Using the Rubric for Continuous Improvement:
Recommendations for Success

Getting Started

Institutions may approach these recommendations by:

1. Conducting a self-assessment to identify current strengths and gaps in each area.
2. Prioritizing one or two specific actions within each of the three recommendation areas below to begin implementation.
3. Building gradually from developing to exemplary practices over multiple semesters or years.
4. Establishing accountability structures to monitor progress and sustain momentum.
5. Celebrating successes and learning from challenges along the way.

Guiding Principles

All three recommendation areas (starting on the next page) should be implemented with attention to:

- **Student Success:** Center course design on the experiences and outcomes of all learners, recognizing diverse needs and backgrounds.
- **Evidence:** Ground practices in research about what works to improve student learning and success.
- **Capacity Building:** Develop institutional infrastructure, not just individual initiatives.
- **Collaboration:** Engage cross-functional teams that include faculty, staff, administrators, and students.
- **Sustainability:** Create systems and cultures that support continuous improvement over time.

1. Data-Informed Instruction and Continuous Improvement

Institutions and faculty systematically collect, analyze, and apply disaggregated student data to drive meaningful improvements in course design, instructional practices, and student outcomes. This includes establishing a data culture that values evidence-based decision-making and supports successful outcomes for all learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Disaggregated Data Collection and Analysis

Developing Practice:

- Begin collecting disaggregated outcome data in high-enrollment gateway courses.
- Train faculty and staff on how to access and interpret basic learning analytics from digital courseware and LMS platforms.
- Establish baseline metrics for student success across different demographic groups.

Exemplary Practice:

- Collect and regularly analyze student outcome data disaggregated by relevant demographic factors to understand patterns in student success.
- Establish systematic processes for examining differences in course completion rates, assignment success, assessment performance, and learning engagement metrics across student populations.
- Utilize digital learning platforms and learning management systems to capture real-time data on student progress, engagement patterns, and performance indicators.
- Create accessible dashboards and reports that enable faculty and administrators to identify trends and disparities at the course, department, and institutional levels.

1.2 Real-Time Data Use for Personalized Learning

Developing Practice:

- Provide faculty with professional development on interpreting learning analytics and translating data insights into instructional adjustments.
- Pilot data-informed teaching practices in select courses before scaling across programs.

Exemplary Practice:

- Empower faculty to use course-level data from digital learning tools to individualize instruction and provide timely interventions for students who need additional support.
- Implement early alert systems that trigger personalized outreach when students fall behind or disengage from course activities.
- Leverage adaptive learning technologies that automatically adjust content difficulty and pacing based on individual student performance.
- Use formative assessment data to modify instructional approaches, reteach concepts, and differentiate learning pathways within the ongoing course.

1.3 Building an Academic Data Culture

Developing Practice:

- Identify and empower data literacy champions who can mentor colleagues in using analytics effectively.
- Create initial data governance frameworks to guide ethical and consistent data use.

Exemplary Practice:

- Foster a community of practice devoted to data literacy among faculty, instructional designers, and student support staff.
- Establish clear data governance policies that increase transparency, trust, and access to relevant student success data.
- Demonstrate leadership commitment to data-driven decision-making by recognizing and rewarding faculty who effectively use data to improve outcomes.
- Provide ongoing training and support to build data literacy skills across the institution, enabling educators to ask meaningful questions, interpret findings, and act on insights.

1.4 Continuous Improvement Cycle

Developing Practice:

- Begin implementing improvement cycles in pilot courses or programs.
- Schedule regular data review meetings with cross-functional teams.

Exemplary Practice:

- Establish formal continuous improvement processes that include regular review of disaggregated outcome data, identification of achievement gaps, implementation of evidence-based interventions, and assessment of impact.
- Document and share lessons learned from data analysis and improvement efforts across departments and with the broader institution.
- Use data not only to evaluate past performance but to proactively design more effective learning experiences.
- Examine data through a student-centered lens, consistently asking: "Which students are succeeding? Which are not? Why? What can we do to change?".

2. Ongoing Professional Learning for Faculty

Institutions provide sustained, student-centered professional development opportunities that build faculty capacity to effectively implement digital learning technologies and evidence-based teaching practices. Professional learning is tailored, collaborative, and directly connected to improving outcomes for every learner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Comprehensive Professional Development for Digital Learning

Developing Practice:

- Launch foundational workshops on digital learning tools and platforms.
- Create initial resource libraries with guides and tutorials for self-paced learning.
- Identify faculty innovators who can share their digital learning practices with colleagues.

Exemplary Practice:

- Offer structured, ongoing professional learning opportunities specifically focused on the effective use of digital courseware, learning management systems, and other educational technologies.
- Provide multi-modal professional development including workshops, communities of practice, one-on-one coaching, peer mentoring, and asynchronous learning modules.
- Design professional development that addresses the complete lifecycle of digital learning implementation: exploration and selection, course design and integration, facilitation and instruction, and assessment and iteration.
- Ensure professional development is accessible to all faculty including adjunct, part-time, and contingent instructors who may have limited time or institutional connection.

2.2 Evidence-Based Teaching Practices (EBTs) Training

Developing Practice:

- Introduce faculty to core evidence-based teaching practices through introductory workshops.
- Provide examples and case studies showing EBTs in action within digital learning environments.

Exemplary Practice:

- Provide in-depth professional learning on evidence-based teaching practices including active learning, formative assessment, metacognition, prior knowledge activation, transparency in learning design, sense of belonging, timely feedback, and data-informed instruction.
- Connect EBT training directly to the digital learning tools and courseware being implemented, demonstrating how technology can enable and enhance these practices.
- Use research-based frameworks to guide professional development design, focusing on practices proven to improve student learning and retention.
- Support faculty in implementing EBTs incrementally, starting with one or two practices and building over time.

2.3 Student-Centered Professional Learning

Developing Practice:

- Begin integrating student success concepts into existing professional development offerings.
- Provide foundational training on inclusive teaching practices and learner-centered course design.

Exemplary Practice:

- Design all professional development with explicit focus on student success, emphasizing strategies that improve outcomes for all learners.
- Offer specialized training on inclusive course design, culturally responsive teaching, universal design for learning, and creating validating and affirming learning environments.
- Help faculty shift from deficit-based to asset-based thinking about students, recognizing students' strengths and diverse experiences.
- Incorporate student voices and perspectives into professional development, including panels, testimonials, and data from student surveys.

2.4 Community of Practice and Peer Learning

Developing Practice:

- Form pilot learning communities focused on specific courses, tools, or teaching challenges.
- Schedule regular meeting times for faculty to share experiences and strategies.

Exemplary Practice:

- Establish communities of practice where faculty can collaborate, share strategies, troubleshoot challenges, and learn from one another's experiences with digital learning and evidence-based teaching.
- Create structured opportunities for peer observation, collaborative course design, and reflective dialogue about teaching practice.
- Facilitate cross-disciplinary learning communities that bring together faculty from different departments who are implementing similar digital tools or addressing similar instructional challenges.
- Recognize and celebrate faculty innovations and successes in implementing digital learning effectively.

2.5 Sustained and Intentional Support

Developing Practice:

- Extend beyond initial training to offer follow-up sessions and basic ongoing support.
- Designate specific staff members or centers (e.g., Center for Teaching and Learning) to coordinate professional development efforts.

Exemplary Practice:

- Move beyond one-time training events to provide sustained, job-embedded professional learning that supports faculty throughout implementation.
- Offer instructional coaching, course design consultation, and technical support as faculty integrate digital learning tools into their courses.
- Create clear pathways for faculty to deepen their expertise over time, from foundational to advanced levels of digital learning and EBT implementation.
- Build professional development into institutional infrastructure with dedicated staffing, funding, and leadership commitment.

3. Student Participation in Course and Program Design

Institutions and faculty systematically gather, value, and integrate authentic student perspectives and feedback into course design, program development, and institutional decision-making processes. Students are recognized as partners whose lived experiences and perspectives are essential to creating effective, learner-centered environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Systematic Collection of Student Feedback

Developing Practice:

- Begin collecting student feedback through end-of-course evaluations or mid-semester surveys.
- Adapt existing course evaluation tools to include questions about digital learning experiences and student success.

Exemplary Practice:

- Implement multiple methods for gathering student feedback throughout course development and delivery, including surveys, focus groups, interviews, and informal check-ins.
- Use validated instruments to assess student experiences with course design, instructional practices, and digital learning tools.
- Collect both quantitative data (ratings, Likert scales) and qualitative feedback (open-ended responses, narratives) to capture nuanced student perspectives.
- Gather feedback at strategic points in the course lifecycle: before implementation (needs assessment), during the term (formative feedback), and after completion (summative evaluation).
- Ensure survey and feedback mechanisms are accessible and designed to maximize engagement from all student populations.

3.2 Centering Student Perspectives in Design Processes

Developing Practice:

- Invite student representatives to participate in select course design or program review meetings.
- Establish pilot student feedback groups for high-enrollment or gateway courses.

Exemplary Practice:

- Include students as active partners in course design teams, curriculum committees, and technology selection processes.
- Engage student representatives from all backgrounds to ensure multiple perspectives inform design decisions.
- Compensate students appropriately for their time and expertise when they participate in design work, recognizing their contributions as valuable labor.
- Create student advisory boards or student fellow programs that provide ongoing input on digital learning initiatives.

3.3 Responsive Action on Student Feedback

Developing Practice:

- Begin making modest changes based on student feedback and communicate those changes to current and future students.
- Create a simple feedback loop where students can see how their input influences instruction.

Exemplary Practice:

- Establish transparent processes for reviewing student feedback, identifying themes and priorities, and determining which changes are feasible and beneficial.
- Communicate back to students about what feedback was collected, how it was analyzed, and what changes will be made as a result.
- Make iterative adjustments to courses based on student input, demonstrating that their perspectives genuinely influence teaching and learning practices.
- Balance structure and flexibility in course design, maintaining clear expectations while staying responsive to student needs and suggestions.
- Document how student feedback has shaped course improvements and share these stories to reinforce the value of student perspectives.

3.4 Student Co-Design and Participatory Approaches

Developing Practice:

- Offer students choices in how they demonstrate learning (e.g., project formats, assessment options).
- Invite student input on specific course elements like assignment sequencing or discussion formats.

Exemplary Practice:

- Engage students as co-creators of learning experiences, allowing them to influence assignment design, assessment methods, course policies, and instructional approaches.
- Use participatory design methods that position students as experts on their own learning needs and preferences.
- Incorporate student-generated content, student-led activities, and student choice in demonstrating learning.
- Support faculty in reframing traditional power dynamics, moving toward collaborative partnerships with students.

3.5 Learning from Students as Student-Centered Practice

Developing Practice:

- Include questions about student experiences and challenges in course surveys.
- Begin conversations with students about what helps them succeed in courses.

Exemplary Practice:

- Recognize that learning from students is essential for creating effective, student-centered learning environments.
- Create ongoing channels for students to share what teaching practices are working well for them, what barriers they encounter, and what would better support their success.
- Use student perspectives to address hidden curricula, unstated expectations, and structural barriers that may impact student success.
- Train faculty on how to welcome, honor, and act on student feedback to create more inclusive and validating learning environments.
- Integrate student voices into institutional research, program evaluation, and strategic planning efforts related to digital learning and student success.

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