

## **Executive Summary**

### **Background Information**

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) Learning Community for New Faculty was designed to assist faculty in becoming fully functioning members of the learning college. The NFLC was intended to support the Core Strategic Direction of CCBC - to improve student learning. The primary objective was to develop the roles of faculty as learning facilitators through a yearlong program of meetings, workshops, and presentations to address the CCBC Supporting Strategic Directions. Goals and objectives were developed to match these seven directions - Infusing Technology, Learning Support, Learning College, Management Excellence, Embracing Diversity, Building Community, and Enrollment Management - with corresponding and specified faculty outcomes. Faculty who were new to the CCBC system were required to participate in this extended program.

The program consisted of daylong sessions in August, January, and June with biweekly meetings throughout the regular semesters. Topics covered included such items as learning college principles, learning outcomes assessment, distance learning, learning styles, information literacy, diversity issues, student advisement policies, curriculum development, learning communities, and student retention.

The assessment for the CCBC Learning Community for New Faculty is an attempt to compare the program outcomes with the program goals and objectives. This evaluation should also lead to recommendations to change and improve the program so that new faculty and the students of CCBC will receive the best possible educational experiences.

### **Evaluation Design**

The NFLC was assessed using five distinct tools. They included evaluating the short-term faculty outcomes using the Faculty Outcomes Checklist, the changes in knowledge of components of the Learning**FIRST** principles using the Learning Assessment Questionnaire, faculty perspectives of the usefulness of the program and effects of the mentor program using open ended surveys, and student satisfaction using the results of the SIR II student evaluations.

### **Results, Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Faculty Outcomes Checklist showed that over 80% percent of new faculty were successful in incorporating electronic components into their courses, using learning support services for their students, including a variety of teaching methods to accommodate various student learning styles, and developing learning syllabi to match the Common Course Outlines for their courses. Only about 40% of new faculty felt comfortable in explaining the program review process. All of the other outcomes ranged between these two extremes. But with no comparison group, it is difficult to determine how the program impacted these outcomes. Therefore, it was recommended that these

results be maintained as a baseline and a guideline for improving the program for the future.

The pre-test/post-test Learning Assessment Questionnaire results demonstrated improvements in all categories: Learning college principles, Learning Outcomes Assessment, Use of technology, Distance Learning, Learning Communities, Information literacy, Diversity issues, Policies for student Advisement, Responsibilities toward student retention, Curriculum development, and Program review. The increased scores were statistically significant in all but three categories, Learning college principles, Diversity issues, and Program review. The new faculty scored themselves very high on the pre-test in the area of Learning college principles. This may reflect a change in hiring practices and a thorough introduction to the college by their administrators. The change in knowledge of diversity issues was marginally significant ( $p = .053$ ) and may have been affected by the fact that the survey was filled out prior to the discussion on culturally mediated instruction. The low ending scores on new faculty knowledge of program review procedures may indicate a need for more inclusion of this topic in subsequent NFLC's.

The mentor program seemed to suffer the most from a medical emergency that caused the program coordinator to be temporarily replaced. As a result the mentors did not have the necessary contacts and were not required to turn in their Post Observation Forms as was part of the original plan. But the new faculty felt they did not require mentors after the first semester. They began to rely instead on the program coordinator and each other for problem solving. Therefore, the recommendation at this point is to reduce the mentor program to a single semester to allow for a more intense - but less time consuming relationship between mentor and "mentee".

In the open-ended survey, new faculty commented repeatedly that they felt the honest conversations, the networking, and the group problem solving were the strengths of the program. But they felt the greatest weakness in the program was the lack of flexibility. Most believed that new faculty should be able to choose the meetings to attend that would benefit them the most. This recommendation would need to be discussed with the academic deans since a minimum would have to be set that could affect faculty evaluations.

The final assessment tool was the use of SIR II student evaluations and comparing the new faculty to four other cohorts - all CCBC faculty, second year faculty, temporary contracted faculty, and national averages. In all categories, members of the NFLC scored as well if not better than their more experienced colleagues. In addition, their scores that matched those of their temporary contracted peers who were not participants in the program in the fall semester but reflected significant differences by the spring semester. And the category where differences were most noticeable was "Course Outcomes". In that category students assess their increase in interest, involvement, and learning.

The CCBC Learning Community for New Faculty has achieved the desired objectives for this academic year. A continuous assessment should be included for future NFLC members and the current faculty should be tracked for a number of years to ascertain whether the program has any lasting impact on student learning.