



Taking College Teaching Seriously, Pedagogy Matters!: Fostering Student Success Through Faculty-Centered Practice Improvement

Gail O. Mellow, Diana D. Woolis, Marisa Klages-Bombich, Susan Restler

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“College teaching is not rocket science – it’s much, much harder.”?Diana Laurillard, University of London

College faculty, both adjunct and full-time, stand with their students at the coalface of learning, wishing for more to succeed and disappointed at how illusory academic success is for so many. Among the array of investments colleges are making to improve student outcomes, from predictive data analysis to enhanced advising, too little attention is paid to supporting faculty. Yet the impact of teacher and teaching on student learning is incontrovertible. *Taking College Teaching Seriously: Pedagogy Matters!* stands against the tide – celebrating the incredible work faculty members do each day and challenging them to expand their capacity to present their content expertise effectively.

This book presents a model of embedded professional development, which capitalizes on the affordances of technology to enable groups of faculty to examine their practice in a non-evaluative context, but with a clear focus on improvement. The core of the work involves individual reflection and the design provides for an accessible way to “see” into the classrooms of discipline peers. Most importantly, the *Taking College Teaching Seriously* experience is not an intense one-shot, but rather a structured opportunity for a faculty member to examine and adapt practice over time and to assess the impact of changes on student learning.

Faculty who have participated in the *Taking College Teaching Seriously* experience found it to be transformative:

- English Professor, Kentucky: *Participating in (the work) this year has helped me to be more reflective in every single action. I constantly analyze how each session went... (it) gave me the tools to think about every minute detail of a classroom.*

- Adjunct Math Professor, Mississippi: *Speaking as an adjunct, I have valued the chance to share my teaching and get ideas from others. I can honestly say that this experience has been a lifeline of sorts this year. In a “magic wand” instructional setting, I’d wish for the kind of honest, respectful and professionally challenging discussions we have in Classroom Notebook* at weekly staff meetings.*

*Classroom Notebook is the *Taking College Teaching Seriously* online platform

- Math Professor, NJ: *I think the continual self-evaluation and reflection allowed us to work together to brainstorm improvements and positive tweaks to be more purposeful in our classrooms as opposed to just randomly reaching in the dark for ideas and techniques in HOPE of success.*

Taking College Teaching Seriously: Pedagogy Matters! breaks new ground in professional development. Each faculty member is at the center of the learning experience, stimulated and supported by peers working in similar contexts. They share a desire to see more students learn deeply and find that honing their skill at

adapting to the learning needs of specific classes and students allows them to realize this goal. Uniquely, *Taking College Teaching Seriously* illuminates the link between faculty teaching expertise and improving student outcomes.

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