Title: Teaching Online Courses for Creativity and Critical Thinking

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Focus: Many faculty members at FAU have taught, or will soon be teaching, online courses in their disciplines. Online courses have great value for reaching students whose obligations might otherwise prevent them from getting an education and students whose schedules would otherwise preclude them from taking a particular course. Moreover, some students are simply more comfortable participating in a virtual classroom. Online teaching could help student learning and improve retention. Despite the clear potential benefits of online courses, they do present us with new pedagogical challenges.

This FLC would discuss the problems we have encountered in teaching online courses, whether some of these problems are discipline-dependent, strategies for improving our online teaching, and discuss the particular challenges presented by online courses to teach students to think more creatively and critically.

Participants: This FLC would benefit faculty members in any discipline who have taken or would be currently taking the FAU e-learning training course, and especially for those currently teaching or who have taught an online course.

Outcomes:

Activities
- Identify (or propose) best practices for teaching online in specific disciplines or subject areas. For example, what issues face a professor teaching a math course online that are unique to the discipline of mathematics? Individual participants or small groups of them, would complete these best practice solutions.
- Identify chief problems shared by professors teaching online courses in any discipline and develop best practices for solving these problems. We shall also consider whether we need to have different expectations of online students than we do of face-to-face students. If so, what these differences are.
- Develop ideas for teaching students not only course material, but also how we can hone their critical and creative faculties and inspire them to continue their education.

Assessment: Participants will be asked to implement some of our suggested best practices in the following term (or even within the fall term as new ideas emerge), and to note whether students perform better when these practices are implemented. They will also discuss whether and why they feel more comfortable and effective using any new techniques or ideas developed by the group.
Sharing Ideas with the FAU Community: (1) A best practices website that could be linked with the e-learning website. This website would include not only a list of best practices, but also some faculty narratives discussing their own experiences in online teaching. The website would include a bibliography accessible to faculty in various disciplines. (2) Some self-selected participants could aim to publish an article(s) that could be announced through the center for e-learning. (3) The group could ask the e-learning trainers to include participants in the e-learning training workshop so that they could discuss some of the suggested best practices and how the group developed them.

Potential Meeting Time: During the fall, the leader of this FLC is available to schedule meetings at the following days at the indicated times:

- Fall semester: Mon: anytime between 11:30-3:00
- Weds: anytime between 11:30-3:00, or after 5:30
- Spring semester: to be determined

Videoconferencing could be provided in case some faculty members on other campuses cannot get to Boca for the meetings