

**Florida Atlantic University**  
Center for Teaching and Learning  
Faculty Learning Community 2011-2012

**Title:** Teaching High-Ability Students\*

---

**Facilitator:** Dr. Christopher Strain, Associate Professor of History & American Studies, Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College

**Focus:** This FLC will bring together a cohort of 8-12 faculty members interested in teaching, mentoring, and serving high-ability students at Florida Atlantic University. Participants will enjoy a year-long exploration of collegiate honors pedagogy to (1) define and identify high-ability students, (2) better understand high-ability students and the best ways of teaching them, (3) make modifications to teaching practices based on what is learned and (4) promote better teaching and learning across the university by sharing what is learned with a wider audience. This FLC will challenge not only the notion that the best students are inevitably high-achievers (with strong GPAs or high standardized test scores) but also the idea that honors courses are simply regular courses “made harder” with extra reading, extra assignments, and stringent grading—instead encouraging ways to create dynamic learning environments for high-ability students while avoiding rote memorization and passive learning. Participants will be invited to share favorite strategies for teaching high-ability students. While aimed at any and all interested faculty, this FLC would be particularly good for those creating Honors-in-the-Majors programs in their respective departments and colleges.

**Outcomes:**

- Each faculty participant will create at least two (2) examples of classroom activities intended to engage high-ability students, present these activities to the FLC, employ them in at least one course, and assess the impact of these new activities in enhancing student learning.
- It is expected that, by the second semester of the FLC, each participant will build new research activities and expectations into at least one course syllabus. Faculty will be asked to present this syllabus to the FLC and describe the intended learning outcomes; each syllabus will be work-shopped by the group, which will make suggestions and offer constructive criticism. Faculty will then implement these activities in the classroom.
- Students will be asked to evaluate these activities on the end-of-semester Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) evaluations, which will provide direct feedback to instructors on the appeal and effectiveness of some of the pedagogical strategies described in the FLC.
- FLC participants will catalog selected syllabi for other faculty members interested in enhancing their own coursework and teaching effectiveness.

## **Potential**

**Meeting Time:** Fridays, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. every other week, primarily on the Boca campus, for six (6) meetings/semester in the fall and spring semesters. A small percentage of classes (one or two per semester) may meet on the Jupiter campus—home of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College—to provide firsthand opportunities for participants to observe and interact with a living-learning community of high-ability students. Participants may, on occasion, join meetings “virtually” via eLearning modalities (e.g. Skype, Elluminate, videoconference, etc.) as necessary; however, participants will be expected to attend regularly and commit to full participation in the FLC during the designated timeslot throughout the 2011-2012 school year.

**Stipend:** Participants will receive a \$1,000 stipend for active participation in the FLC and upon fulfilling all FLC expectations. These expectations include attendance at 80% of the group meetings, participation in the FLC’s project(s) and the communication of the project outcomes, and completion of the end of experience feedback survey.

**Note:** \* This FLC is being conducted in conjunction with the university Quality Enhancement Program in compliance with SACS reaccreditation requirements. As such, the work produced by this FLC will be included in the compliance reporting for SACS reaccreditation. Participants in all QEP-related FLCs will meet periodically throughout the year to assess their work and contribute to QEP planning.