

InTeGrate Faculty Stories

InTeGrate Leads to Changes that Accommodate Diverse Learners and Builds Supportive Faculty Communities

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The perspective summarized in this brief is from a faculty member who teaches a variety of geology and education classes from introductory to graduate level courses. The wide range of students includes many learners from different backgrounds. Prior to the Implementation Program (IP), he “didn’t use a lot of examples that showed diversity,” but afterwards he increased the use of examples representing non-dominant populations. He also gained a deeper understanding of the need for multiple types of learning activities beyond lecture.

INFLUENCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The IP program opened this faculty member’s eyes to multiple ways of learning, and how the InTeGrate materials could be adapted to provide a wider array of diverse examples and different pedagogies. Changes he made included no longer using the power point slides provided by the publisher that only included white male scientists, and providing more diverse examples. Also, to increase student engagement, the faculty member incorporated teaching activities in addition to lecturing.

The IP program gave the participants exposure to material and other people’s work, to gather ideas on how to make a more inclusive classroom via “small changes that don’t require a lot of time, but have a huge impact.” The faculty member recognized that prior to IP he was not consciously creating content to engender inclusiveness, but now does with both his materials and teaching methods. In addition, he has an increased efforts to make interdisciplinary connections to the content. He explained that:

I use a lot more in-class activities to help students understand advanced level concepts . . . I also now really try to use a lot of diversity within my lectures . . . I try to talk about the relationship of socio-economics to the material that we’re presenting . . .

The IP program also helped this faculty member see the importance of relating the material to student’s lives and real-world examples. He said:

InTeGrate really taught me to tie the majority of topics that I talk about, whether it’s an introductory

level class, or a graduate level class, into real-world situations and applicable situations.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The faculty member felt the IP experience also improved instruction of other departmental participants by providing teaching material and tools for them to use. This led to the department developing student learning outcomes for classes and a better student experience. His enthusiasm for teaching increased after the IP, in part, from the collaborations that participation in the program facilitated, as noted below:

I start to see colleagues with similar interests. I collaborate with those colleagues either on a personal level or a professional level. It’s kind of really opened my world to collaboration.

The ongoing community of practice that the IP helped create also includes faculty from outside his discipline who helped add societal perspectives to this course content. The community serves as a conduit for both cultivating and sustaining changes to teaching that better support their diverse learner population. In response to why he will continue to be involved in this community, he said:

I can’t imagine a time in my life now where I would want to get out of this community. It’s been so beneficial . . . People are there to answer questions. People are there to help you through problems . . . It’s a huge support group . . . It’s a lot of work, and it’s something that is definitely not easy to do to sit down and start to rethink your teaching and maybe admit to yourself some of the things you were doing maybe weren’t the most beneficial to students, but learning those things because of this program has just been priceless.

The IP program helped this faculty member increase the inclusiveness of his course content making the classroom more engaging for all learners. It also increased interdisciplinarity of the course content and helped create a community of faculty focused on student learning.