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SHARING BEST PRACTICES: TEACHING SMARTER, NOT HARDER

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ABSTRACT

In this session, ABSEL members will share their best practices in teaching. We all have implicit knowledge about techniques that reduce time for teaching activities while maintaining or improving quality but we often forget to share this knowledge. The session design allows for sharing and building on each others' knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive academic environment, faculty members are being asked, as are business people, to "do more with less." How do we do this? Of course, there's the promise that technology will ease our burdens yet, while most of us feel that the new technology options are valuable teaching tools, they don't reduce the time spent preparing or teaching. In fact, if interactive technology is used well, the professor becomes a guide or coach rather than the "expert" lecturer. New skills are often required for effective classroom and distance use of technology.

Faculty are increasingly being called on to make phone calls, write letters, attend college fairs, speak at open houses and perform other recruiting activities in addition to traditional retention activities like advising students. Outcomes assessment efforts claim our time as does accreditation or reaccreditation work. On top of these demands, faculty are expected to reach out to business and build partnerships, a time-consuming activity. We are committed to student internships and service learning/fieldwork projects which eat up a lot of time (well worth it, of course).

And, not to forget, of course we have to do research and publish. We also want to see our families and have time for exercise and balance in life. So where is the time left to redesign courses,

prepare for classroom activity, grade assignments and exams, and actually teach?

Now that you are totally overwhelmed by the enormity of the job's time demands, let me propose some help. Why can't we "work smarter, not harder" and become parts of a learning organization (concepts we teach, but rarely have time to practice!)? At ABSEL, a collection of excellent, caring teachers comes together, bringing multiple skills and years of experience. Let's learn from each other's successes. By sharing our own best practices in a workshop format (as opposed to written communication), we can query each other for details, build on ideas, gain energy from the generation and sharing of teaching tips, and leave with a solid collection of take-aways we can use immediately back home.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

After a brief introduction by the facilitator, participants will do a needs assessment – i.e., they will identify the set of job tasks that contribute to good teaching. This list may include text/readings/media selection/finding resources, class preparation, in-class activity, assignments, grading, evaluation/feedback, advising, and organizing one's office.

Then the group will share their own best practices by responding to the different areas of need. This is done via easel sheets posted on the walls. The group then views the "gallery of best practices," clarifies, and builds on ideas through discussion. Ideally, each participant will leave with several ideas for "teaching smarter, not harder," with validation of her own teaching knowledge, and with inspiration and energy to implement something new back home.