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Creating and Sustaining the Inclusive Teaching Program for Lecturers at the University of Michigan

2021 Finalist for the Delphi Award

By Jordan Harper and Adrianna Kezar

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Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty (NTTF)

- ✓ Professional Development

Example Best Practices in Process to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

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The University of Michigan (UM), a unionized, public four-year university, quickly realized that most lecturers teach entry-level and foundational courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in their disciplines. This realization, along with the launch of a multi-year Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategic plan in 2016, led the University of Michigan to think critically about creating better supports for lecturers off the tenure track. The final product was a professional development program exclusively for lecturers known as the Inclusive Teaching Program for Lecturers (ITPL). In focusing on lecturers, the University of Michigan ensured that inclusive and equity-focused teaching practices are embedded in classrooms across the institution and that lecturers off the tenure track are well prepared to enact such practices in their respective classrooms. To this end, the University of Michigan recognizes lecturers as a critical teaching and mentoring population by investing key resources in their professional development that, in turn, also improve student learning outcomes.

Professional Development

The University of Michigan created the Inclusive Teaching Program for Lecturers as a way to further cement its commitment to ensuring that each member of the campus community has the opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the direction of the institution. The ITPL program supports lecturers by offering engagement with DEI frameworks and content pitched beyond introductory conversation. What's more, it is aimed at advanced skill development for long-term and sustainable change to these lecturers' teaching practices. The program challenges lecturers to infuse DEI in their course content and pedagogy. After completing the course and revising their content and practices, lecturers then teach their revised course while receiving feedback and support from their program cohort and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching's (CRLT) DEI-focused consultant. As a result of completing the program, lecturers are better

equipped with a newfound set of tools and skills while also being well positioned to serve as resources and informal teaching consultants for their colleagues.

The ITPL was designed to fulfill four primary objectives, broadly:

1. Build a community to support lecturers in their inclusive teaching practices,
2. Provide an evidence-based framework to help participants reflect upon and further develop their inclusive teaching practices,
3. Enhance participants' confidence and skill around inclusive teaching practices, and
4. Support individual participants in making substantial changes to their respective courses.

A theory of action was then developed to help achieve these four primary objectives.

Developing a Theory of Action

The University outlined a three-part theory of action for ITPL. The key elements of the theory of action include a minimal time commitment, a relatively small cohort and compensation for participants. Each element of the theory of action was created and implemented out of respect for the realities of lecturers.

A minimal time commitment is important because many of the lecturers at UM carry large teaching loads, take on additional teaching positions at other institutions, or hold other full or part-time jobs outside of academia. Furthermore, lecturers are only expected to attend four cohort meetings over the span of nine months along with a one-on-one consultation with the program facilitator or a midterm feedback session with students in one of the participant's courses. Aside from meeting times, lecturers are expected to write a final reflection and submit a revised and annotated syllabus demonstrating changes based on the inclusive and equity-focused teaching principles and practices learning during the program. Minimal time commitments allow for meaningful exchange without placing more of a burden on already busy lecturers.

Small cohorts are intentional in an effort to foster community and encourage lecturers to build strong relations with one another so that they come out of the program with a new network of faculty to reach out to for support and guidance.

Having a small cohort is the second element of the ITPL theory of action. Small cohorts are intentional in an effort to foster community and encourage lecturers to build strong relations with one another so that they come out of the program with a new network of faculty to reach out to for support and guidance.

The last element of the ITPL theory of action is compensation for participants. Feedback from the UM's DEI strategic planning in 2015 informed the decision to provide a \$1,000 stipend to all ITPL program participants. Compensation not only draws lecturers to the program but also rewards them for engaging in professional development.



Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships helped to create and sustain the ITPL program at the University of Michigan. Together, the Lecturer Employee Organization (LEO) and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) developed a proposal and plan for the lecturer-focused inclusive-teaching program. It is also important to note that the program is included in both the union's bargaining platform and was ultimately included in the union's 2018-2021 contract. This was largely possible because of the strategic partnership put in place between the LEO and the CRLT. Strategic partnerships signal the importance of collaboration to achieve widespread and meaningful change.

Feedback Loops

The impact and success of ITPL are tracked in two primary ways: participant feedback and student feedback. Participant feedback is obtained through participant self-assessment, final program evaluations, final reflections and surveys. In the final evaluations and self-assessments, program participants are asked about the program's overall impact with increasing their confidence in applying an equity-focused and inclusion framework to their course content and pedagogical practices. Student feedback is important to understand the impact the ITPL program has had on the student experience. Student feedback is collected through the midterm student feedback process and/or final course evaluations. Both participant and student feedback are used to strengthen the lecturers' pedagogical practices.

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