Online Faculty Mentoring: Remote Means to Provide Supervision and Improve Performance

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Program Rationale
Online programs, like IWU’s College of Adult and Professional Studies (CAPS), may employ hundreds of adjunct instructors who are geographically远离 their department’s supervisors and students. With this spread comes a need for ongoing support and guidance. Typical faculty mentoring is in-person and on campus. However, an in-person assessment is sometimes impossible, and with online classes, at times unnecessary. Rather, a limited presence within an online class is more helpful for assessment and guidance. Previously, Division of Liberal Arts (DOLA) faculty were ranked solely on the basis of their end-of-class (EOC) surveys, which were numbers generated by their students. These numbers, obviously limited in the data they could project, also had no way of measuring grading feedback on papers. The online faculty mentoring program, developed by DOLA and headed by Dr. Craig Edwards, seeks to bridge the gap between student surveys and the in-person mentor to provide supervision, support, and assessment.

Materials and methods
DOLA’s online faculty mentoring is conducted remotely and non-intrusive. A similar approach, with an added teaching observation, is also used for instructors who teach blended onsite/online classes in one of IWU’s 15 regional educational centers. The current assessment instrument was approved for online use in May 2017 and later adapted for use at IWU’s 15 regional educational centers throughout Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio.

English faculty members were initially ranked based on indirect evidence provided by End of Course Student Surveys (EOCs). As more direct data becomes available (through direct observation and mentoring), the rankings are adjusted accordingly. Adjuncts with a ranking of 1-3 are eligible to teach on a regular basis with 1’s receiving the most frequent course offers. 4s have been put in a queue to be mentored, but may be allowed to teach in the most frequent course offers. 4s have been put in a

Results
Of the 81 adjunct English faculty in DOLA, 26 have been monitored using a similar assessment tool. Some of the 26 received mentoring as part of the standard onboarding process and the rest because concerns had been raised about their teaching performance.

When concerns were raised by End of Course Student Surveys or direct reports from students, the adjuncts in question were informed they would need to undergo the mentoring process to continue teaching.

Current Mentored Status of Adjunct Faculty Members

Two adjuncts resigned immediately upon hearing they would require mentoring. A total of the 26 resigned or were deactivated. 30-40% of the remainder were responsive to the mentoring.

32% of the total adjunct pool within DOLA has now been through the 5-6 week mentoring process.

Conclusions
Anecdotal material has shown that the mentoring has been helpful to improve the quality, quantity, and timing of faculty feedback on student work. It has also been useful as a metric to rank faculty.

No formal assessment of the program’s effectiveness has yet been attempted. Resources are currently being sought to fund mentoring of the remaining 55 English adjuncts on a more accelerated timetable, followed by formal assessments.

A proposed quantitative assessment is to study End of Course Student Survey scores to see if student perception of teaching quality increases after mentoring. A desirable qualitative measure would be blind evaluations of samples of adjunct grading comments for students pre- and post-mentoring.

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The four parts of the mentoring program are as follows:

• Non-intrusive class observation, where the mentor has access to the mentor’s online course
• Feedback on adjunct’s grading comments
• Personal contact via phone or video meeting
• Qualitative 10-question mentoring tool

After the 5-6 week mentoring process, the mentor evaluates the member on ten weighted criteria, shown in wheel above.

References


Further information
To discuss the research, method, results and further assessment, please contact us:
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