

## Learning Community Institute: Grant Task 1.7.4

### Executive Summary

The Learning Community Institute is intended to help faculty and staff *establish and implement successful learning communities*. UW-Stout learning communities link 25-30 students together through 2-3 courses and by assigning them to a specific living area, when possible. The Learning Community Institute is also intended to help *increase the retention and graduation rates* of students enrolled at the university by strengthening students' interactions with one another and their instructors, as well as enhance learning and engagement by encouraging students to actively engage in their learning by attending a variety activities outside of the classroom.

The Learning Community Institute resulted in significant improvement in groups self-reported knowledge and abilities related to what a learning community is, development of community goals/expectations, learning community specific instructional strategies, and assessment strategies.

#### Strengths of the Activity

- Participants had the largest increase regarding their ability to develop instructional strategies for teaching in a learning community.
- Participants greatly increased their understanding of what a learning community is and how to assess student learning in learning communities
- Participants increased their ability to create goals/expectations for their learning community and to develop effective strategies for assessing student learning in learning communities.
- Participants perceived learning communities as a valuable tool to assess student learning before and even more so after participation in the institute.
- Seven of 9 survey respondents stated that they achieved the objectives they set prior to the institute.
- The most useful information/activities included discussions and collaboration with learning community agents and the detailed presentation on the background of learning communities and their importance.
- All post-survey respondents stated that they would recommend the institute to other programs.

#### Opportunities to Improve Future Institutes

- Post information and resources on planning and assessment tools on D2L
- Provide additional examples of what other learning communities are doing
  - Invite other learning communities to share their experiences.
- Provide additional information or assistance on developing effective strategies for assessing student learning in learning communities
- Consider increasing the number of participants

#### Action Plan for Current Institute

- Scheduled follow-up for following academic year
  - Follow-up team progress
  - Provide further support based on needs
  - Allow groups to share their success stories and assessment tools