Meauxmentum Scholars Toolkit

A quick-start guide to your FLC

Purpose

Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) are designed to give small groups of faculty—typically 8–10 colleagues—the opportunity to engage in sustained, meaningful conversations about teaching and learning. As a Meauxmentum Scholar, your role is to create the structure and support that allows this learning community to thrive.

Research shows that faculty who participate in FLCs develop greater confidence in their teaching, deepen their understanding of how students learn, and become more willing to try new approaches. They also report higher levels of scholarly engagement, stronger feelings of belonging, and improved connection with students.

By guiding an FLC, you help create the conditions for this kind of professional growth and community-building on your campus.

Task (What you need to do)

Before the FLC begins:

1. **Choose a focus area.** Select one of the following contexts to guide the work of your FLC:
    - **Classroom practices:** Explore small, high-impact instructional changes using resources such as James Lang's *Small Teaching* or Sierra Adare's *Gamify Your College Classroom.*
    - **Assignments:** Apply the Transparency in Learning & Teaching (TILT) framework to clarify the Purpose, Task, and Criteria of assignments.
    - **Beyond the classroom:** Examine learning that occurs outside the classroom, drawing on resources like AAC&U's *Eight Key Elements of High-Impact Practices* (HIPs) or Ken Bain's *The Super Course: The Future of Teaching and Learning.*
2. **Recruit your community.** Invite 8–10 faculty members to participate in your FLC.

During the semester:

3. **Hold regular meetings.** Meet approximately every three weeks (face-to-face, hybrid, or online) to:
    - engage with readings, examples, or invited experts;
    - discuss practical applications;
    - support one another in planning or implementing changes.
4. **Foster community.** Maintain consistent communication and create a collegial, supportive environment. When feasible, include shared meals or snacks to strengthen group connection.

By the end of the semester:

5. **Ensure each participant (including you) implements one meaningful change** to a classroom practice, assignment, activity, or piece of course material that stems from the FLC's work.
6. **Submit a critical reflection.** Each participant will complete a brief reflection addressing:

    - A brief description of the original assignment, activity, or course material.
    - The purpose of the assignment, activity, or course material.
    - A description of the change or innovation you have made to the assignment, activity, or course material.
    - What you hoped to accomplish with this change or innovation (i.e. your goal).
    - Did this change or innovation meet your expectations?
    - What was the outcome for your students?
    - What will you do differently next time?
    - What effect did your participation in this FLC have on your teaching?

Criteria

A Meauxmentum Scholar will be considered successful when they have:

- organized and facilitated regular meetings that cultivate a sense of community;
- supported their participants in making meaningful changes in their teaching;
- completed their own end-of-semester reflection; and
- collected reflections from their FLC participants.

Example of Critical Reflection from previous FLC program:

Meauxmentum Scholars: Final Reflections

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Topic: Small Teaching

Our group met seven times during the Spring 2025 semester in a hybrid format, combining face-to-face and virtual meetings. Participating in this Faculty Learning Community was a rewarding and collaborative experience for all involved. We appreciate the opportunity to engage in this initiative and look forward to the possibility of continuing it into the 2025-2026 academic year.

Critical Reflection

A brief description of the original assignment, activity, or course material.
In my CHEM 1010 course (General Chemistry I for non-science majors), I focused on improving student understanding of molecular polarity, a complex but essential concept that requires mastery of several interconnected skills: counting valence electrons, drawing Lewis structures, determining molecular geometry and bond angles, assessing bond polarity, and evaluating molecular symmetry. Previously, I checked for student understanding through informal methods, such as voluntary oral responses and multiple-choice polls during class. While this approach provided a quick snapshot of general comprehension, it typically involved only a handful of repeat volunteers, which limited my ability to assess how well the class as a whole was grasping the material.

The purpose of the assignment, activity, or course material.
This assignment served as a formative assessment at the end of Chapter 10, *Chemical Bonding*, which focuses heavily on molecular polarity. The goal was to evaluate whether students could integrate and apply individual concepts they had learned, such as Lewis structures, geometry, and electronegativity, to determine the polarity of a molecule. To complete the task successfully, students needed to draw upon material from prior lectures. Because this multi-step reasoning process is essential not only for mastering Chapter 10 but also for understanding the content in Chapter 12, *Liquids, Solids, and Intermolecular Forces*, it was important to assess how well students could connect these concepts in a meaningful way.

A description of the change or innovation you have made to the assignment, activity, or course material.
I redesigned this activity using retrieval strategies outlined in Chapter 2 of *Small Teaching*. Instead of relying on oral responses or multiple-choice polls, I created a written, open-ended task that required each student to show all the steps used to determine the polarity of a molecule. Students worked on the assignment during class and were encouraged to discuss their ideas with peers, although each student submitted their own individual response. To incentivize participation and accuracy, I provided a small amount of extra credit for well-completed tasks. This approach emphasized active retrieval practice and gave every student a chance to reinforce their learning while allowing me to better assess their individual thinking.

What you hoped to accomplish with this change or innovation (i.e. your goal).
My primary goal was to ensure that every student actively engaged with the full problem-solving process involved in determining molecular polarity. I wanted students to synthesize earlier material to reinforce long-

term retention and to develop a deeper understanding of how these ideas relate. I also aimed to create a more inclusive learning environment by shifting from passive observation to active participation. This format gave all students, not just frequent volunteers, a chance to work through the material and express their thinking. In addition, I used their responses to identify misunderstandings I could address in the following lecture.

Did this change or innovation meet your expectations?
Yes. Several recurring issues in student responses helped me identify key areas of confusion. One common mistake was placing the double bond on chlorine instead of oxygen. In $COCl_2$, carbon is the central atom. Oxygen, with six valence electrons, typically forms two bonds to complete its octet. Chlorine, with seven valence electrons, usually forms only one bond. Many students also misidentified the molecular geometry, selecting shapes like tetrahedral or bent instead of the correct trigonal planar geometry. These errors likely stemmed from confusion about the arrangement of atoms and electron groups around the central atom.

Some students also overlooked bond polarity. Both the C=O and C-Cl bonds are polar due to differences in electronegativity, and the molecule itself is polar because it lacks symmetry in all three dimensions, resulting in a net dipole. Recognizing these mistakes allowed me to target specific areas for further explanation in upcoming lessons. These insights were especially helpful in shaping how I approached my next lecture.

What was the outcome for your students?
This activity encouraged students to collaborate and participate more actively during class. Many were more comfortable sharing ideas with peers than speaking in front of the entire class, which helped create a more interactive and supportive learning environment. Requiring individual submissions increased engagement and accountability, as students focused more on completing the task thoughtfully.

To further motivate students, I provided a small number of bonus points for responses that showed effort and accuracy. This incentive encouraged students to take the activity seriously and be more thorough in their reasoning. Overall, the combination of peer collaboration, individual responsibility, and the opportunity for extra credit contributed to a productive and engaging class session.

What will you do differently next time?
I don't plan to make changes to this particular activity, as it worked very well and achieved its goals. Instead, I want to use what I learned to build similar activities into more lessons throughout the semester. The structure of this task was open-ended, collaborative, and focused on retrieval. It proved to be an effective way to assess student understanding and support deeper learning. Going forward, I plan to design more opportunities like this one. Regular practice with complex concepts in low-stakes environments will help students strengthen their skills and give me earlier insight into misconceptions, so I can adjust instruction as needed.

What effect did your participation in this FLC have on your teaching?
As one of four Meauxmentum Scholars (MS) at Southeastern Louisiana University, I led a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) focused on *Small Teaching*. I recruited participants through the Center for Faculty Excellence newsletter and organized seven hybrid meetings throughout the semester, combining in-person and virtual sessions. The group, composed of faculty from various disciplines, brought a range of teaching perspectives that enriched our discussions and deepened our exploration of the book's strategies. We used a shared Google Doc to post reflections, ideas, and key takeaways as we implemented those strategies in our classrooms. These discussions fostered reflective dialogue and created a supportive environment where members could learn from each other's experiences.

In addition to leading the FLC, I participated in monthly virtual MS check-ins and attended both the MS Kickoff in August and the Meauxmentum Summit in April, all hosted by the Louisiana Board of Regents. These experiences allowed me to connect with other scholars across the state, exchange ideas, and grow in confidence as a developing faculty leader.

The FLC experience fostered a strong sense of collegiality and mutual support. For example, in the weeks leading up to spring break, I began noticing a decline in student attendance just as the course content was becoming more challenging and the withdrawal deadline had already passed. I brought this concern to our April FLC meeting, where colleagues offered encouragement and practical advice. They helped me refocus on the students who remained engaged and shared strategies for making class time more interactive, along with thoughtful approaches for reconnecting with students who had become less present. These conversations highlighted the value of collaborative reflection and reinforced the importance of a supportive teaching community committed to continuous improvement for student success.

Although funding for the book arrived later than planned, which delayed my ability to implement the strategies across the full semester, the experience was still incredibly meaningful. During the latter part of the term, I was able to apply *Small Teaching* strategies and was struck by how positively students responded to collaborative, low-stakes activities. Students with stronger content knowledge naturally stepped into peer-support roles, which contributed to a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Reading *Small Teaching* helped me understand how its strategies are deeply interconnected. To build a classroom where students feel safe to engage, I needed to foster a strong learning culture, as emphasized in Chapters 7 and 8 on belonging and motivation. Chapter 5 on practice was also particularly impactful. It reinforced the idea that students need frequent, structured opportunities to develop the cognitive skills they will be assessed on. This perspective has changed how I think about using class time. Rather than relying primarily on demonstrations, I now plan to incorporate more retrieval-based and practice-oriented activities that allow students to meaningfully engage and receive feedback.

Looking ahead, I am excited to apply these strategies more consistently and intentionally in future semesters. The FLC provided a valuable space for reflection, peer collaboration, and pedagogical growth. It also strengthened my commitment to designing active, student-centered learning environments and to continuously refining my teaching approach.

[This example is from a previous Meauxmentum Scholar. Following this reflection would be the reflections from each participant.]