Community-driven, Competency-based Certificate Programs for Professional Development

Ms. Kim A. Scalzo, State University of New York, HQ

Kim Scalzo is Director of the SUNY Center for Professional Development (CPD). The SUNY CPD provides professional development and training opportunities for faculty and staff across SUNY's 64-campus system. CPD programs and services are targeted toward campus administration and leadership, faculty and instructional support staff, and IT staff. As Director, Kim provides overall leadership for the center, including strategic planning, new program development, campus relationship management, and partnership development with training vendors. Kim has also been active in the implementation of Innovative Instruction initiatives through SUNY's Strategic Plan, The Power of SUNY.

Prior to SUNY, Kim spent 18 years in a variety of administrative and leadership roles at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, including Director of Academic Outreach Programs with overall responsibility for Rensselaer's Summer, Continuing Education, Distance Learning, and Outreach Programs. Kim has also served as a reviewer for the New York State Education Department Office of Higher Education for several Institutional Capability Reviews for distance learning programs. Over the past five years she has participated in an EU-US DAETE and DAETE2 projects to develop international quality standards for continuing education centers. She is also a co-creator of the Bray-Scalzo Partnership Model for creating and sustaining successful partnerships.

Kim currently serves as Chair of the Continuing Professional Development Division of the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE-CPD). She is also a member of the International Association of Continuing Engineering Education (IACEE) Council and serves as the Vice President for Products and Services on the IACEE Executive Committee. Additionally, she has served as a member of the National University Telecommunications Network (NUTN) Advisory Board and is currently a member of the SUNY Plattsburgh Alumni Association Board of Directors, the Faculty Council on Teaching and Technology (FACT2), and the Advisory Board for the SUNY Information Technology Exchange Center (ITEC). Kim received her bachelor's degree in Computer Science from SUNY Plattsburgh and master's degree in Education in College Student Personnel from the College of Saint Rose.

Ms. Lisa Miles Raposo, State University of New York Center for Professional Development

Lisa Miles Raposo is the Assistant Director of the State University of New York Center for Professional Development (SUNY CPD) where she is responsible for daily operations of the Center and its Academic Programs staff. Her team provides training and professional development opportunities for faculty, librarians, and instructional support staff throughout the 64-campus State University of New York system. Lisa chairs the Program Planning Committee for the largest SUNY Conference, the Annual SUNY Conference on Instruction and Technology (CIT), and manages the Certificate Program Development for Teaching Faculty. Lisa began her career at SUNY as a Reference and Instruction Librarian at SUNY Institute of Technology. Lisa has a Bachelors Degree in English Communications from Le Moyne College, located in Syracuse, New York, and earned her Masters in Library Science from Syracuse University.

Community-driven, Competency-based Certificate Programs for Professional Development

Abstract

In the SUNY Center for Professional Development, we are moving away from a reactive "responding to requests" approach to programming towards a more proactive approach of community-based needs assessment and deliberate program development to drive and project offerings. To accomplish this, we are developing a series of competency-based professional development certificate programs for faculty and staff in key roles throughout our university system. A hallmark of our program development is the way in which we are engaging communities of practice across our campuses to determine where programs are needed, to define the competencies required for faculty and staff to be effective in the specified roles, and to determine what the instructional activities are to achieve the competencies. We believe this will increase the relevance of the programs and will ensure that there is a built in audience for the programs once they are developed. We are also using a consistent program development template for all of our programs and have a common set of parameters for the program delivery and support to ensure scalability, allowing us to manage multiple simultaneous program offerings. This paper will describe the processes and steps taken to assess the professional development needs of our target audiences, determine which programs to offer, and engage the stakeholder communities in program development, delivery, and assessment. Examples of specific programs developed and delivered will be shared along with challenges and lessons learned.

Business Rationale

The State University of New York (SUNY) is the largest comprehensive university system in the US with 64 campuses geographically distributed across the state of New York. SUNY has faculty and staff across all the campuses with common professional development and training needs that are met in a variety of ways. Due the diversity in size and scope of the SUNY campuses, the level and degree to which each campus provides professional development for its staff varies greatly. Some campuses have well developed and staffed centers for professional development, faculty development, and teaching and learning. However, some campuses have professional development as only a portion of an individual's job responsibilities.

Across the system, there are many communities of practice (CoPs) that exist to support faculty and staff in roles that are common on all of the campuses. Some of these CoPs have been in existence for a long time, while others are new or emerging in response to trends in higher ed. The degree to which SUNY CoPs provide professional development for their members also

varies and usually manifests itself in the sharing of information and hosting of annual conferences, at which presentations come primarily from the community members. In many cases, however, the onus is on the individual to reach out to their community for assistance. We often hear that individuals on the campuses, particularly new professionals, would like to connect with and be mentored by seasoned professionals within the system to get the benefit of their SUNY knowledge and perspective.

In terms of formal professional development courses and programs, there are some available, but many are passive and designed to increase awareness or understanding; participation does not usually ensure competency development. As a result of this and other factors, professional development is largely driven by the individual interests and dependent upon the availability of funding campus by campus, as well as on the willingness of others within the system to share information and best practices. Additionally, while there is a Center for Professional Development, not all professional development across SUNY is offered or tracked centrally, so impact is difficult to measure.

In response to the range of challenges being faced, the SUNY Center for Professional Development (CPD) has decided to develop and implement a series of competency-based certificate programs to address common and recurring professional development needs for roles that exist within targeted CoPs across the system.

Approach

Building on s successful course development model for online professional master's degree programs at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute[1], the SUNY CPD is taking a formal curriculum development approach to identifying and developing the programs and to ensure that regular assessment will be a required component of each program. Additionally, there is an opportunity to leverage the SUNY communities of practices to inform the curriculum development and assessment, and our approach is accounting for that. The specific elements of the approach are outlined below:

- Use of SUNY communities of practice and community leaders to determine highest priority professional development needs (roles and emphasis of programs), provide input for curriculum development, and participate in ongoing program assessment and new development
- Identify programs for roles with common and recurring professional development needs across the system to leverage development and delivery for maximum impact
- Emphasize competency-based program development to increase expectation of impact on performance

- Place priority on use of experts within SUNY for instruction to realize benefits of "Systemness" by encouraging mentoring and collaboration that will benefit the individual, their campus, and SUNY
- Employ a common program development template that promotes the development of core competencies and an outcome-driven curriculum and assessment
- Allow for flexibility to account for the unique aspects of each SUNY CoP as appropriate
- Allow for the option to include a certificate credential for non-credit CPD certificates, formal CEUs, and college undergraduate and graduate credit as appropriate for each community

Roles and Responsibilities

In considering who would need to be involved in the development, delivery, and support of these certificate programs, it was clear that this would need to be a collaboration between the SUNY CPD, our sister SUNY Organizations, and SUNY Communities of Practice. CPD Leadership reached out to two other departments who have already established strong ties with several CoPs in the System. The Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS) serves SUNY Librarians and Library staff, while the SUNY Learning Network (SLN) provides leadership to distance learning and instructional design professionals on the campuses. The audiences served by OLIS and SLN overlap with target CPD audiences, and therefore, it was natural to partner with these SUNY organizations and seek ways to collaborate on the overall program design and development. All three organizations operate in a similar reporting structure and ultimately through the SUNY System office as CPD. To formally establish the partnership with SLN and OLIS, a joint project leadership team was established with representation from all organizations and each organization has taken the lead on a subset of the programs being developed.

Once the team defined our Certificate Programs scope and common approach, we needed to conduct outreach to SUNY CoPs. In order to make it clear who would be responsible for what and to minimize the potential for confusion throughout the process, we outlined the roles and responsibilities of both CPD and CoPs.

The SUNY CPD provides leadership and coordination for the following:

- o Program development
- o Curriculum development approach and process
- o Program planning and promotion
- o Contracts with instructors and vendors for instruction
- o Provision of online learning environment
- o Program delivery and support
- o Support of all program logistics
- o Registration and certificate tracking

- o Management of program finances
- o Program evaluation and assessment

The SUNY CPD relies heavily on the engagement of SUNY CoPs for input on the following:

- o Identification of programs
- o Curriculum development and certificate completion requirements
- o Identification of instructors/providers
- o Determination of delivery mode and format
- o Determination of whether or not to pursue a formal credit option
- o Ongoing program evaluation and assessment

Some of the principles of the DACUM (Develop A CUrriculuM) curriculum development model for staff development[2] are used here, namely the use of expert workers to identify the tasks and skills, which we identify as competencies, needed to perform effectively in their role. We use the collective expertise of the CoP to arrive at a consensus on competencies, learning outcomes, and identify the deliverables needed to ensure competency attainment. As cited by Honda[3], the DACUM Process " establishes an excellent baseline from which to develop any training curriculum," and "access to expert resources when developing the curriculum is critical." We are finding this to be the case as well.

Program Development Process

The SUNY CPD has developed a framework for program development at the certificate level that is used with each CoP and takes them step by step through a consistent process to ensure that there is emphasis placed on early identification of learning objectives, competency development, customization for the community in delivery and format, and regular assessment both at the course and program level. The template is adapted from the process used in the RPI Course Development Model and is customized for the SUNY environment and culture. The steps in the SUNY CPD template are depicted in Diagram 1 and described in more detail below.
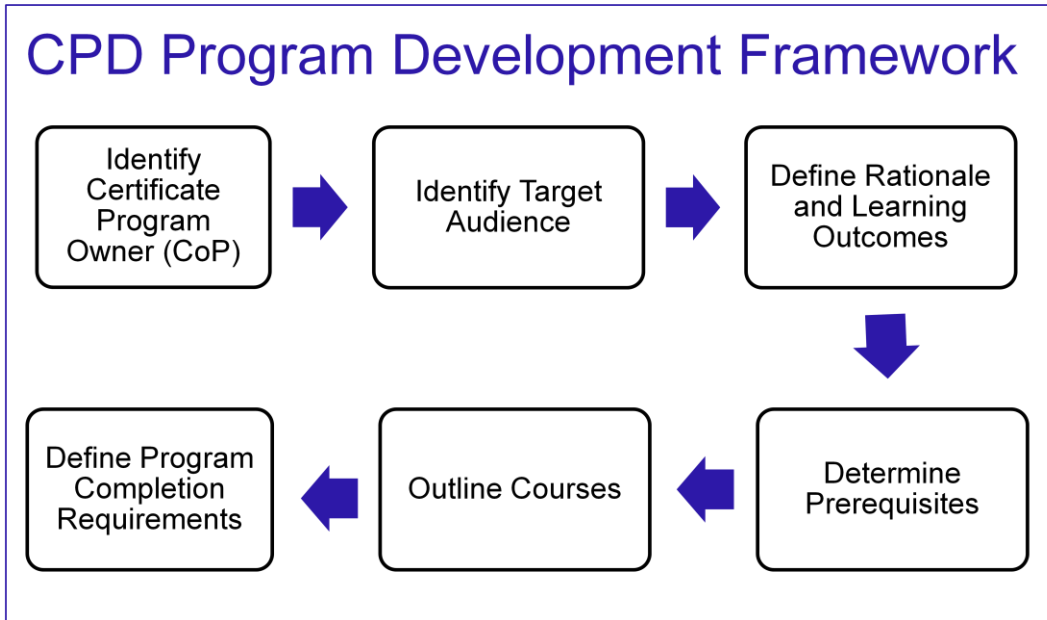
CPD Program Development Framework

Diagram 1 – CPD Program Development Framework

A. Identify Certificate Program Owner (Who is the entity on the program side who will be responsible for the final approval of the certificate and will be responsible for any updates or changes to the content – for example, this is usually the name of a formal CoP)

B. Identify Target Audience for the Program (Who should enroll in this program?)
     1. What are their titles?
     2. In what types of organizations do they work?
     3. What roles do they play in their organizations?

C. Program Description
     1. Rationale (Why is this certificate program needed and what functional responsibilities will be able to be supported if someone completes this program?)
     2. Learning Outcomes to be Accomplished (What will people who complete the certificate program be able to do, including what competencies will they have gained?)

D. Prerequisite Knowledge (are there any prerequisite skills or knowledge needed to be successful in completing this program?)

E. Courses that would be developed through a series of learning activities to achieve the learning outcomes/competencies
     1. Course 1 (learning outcome/competency)
          a. Learning activity 1 and assessment 1

   b. Learning activity 2 and assessment 2
   c. Etc.
   d. Delivery mode (F2F, Online, Blended)
   e. Instructor
  2. Course 2 (learning outcome/competency)
   a. Learning activity 1 and assessment 1
   b. Learning activity 2 and assessment 2
   c. Etc.
   d. Delivery mode (F2F, Online, Blended)
   e. Instructor
  3. Course 3 (learning outcome/competency)
   a. Learning activity 1 and assessment 1
   b. Learning activity 2 and assessment 2
   c. Etc.
   d. Delivery mode (F2F, Online, Blended)
   e. Instructor
  4. Etc.

F. Program Completion Requirements (Does there need to be any assessment of learning outcomes or is there a capstone requirement to award a certificate, or is the certificate awarded solely based on program attendance and completion of each course?)

Implementation Considerations based on experience two years into this

In thinking about how to embark on the implementation of a program of this scale and scope across the SUNY System and with limited staff resources within the SUNY CPD, we considered very carefully how to be the most efficient and effective in our efforts. Partnering with SLN and OLIS was the initial step in expanding our program development resources. Next we had to present and get buy in for approach with the various SUNY Communities with which we were already engaged. This is a very new concept for professional development across SUNY and it also represented a new role for CPD. We continue to spend a great deal of time presenting the concept at conferences and meeting with CoP governance bodies to find out if the concept makes sense to them and if they are willing to engage with us in the way we need them to. Fortunately, the response has been positive, and we continually gain the support we feel is needed to proceed.

Due to the scale and scope of this initiative, the need for communication across the system, and the dramatic change in approach to program development, we decided to employ formal project management principles to our work.   This included:

- Identification of a project sponsor
- Identification of a project manager
- Establishment of a project team
- Definition of roles for the project sponsor, project manager, and project team members

- Development of both a project proposal and a project plan, which include details about scope, resources, risk, assumptions, and other project considerations
- Establishment of a communication plan
- Development of a project timeline w/milestones and deliverables, including a change management process
- Regular project team meetings
- Project evaluation

This approach has not only formalized much of what we are doing but has also helped us stay on track, remaining true to the goals of the initiative.

One of the most helpful things we did was create a program development template that outlined the steps in the process that we have to go through from identifying the CoP we will work with to the ongoing program assessment. This has helped to ensure that we are developing the certificate programs with a consistent approach across multiple CoPs, to maintain the emphasis we wanted to have on outcome-driven, competency-based programs with regular assessment, and to facilitate the program development process for individuals who may not be familiar or comfortable with curriculum development. It has proven to be very helpful to have lock-step process with a template that has detail about what is needed at each stage along the way.

The community-driven aspect of our approach has been much more time consuming than we anticipated, and we are finding that not all of the COPs place the same priority on the program development. Many of them are doing this on top of their already busy jobs and with staff reductions across the system; this is a challenge. Because we value the community input, they have bought into the approach, and we see the value of their unique perspectives, we have adjusted our timelines to accommodate their availability. However, this has pushed our timelines for development and initial delivery out further than we originally planned.

It has been extremely important for us to recognize and allow for the variation in the way each CoP operates and can engage with us. Some have formal governance structures, some have ties into other SUNY System Administration offices, and others are emerging and more informal. Some meet frequently and others not so frequently. Some have annual conferences, while others do not. Lastly, some are very familiar with curriculum development and for others it is a foreign concept. Our ability to adapt to those differences and our willingness to educate them and reinforce the process has been important for the continued progress in each program.

Conclusion

Two years into this process, we have about 15 programs identified to be developed and delivered across a range of technical and academic communities. Two programs have been developed and one has been delivered. We expect several to be launched in the coming year. While we have

only conducted the initial assessments of the first program, the response from the CoPs continues to be positive. We are also gaining increased visibility amongst SUNY System Administration and campus leadership and their response is similarly positive. We hope to come back in a year or two and be able to report on the impact of the programs on individuals, the campuses, and the SUNY System.

Bibliography

1. "A Model for Distance Learning Course Development Promoting Interactivity," S. Bray and K.A. Scalzo. Conference for Industry and Education Collaboration Proceedings, Sarasota, FL, February 2002.
2. "DACUM: A Versatile Competency-Based Framework for Staff Development," J. DeOnna, Journal for Nurses in Staff Development Vol. 18, Issue 1, pp 5-11. January/February 2002.
3. "Honda Finds DACUM Valuable for Training." ASTD Staff, T+D Magazine. March 2013