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# Sustaining transformation: An inquiry of How Course Transformations are Maintained When Instructors Change

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# SUSTAINING TRANSFORMATION:

AN INQUIRY OF HOW COURSE TRANSFORMATIONS  
ARE MAINTAINED WHEN INSTRUCTORS CHANGE

**Nastasha Johnson & Jennifer D. Moss**

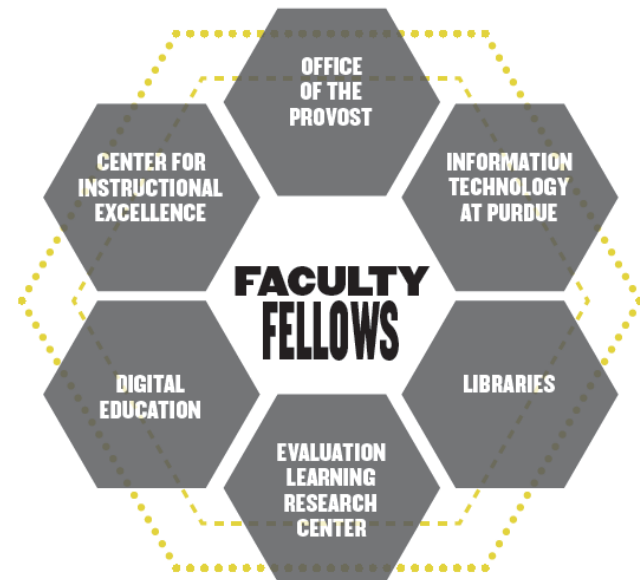
**Purdue University**

# WHO WE ARE AND OUR CONTEXT

- **Nastasha Johnson**
  - Purdue University
  - Libraries, Faculty
  - IMPACT Support Team Member
  
- **Jenny Moss**
  - Purdue University
  - Center for Instructional Excellence, Project Manager
  - Adjunct for College of Education
  - IMPACT Support Team Member
  
- We are working on this project equally and authorship order was determined by a coin flip.

# WHAT IS IMPACT?

- Instruction Matters:  
Purdue's Academic Course Transformation
- IMPACT is Purdue's course transformation program.
- Semester-long
- Examines all aspects of the course
- Collaboration of Center for Instructional Excellence, Libraries, and Teaching and Learning Technologies



## WHAT LED TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Through our work, we became aware that faculty do not always remain in their course or at the institution after they transform their course.

- **Hard Science** – very active visiting professor took a job at another university.
- **Human Science** – very experienced full professor promoted out of teaching.
- **Education** – award-winning assistant clinical professor took a tenure-track job at another university.

## MINIMAL LITERATURE FOUND ON SUSTAINABILITY

- Existing literature does not examine many types of hand-offs.
- Main type discussed was *course coordinator-to-graduate instructor* transition.
- However, faculty do leave courses without advance planning.

# WHY DOES IT MATTER IF FACULTY LEAVE?

- Sustainability of resources invested
  - Money – stipend
  - Time and energy invested by IMPACT Support Team.
  - Time and energy invested by the transforming faculty.
  - Departmental buy-in/course elements
- *Is* the intervention sustained when faculty leave?
- *How* is the intervention sustained when faculty leave?

## OUR RESEARCH QUESTION

- How is sustainability of course transformation addressed when a faculty member hands off a course or a course is received by a different faculty member?



# METHODS

- Interview
- Convenience Sample
  - Identified courses that had gone through course transformation initiative twice.
    - Talked with original transforming faculty where possible and with second faculty member.
  - Asked other IMPACT Support Team members for information about courses that they knew had been transformed and then handed off.
- Project approved by IRB.

## INTERVIEWS

- We scheduled 90 minute slots for interviews.
- Audio recordings were made & notes were taken.
- Where possible, we took them out for coffee or lunch.
- Where possible, we both attended each interview.

## QUESTIONS

- We asked instructors questions in a variety of areas.
  - General teaching experience.
  - Onboarding they enacted or received.
  - What elements of transition they kept/shared & why.
  - Departmental buy-in and available resources.
  - Year of students & core curriculum qualification.

# TRANSCRIPTION

- The audio files were transcribed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- We reviewed the transcripts for clarity and accuracy

## WHO DID WE INTERVIEW?

- We interviewed 13 instructors including:
  - Course Coordinators
  - Continuing Lecturer
  - Clinical Faculty
  - Assistant Professors (non-tenured)
  - Associate Professors (tenured)
  - Full Professors (tenured/possibly chair)

## TERMS WE ARE USING

- **Sustainability** – when the first transforming faculty member shares information about content and pedagogy with a new faculty member who will be teaching the course
- **Handing off** – when a faculty member gives up a course
- **Receiving** – when a faculty member is assigned to teach a course that was transformed by another

## TRENDS IN EARLY ANALYSES

- We can identify four levels of intentionality in sustaining course transformations
  - Prototypical
  - High/Standard Bearer
  - Moderate
  - Low

## PROTOTYPICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Hard Science Course example
- Has a sustainability “trail” that goes back more than 15 years, well before the transforming faculty member entered IMPACT.
- Job of IMPACT faculty member was to bridge gap since he had worked with original faculty.
- Course coordinator also has significant institutional “memory.”



## HIGH SUSTAINABILITY

- Applied Science Course example
- We interviewed both instructors.
- The hand off from first to second instructor was planned.
- The receiving instructor worked remote for the first year, but visited campus once a month and sat in on the course for the year.

## MODERATE SUSTAINABILITY

- Liberal Arts Course example
- We interviewed the receiving faculty member
- She had been on the team for the course under the prior faculty member.
- She had a great deal of institutional knowledge about the course and she feels that was a big part of her being chosen.
- She is maintaining some things from the transformation and changing other things.

## LOW SUSTAINABILITY

- Liberal Arts Course example
- Faculty member we interviewed went through IMPACT several years after the first transformation.
- In this discipline there is no expectation that course content and pedagogy are shared.
- Academic freedom is very important in this department.

## LOW SUSTAINABILITY

- Applied Science Course example
- Our interviewee was teaching the course.
- Then, a different faculty member went through course redesign program to improve tenure chances.
- After 4 semesters, our interviewee began to teach the course again and then went through IMPACT afterward.
- No attempt was made to share information and sustain the initial transformation.

## HIGH – LOW, WITH A TWIST

- Applied Science Department example
- One course had a succession of faculty members and the sustainability was at one point high and then became low.
- When the initial faculty member transformed the course, he worked closely with two other faculty members to see that the changes he made were reflected in the other two sections of the course.
- Initial faculty was eventually promoted and handed things to one of the included faculty.
- This faculty member retired soon after. Minimal effort was put into sharing the initial transformation with the new faculty.

## PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- Attention to sustainability is more varied than we expected.
- Surprised to see a lack of sharing of pedagogical knowledge and experiences in other departments.
- Our preliminary findings may influence how faculty are asked to share what they learn through participating in our program.

## NEXT STEPS

- This is only a preliminary analysis.
- We will use content analysis to examine transcripts.
- We also plan additional analyses from larger database of instructors who are teaching courses that have been transformed.
- Develop recommendations and practices for course transformation programs to enhance the likelihood of sustainability of transformations when faculty change.