Using a Community of Practice to Support Change in Curricular Management
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Experience:

- 2 years in the Office of the Registrar; UW-Madison
- 7 years in advising; UW-Madison
Session Agenda

• About UW-Madison
• The Need
• An Introduction to Communities of Practice
• Fall 2015: The Launch
• Our Next Steps
UW-Madison enrolls over 43,000 students annually...
• …for a combined 1,094,000+ credit hours annually
• …enrollment occurs under 14 different Schools/Colleges “organizations”
• …under 180+ subject listings
We have a (very) decentralized curricular and enrollment community:

• Over 250 individuals have access to curricular build pages
• Nearly 400 individuals have access to enrollment update pages
• Over 100 special event schedulers
The Problem:

• Curricular & Enrollment representatives are dispersed (physically, HR); they do not know each other.

• C&E representatives experiencing common pain-points, but do not know how to advance concerns or in a unified manner (or that others were experiencing their problems).
The Problem:

• Structure not conducive for communication between the RO and C&E representatives (announcements rather than dialogue).

• No means of on-going training or professional development.
Our Solution: A Community of Practice

“A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who voluntarily engage with each other in a particular subject domain for a sustained period of time, developing aligned practices and imaginations of what is (and is not) possible.”

(Wenger 1998)
Our Solution: A Community of Practice

“A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who voluntarily engage with each other in a particular subject domain for a sustained period of time, developing aligned practices and imaginations of what is (and is not) possible.”

(Wenger 1998)
Communities of Practice…

• … help drive strategy
• … start new lines of business
• … solve problems quickly
• … transfer best practices
• … develop professional skills

(Wenger and Snyder 1999)
Principles of Communities of Practice

• Design for evolution
• Dialogue between inside and outside perspectives
• Invite different levels of participation
• Develop public and private community spaces
• Focus on value
• Combine familiarity and excitement
• Create a rhythm for the community

(Wenger 2002)
# How do CoPs compare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What’s the purpose?</th>
<th>Who belongs?</th>
<th>What holds it together?</th>
<th>Duration?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
<td>To develop members’ capabilities; to exchange knowledge</td>
<td>Members who select themselves</td>
<td>Passion, Commitment, and identification with the group’s experience</td>
<td>As long as there is interest in maintaining the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Work Group</td>
<td>To deliver a product or service</td>
<td>Everyone who reports to the group’s manager</td>
<td>Job requirements and common goals</td>
<td>Until the next reorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Team</td>
<td>To accomplish a specified task</td>
<td>Employees assigned by senior management</td>
<td>The project’s milestones and goals</td>
<td>Until the project has been completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Network</td>
<td>To collect and pass on business information</td>
<td>Friends and business acquaintances</td>
<td>Mutual needs</td>
<td>As long as people have a reason to connect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Kick-Off

Fall 2015 Curricular & Enrollment Representative Forum

• Over 130 attendees: internal and external to the Office of the Registrar

• An Introduction from Senior Leadership (Vice Provost for Enrollment Management)

• Event was a mix of community building/networking, updates, and feedback opportunities
Our Community Responded Well!

We asked attendees to complete a post-event survey to provide feedback on the initial kick-off, help in planning future events, and gauge interest in future events.
We Got Work to Do...

- 49 suggestions to the prompt “What could the Office of the Registrar work on to help your role”.
- Some ideas were already in progress.
- Some training issues came to light.
- This exercise is helping to drive office priorities.
We Have Help: Our CoP!

• Four Community of Practice conveners to organize surveys, brown-bags, and semesterly forums

• A virtual space for dialogue amongst C&E representatives when they need it

• Practitioners eager to mentor new curricular and enrollment coordinators
What We Are Doing and Our Next Steps

• Implemented an “Open Lab” during final call – creating a physical space for the community to network, transfer best practices, and seek in-person assistance from the RO.

• Created hands-on continued training opportunities co-facilitated by the RO and campus colleagues.

• Increased C&E representation on Office of the Registrar tasks, projects, and work teams.

• Institutioned semesterly Curricular and Enrollment Representative Forums. (Where campus are asking to engage this group!)
In Summary

Communities of Practice...

☑️... help drive strategy
☑️... start new lines of business
☑️... solve problems quickly  (and identify problems)
☑️... transfer best practices
☑️... develop professional skills
All Alliance presentations will be available for download from the conference site.
THANK YOU!