

## **Award Title**

University of South Carolina's University 101 Program Instructor Development Process

## **Awards Categories**

Administrative, Assessment, Information Technology, Fundraising, Professional Development and related

## **Executive Summary**

University 101 Programs at the University of South Carolina was born of the desire to help faculty better understand students. In the 38 years since its inception, University 101 has impacted the learning, transition, retention, and success of countless students; has created a sense of collegiality across the campus; and has helped to enhance teaching effectiveness. University 101 Programs is truly a cross-campus experience, one that incorporates faculty, staff, and students from many departments, offices, and majors.

A dedicated and innovative corps of instructors is key to making University 101 effective. Recently, University 101 Programs has reaffirmed its commitment to the training and development of instructors to improve the instructor experience, as well as the effectiveness of University 101 for student success. Through the use of evaluation, collaboration, innovation, and assessment, University 101 Programs has contributed to a noted improvement in the success of students and instruction.

To enhance the instructor experience, University 101 Programs, and its campus partners, revised the initial instructor development workshop, created a Faculty Resource Manual, built an instructor intranet, and initiated an annual one-day conference for all instructors. These resources have been developed to connect University 101 instructors to each other, to enhance instructor effectiveness, and to encourage innovation in the classroom. Assessment of these resources has resulted in positive feedback from instructors, and noted improvements in achieving course learning outcomes.

University 101 Programs has utilized assessment data to provide guidance in program improvement to address student needs and/or critical campus issues. For example, data from the First-Year Initiative Survey guided the content of the 2010 Teaching Experience Workshops and the 2010-2012 Transitions textbook, to better prepare instructors to serve student needs. Interviews with high-performing instructors (as reported by students on the First-Year Initiative survey) were utilized to identify best practices in achieving particular course learning outcomes. These innovations have been the direct result of collaborations with campus partners and the application of assessment data.

The implementation of these new resources and initiatives has garnered notable results in the course evaluation process. For example, more students reported University 101 to be a valuable experience in 2009 than 2008, with 70.5% reporting that they would recommend the course to other students (verses 66.3% in 2008). The quality of instructors, as reported by students, rose

from 2008 to 2009, with over 88% of students recommending their instructor for future U101 classes, and reporting that their instructor was well prepared for class (94.2%). Finally, evaluation of the new initiatives for professional development has resulted in outstanding reviews from University 101 instructors.

The University 101 Program continues to enhance the student experience through the professional development of its instructors. By involving instructors in the creation of knowledge and resources, University 101 has created partnerships with departments and individuals across campus. This, coupled with a rigorous assessment agenda, has developed the University 101 Program into one of the most influential experiences, for both instructors and students, at the University of South Carolina.

### **Award Description**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S UNIVERSITY 101 PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The University 101 Program at the University of South Carolina has a long history of helping students make successful transitions to college. The origins of the first-year seminar are grounded in professional development. One of the primary driving forces for the creation of University 101 was a desire to “humanize the university environment” through an effort to help faculty better understand students. As the seminar evolved to address the changing needs of students, faculty development activities remained a key aspect of the program. The University 101 Program steadfastly supports and advances THE INSTITUTIONAL MISSION of “educat[ing] the state’s diverse citizens through teaching, research, creative activity, and service.” The instructor development initiatives provide lifelong learning opportunities for faculty and staff, with enhanced student learning as the ultimate beneficiary of these efforts.

Recently, a renewed focus on instructor development has reinvigorated the program. Significant progress has been made to enhance the quality of instruction (see assessment data for details). These improvements can be attributed to the many new instructor development initiatives, including significant changes to the existing “Teaching Experience Workshop,” the creation of an annual one-day instructor conference, and the development of a faculty resource manual. Today, the program is an institutional point of distinction. Its instructor training provides high-quality professional development activities for faculty, student affairs professionals, campus administrators, and graduate and undergraduate peer educators at the University of South Carolina and across the USC system. See the model describing the annual professional development cycle at <http://sc.edu/univ101/instructors/pd/index.html>

EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER RESOURCES is central to the instructor development activities as well as a valuable tool for the development and implementation of new initiatives. In 2009, a SharePoint intranet was launched as an electronic method of supporting and developing instructors. The site provides a forum for discussion, a place to share resources, and a mechanism for distributing information. Instructors have 24/7 access to resources which include videos, powerpoints, and a 500+page Faculty Resource Manual (see table of contents at [http://sc.edu/fye/publications/bb/ar/pdf/FRM\\_Content.pdf](http://sc.edu/fye/publications/bb/ar/pdf/FRM_Content.pdf) ). The program also utilizes social

media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), and instructor listservs, to share highlights of assessment findings, relevant information on today's students, details on campus activities supporting course goals, and reminders about instructor development events.

University 101 is a program with campus-wide investment and involvement. COLLABORATION WITH ACADMEIC AFFAIRS AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS is a program hallmark. Individuals and units across campus collaborate to support student learning and success (e.g. Writing Center, academic advisors in all academic units, Center for Teaching Excellence) through involvement in instructor workshops, classroom presentations, and resource development. More than 40 individuals from across campus were involved in the creation of the 500+ page faculty resource manual, and 31 campus partners participated in the annual instructor conference. Additionally, the instructor corps is composed of 150 faculty, professional staff, and administrators from 59 departments across campus.

Instructors and campus partners continue to develop ORIGINAL AND CREATIVE resources and curricular materials that enhance the University 101 experience for both instructors and students. An annual influx of new instructors ensures a constant stream of novel and creative approaches in the course curriculum. New ideas, active learning pedagogies, and engaging strategies are shared with both seasoned and new instructors through our conferences, faculty meetings, workshops, and intranet.

Assessment and faculty development are inextricably linked. INNOVATIVE AND PRACTICAL USE OF RESEARCH AND/OR ASSESSMENT DATA LINKING TO COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES provides guidance for program improvement. Assessment findings directly inform decisions about the content for instructor development activities, and thus DEMONSTRATES SUCCESS IN ADDRESSING STUDENT NEEDS AND/OR CRITICAL CAMPUS ISSUES. Assessment helps drive recommendations on which course learning outcomes need additional attention, as well as the most effective educational methods for achieving those outcomes. Examples of how assessment data are applied to our faculty development efforts and the addressing of student needs include:

- Results of the First-Year Initiative (FYI) Survey indicated that use of engaging pedagogies and the usefulness of course readings were the greatest predictors of overall course effectiveness. As such, we focused our faculty development the past two years on these areas. The keynote address at our 2009 instructor conference was on active learning. We added a significant unit to the Teaching Experience Workshop on this topic so that all new instructors are versed on active and engaging teaching methods. We also included a plenary session in 2010 on how to effectively utilize course readings. Based on feedback from students and instructors, we also rewrote and redesigned our common textbook, Transitions, to be more useable as a classroom text.
- By using the FYI Survey, we were able to identify course sections with high scores in achieving certain learning outcomes. We identified the top 5 performing instructors in helping students manage time and priorities. We interviewed these instructors (and some of their students) to ascertain what they did to reach this outcome. Themes were developed and shared with instructors. We also held concurrent sessions on this topic at our instructor conference and summer workshop series.

- By assessing educational methods, we have determined which approaches to covering a topic work better than others. In fall 2009, 61 sections participated in a library presentation as a method of fostering information literacy. Other sections utilized a variety of other means including library scavenger hunts, research assignments, and other in-class demonstrations. After comparing responses on the FYI Survey, we learned that students who participated in the library presentation were more likely to report that UNIV 101 contributed to their ability to find what they need through the library than students who did not participate in the presentation. This information was shared with instructors at the annual spring workshops.

Thus, a strong and intentional faculty development program is a major contributor to the University 101 program's ability to create a **POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING, TRANSITIONS, RETENTION, AND SUCCESS**. When compared with students that do not enroll in University 101, students who take the seminar consistently earn higher first-year GPAs, have higher persistence rates, and have higher five-year graduation rates. What makes these findings more remarkable is that students who enroll tend to have lower high school grades, SAT scores, and predicated grade point averages.

Since University 101 was created at the University of South Carolina in 1972, it has served tens of thousands of students, and at the same time, several thousand faculty and staff have participated in professional development activities. Considered a point of distinction for the institution, University 101 is highlighted frequently in student recruitment literature and in publications for external audiences. Program administrators serve on significant University committees (e.g. general education, academic programs liaison, assistant and associate deans' council, SACS standards). Perhaps the most recent and significant **EVIDENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY** is that University 101 is evolving as a key component of the Quality Enhancement Plan being developed for the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (2010).

The professional development experiences provided in the University 101 Program have involved faculty and staff at the University of South Carolina and ultimately enhanced the success of students and the quality of life at the institution. Many traditional barriers between departments and units typical at a large, decentralized university have been expunged through these professional development efforts. Individuals who might not normally cross paths become colleagues who share a common purpose. A supportive and caring community exists where lifelong learning for professionals, and learning and success for students go hand in hand.

### **Assessment Data**

University of South Carolina's University 101 Program Instructor Development Process

### **EVIDENCE OF STUDENT SUCCESS**

University 101 and its faculty development components generate a positive impact on student learning, transitions, retention, and success. The most recent data indicate that:

- The average first-year GPA of UNIV101 students in fall 2008 was 3.24. This is significantly higher than those who did not enroll (3.17;  $p=.02$ ).
- The one-year persistence rate of UNIV101 students in fall 2008 was 87.6%. This is compared with 84.6% for those that did not enroll ( $p=.02$ ).
- The five-year graduation rate for fall 2004 UNIV101 students was 64.5%, as compared to 63.2% for students who did not enroll. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (2009), 92% of UNIV 101 students reported that they would choose to attend USC again if they had it do to over (compared with 85.5% of non-participants;  $p=.01$ ).

## EVIDENCE OF INCREASED QUALITY

Improvements were seen in key performance indicators for University 101 from 2008 to 2009, which are in part due to the significant enhancements that were made in the instructor development strategy during this time period. For instance:

- 70% of students ( $M=3.94/5.00$ ) in fall 2009 reported on the end-of-course evaluation (EOCE) that the course was a valuable experience - an increase from 66% ( $M=3.80$ ) in 2008.
- 70.5% of students ( $M=3.96/5.00$ ) in fall 2009 reported on the end-of-course evaluations (EOCE) that they would recommend the course to other students - an increase from 66.3% ( $M=3.82$ ) in 2008. Overall course effectiveness, as measured on the First-Year Initiative Survey improved from a mean of 4.86 in 2008 to 4.94 in 2009.

Tremendous progress has been made on improving the quality of instruction in UNIV101. Scores on the "Instructor Index," a factor consisting of 7 questions from our end-of-course evaluation, improved from 4.50 in 2008 to 4.62 in 2009. More specifically - 88% ( $M = 4.54$ ) would recommend their instructor for future U101 classes. This is up from 86.2% ( $M=4.44$ ) in 2008.

- 94.2% ( $M = 4.68$ ) reported their instructor was well prepared for class. This is up from 91.5% ( $M=4.54$ ) in 2008.
- 92.2% ( $M = 4.63$ ) reported their instructor encouraged meaningful class discussions. This is up from 89.3% ( $M=4.51$ ) in 2008.
- 94.4% ( $M = 4.71$ ) reported their instructor showed enthusiasm for the course. This is up from 90.8% ( $M=4.57$ ) in 2008.
- 88.9% ( $M = 4.51$ ) reported their instructor gave useful feedback on assignments. This is up from 85.8% ( $M=4.37$ ) in 2008.
- 87.7% ( $M = 4.50$ ) reported their instructor presented material in an interesting or interactive way. This is up from 84.7% ( $M=4.36$ ) in 2008.

- 94.3% (M = 4.72) reported their instructor treated students with respect. This is up from 93.2% (M=4.65) in 2008.

In addition, the Engaging Pedagogies factor on the First-Year Initiative Survey improved from a mean of 5.03 in 2008 to 5.13 in 2009. This factor represents the degree to which students report that the course included (a) a variety of teaching methods, (b) meaningful class discussions, (c) challenging assignments, (d) productive use of class time, (e) encouragement to speak in class, (f) encouragement for students to work together, and (g) meaningful homework.

## ASSESSMENT OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE WORKSHOP(for new instructors)

Feedback on the Teaching Experience Workshop was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of participants (n = 48) in the last three workshops agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop was valuable (M = 4.94/5.00).

### BUILDING CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE (for all instructors scheduled to teach the upcoming year)

96% of respondents (n=99) to the faculty survey reported that the 2010 Building Connections Conference was a valuable experience. Comments included:

- “I love the concurrent sessions and appreciate knowing that some will be offered over the summer. This way I do not feel as if I am ‘missing’ something. I met some new colleagues and exchanged a number of ideas with them.”
- “I loved hearing what the top three candidates for the Outstanding Teaching Award had to say. They are excellent role models for the rest of us and gave some great tips that can be incorporated into our classes.”
- “I also like the camaraderie that comes with the conference. We often all do our own jobs in our own little University-world and forget that there are MANY other caring, wonderful instructors out there. I love meeting these folks at this conference and feed off of their ideas, energy and even benefit from commiserating about our challenges. I am always impressed with the time and effort the U101 staff put into making this a meaningful experience. It is always well worth attending and models exactly the kind of ideals you want us to bring to our U101 classes. Thank you to all of you who never fail to support us and help us find ways to improve!”
- “The conference overall was very informative and helpful. It's just what I need to kick start my serious planning.”

### FACULTY MEETINGS (for current instructors during teaching term)

91% of respondents to our faculty survey (n=69) reported that the faculty meetings were valuable. Statements included:

- “I enjoyed hearing about the great ideas some of the instructors used in their class. Their ideas gave me guidance to the types of activities to use in the future.”
- “It's always good to get together with other 101 teachers to trade ideas and teaching strategies on how to connect with your students.”
- “It was great to hear what other faculty members were doing in the classroom. By listening and learning about what other teachers were doing in the classroom I was able to modify parts of my lessons therefore making them more valuable to the students.”
- “Teaching can be lonely -- these meetings reminded me that I was not alone! It is so important that we (teachers) have a learning community just like our students do. Thank you so much for providing these meetings.”

#### FACULTY RESOURCE MANUAL (FRM) (for all instructors)

On the 2009 Faculty Survey, 94% of respondents reported the manual to be “valuable” or “very valuable.”

- “Absolutely wonderful resource.”
- “Helpful in answering ‘How To’ questions and provided awesome resources.”
- “I believe that if the manual was paired with the ability to instruct there is no instructor who should not have had an effective and productive section, everything could be found there.”
- “I could not have asked for a better resource/guide on everything related to the learning outcomes and the University.”
- “It was a wonderful resource...I do not know what I would have done without it honestly.”
- “This is the BEST thing we have ever done for U101.”
- “This was the most helpful resource I could imagine.”
- “A resource I consistently used throughout the semester.”
- “The FRM was my constant companion while developing my lesson plans this semester
- “It really showed that the U101 staff wants us to succeed as instructors.”
- “Thank you for creating a book that is FULL of material that is useful and up to date. This book should be called the cookbook for creating the perfect class!”
- “Your team did an excellent job of pulling together relevant research, practical application activities and resources to help instructors.”