

Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Steven Michels

January 24, 2018

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From left are Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning Steven Michels, School of Communication & Media Arts Director James Castonguay, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Rupendra Paliwal and Office of Digital Learning Director Jaya Kannan at Sacred Heart University's Summer Institute. The new ACUE partnership will enhance faculty development programs such as this.

This semester, Sacred Heart University's [Office of Digital Learning](#) (ODL) has launched a partnership with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to equip faculty across multiple disciplines with the instructional skills shown to promote student motivation, learning and persistence. Faculty who complete the program, which complements the University's ongoing faculty development, are awarded a nationally recognized Certificate in Effective College Instruction that is co-endorsed by ACUE and the American Council on Education (ACE).

Rupendra Paliwal, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at SHU, initiated this accredited ACUE course on effective teaching practices as an important faculty development initiative. In keeping with SHU's focus on academic excellence and desire to celebrate the teaching practices of its faculty, the course will give an opportunity for faculty participants to develop as reflective practitioners. "Sacred Heart has always been known for its commitment to teaching," says Steven Michels, assistant provost for teaching and learning, who worked with

Paliwal to bring the course to SHU. “Our partnership with ACUE is simply one example of how dedicated our faculty are to improving their craft.”

The course complements our existing faculty development initiatives, such as the week-long Summer Institute. It further provides peer-collaboration opportunities with the in-person enrichment programming we’ve developed to frame the online course experience, says Jaya Kannan, director of the Office Digital Learning. “These events will give faculty the opportunity to learn together and share concrete examples of what is happening in their classrooms.”

ACUE’s Course in Effective Teaching Practices is based on more than three decades of research that shows how effective teaching improves learning for all students. The Office of Digital Learning will coordinate this course for this first cohort of 30 SHU faculty participants, in the 25 learning modules throughout this spring 2018 semester. The course will be jointly facilitated by Michels, Kannan and Wendy Bjerke (Digital Learning Faculty Fellow and Associate Professor, CHP). The goal is to get SHU faculty to reflect on their practices, develop new strategies and learn from their peers about innovative practices going on in SHU classrooms. The course will culminate in May 2018 with a three-day collaborative workshop for faculty members to incorporate evidence-based techniques into existing course designs.

Aligned with the latest research in cognition and adult learning, ACUE’s course addresses more than 200 evidence-based teaching practices, covering how to design an effective course, establish a productive learning environment, use active learning techniques, promote higher-order thinking and utilize assessments to inform instruction and promote learning.

“I volunteered for participation in ACUE’s comprehensive Course in Effective Teaching Practices to enhance and refine my current pedagogical skills so I could best help my students succeed,” said SHU nursing professor Sue Goncalves. “As a champion for lifelong learning, I jumped at the opportunity offered to me to become credentialed and strengthen my own evidence-based teaching practices and level of expertise.”

ACUE’s Community of Professional Practice provides continued support for educators to grow in the scholarship of teaching through member forums, expert webinars, weekly newsletters, the “Q” blog and “office hours” with leading scholars in college instruction.

“We strive to get faculty thinking about the fundamentals of good teaching and stay abreast of recent trends in higher-ed. We are hopeful that more faculty will take the course in the future,” says Kannan. “It enriches teaching, but the real expected outcome is that it improves students’ learning.”

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