

Self-Review, April 8, 2022

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Participation in College Initiatives

When the Director of General Education and HU/SS Department Chair, Mike Grigevich departed from the college in the middle of the Fall 2021 semester, I unofficially took on many aspects of his role to help the college during a challenging transition that transcended and included the transitions involved in this particular department.

Aware of my continued formal role as an instructor (not formally as an acting chair), I reached out to other faculty members in my department and suggested we choose a participative model with a rotational hierarchy for running department meetings and revisiting curriculum. This helped us to maintain a positive spirit, a sense of continuity, and the maintenance of department standards.

In addition, my role and visibility in three committees were substantially increased, which brought me into an intense period of activity on behalf of the college's mission and its variety of departments and programs. To simplify, I will list the many activities and accomplishments in a numbered list below:

1. Intentional adoption of the role of unofficial flag-carrier for the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HU/SS) during a period of transition and uncertainty. This helped some faculty to choose to stay on until the end of the academic year, which has had a stabilizing effect on the work we needed to continue to carry out.
2. Coordinated and held many meetings related to the work of the Faculty Development Committee (FDC), of which I am chair. These meetings involved discussions and planning around college climate and culture, the creation of trauma-informed environments (originally planned for the current semester, but moved to next fall), the implementation of monthly workshops for faculty in classroom discourse, integration of instructional technology, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), faculty discussion forums for the sharing of best practices.
3. Circulated across departments and programs (mostly through email and online meetings) to generate support and participation in building a unified faculty vision around teaching and learning. The first step involved the design of a survey to gather faculty input, so that we could increase the potential for faculty buy-in to current and upcoming initiatives. In short, I took the responsibility to help build a strong core so that the college could not only survive through the transition, but hopefully thrive due in part to higher morale and commitment among faculty. This work is ongoing, and the goal is still a ways off, but we have begun the work.

4. Held several meetings around the design of new placement tests for incoming students. These placement tests are still in development, and they are being designed with the explicit goal of being equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive so that all students would have an opportunity to take placement tests without any unnecessary barriers. The goal is to be more accurate and student-centered in the placement in ESOL courses, developmental courses, and general education courses.

5. Worked closely with Mozghan Hoisspeur, the Director of Curriculum and Assessment and chair of the Faculty Academic Advisory Committee (FAAC) in the complete re-design of BFCIT's approach to evaluating and assessing the outcomes of its programs, departments, and courses, as well as its approach to faculty development. This involved months of careful collaboration, communicating with stakeholders across the college to gather input, advice, and information, and detailed design of the data tables that program directors and department chairs will use to measure the performance of their programs and departments. Currently, we are asking all departments to weigh in so that the first completed drafts will, in the end, reflect a shared vision for excellence in accordance with BFCIT's stated mission, goals, and Institutional Values. The assessment documents have been renamed to Annual Program Review (APR) and 5-Year Program Review (5PR) to establish branding and continuity.

6. Established CANVAS pages and Microsoft Teams pages with numbered, well-organized folders for the Faculty Development Committee (FDC). I undertook the task of going back a full decade to create "institutional memory" and build a "learning narrative" for current and future faculty to re-establish BFCIT's internal reputation as a teaching and learning college that centers the practice of teaching as its main product. Dr. Loiseau and all members of the FDC are members of these pages and can access the information at any time. This will help with any personnel transitions in the future, so that nobody is left in the lurch.

7. Re-established the official goals of the Faculty Promotion Committee (FPC) in accordance with the BFCIT Course Catalog and Employee Handbook and organized all official promotion-related documents in a Microsoft Teams and CANVAS page so that current and future employees will know where to go to find information. As the FPC was merged with the Faculty Development Committee (FDC), I am the chair of both committees. As chair of the promotion committee, I actively advocated for the promotions process to be re-instituted after the Covid-19 crisis began to recede, arguing that we needed to create a sense of "prestige" for faculty so that more faculty members would be magnetized towards the new vision that the College President Dr. Francis and Dean of Academics, Dr. Loiseau would be able to retain top-tier talent. After creating [a PDF of my own promotion portfolio from 2018](#), I shared it with all promotion candidates and personally advised them in the beginning of the re-instituted promotion process. To facilitate this process, I established a new pilot program called "Promotion Partners", in which I paired each promotion candidate with a member of the Faculty Promotion Committee so that there would be mentorship and guidance and a distributed model of leadership and participation within the committee.

8. Initiated and led the faculty and staff through the process of building the BFCIT College Senate during the crisis that occurred in 2020 when Covid-19 caused major restructuring, loss of student enrollment/revenue, and was close to being either closed or merged with Wentworth Institute. Part of this process was the creation of a strong sense of "identity" for the college's people, which included phone calls and emails to city officials on behalf our collective belief that the college must remain its own entity with an important and unique vision of serving under-represented groups and creating an increasingly diverse workforce for the Greater Boston region while lifting up the communities our students live in. While I wrote the first draft of the BFCIT College Senate Bylaws and Charter, the open Google Doc had a period of comment for over a month, and many staff and faculty contributed to its creation.

Below is the link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OhZxpMMIFMPi1AKN6H8Ca_nnHASuf4kU/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107712192893211657532&rtpof=true&sd=true

9. During the visit by the New England Consortium for Higher Education (NECHE), the accreditation agency responsible for analyzing, assessing and granting re-accreditation, I was asked, as the senior faculty member of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HU/SS) to represent our department after former Chair Mike Grigevich moved on to another college. I was also asked to represent the BFCIT College Senate during the NECHE visit to speak about our open, collaborative process, inter-departmental vision, and participation in the college's formal governance structure, as this was one of several major areas that our re-accreditation depended on.

10. Collaborated with multiple departments and offices to develop the vision and curriculum of the new program for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Though the enrollment is not yet at the level the college needs for the program to begin, its overall design has been established.

Professional Development and Collaboration

I attended four online conferences over the past year. Topics included ESOL, creating trauma-informed environments, cultural literacy, working with students during the pandemic crisis, frameworks for 21st century sustainability, and balancing teaching and life for optimal work.

I have an ongoing positive relationship with members of the Student Services team as well as the admissions staff. Though I don't know everyone in every department or program, I've made efforts on a regular basis to share professional development opportunities with different departments and programs, and through my role as FDC/FPC Chair, my job has been to work at creating not only a best-in-class culture of teaching and learning, but an environment in which consensus can be reached. The active participation in the management of morale among the faculty is an ongoing commitment that requires, above all, the building and strengthening of trusting relationships across all departments and programs (see above for the outcomes of maintaining this commitment).

Professionalism and Adaptability in HU/SS Department

As I wrote in the first section, I informally adopted a cheerleading role within my the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HU/SS) and made sure that continuity of vision was maintained after the unexpected departure of the chair of my department. The most elemental part of adaptability during times of crisis is keeping positive and remaining respectful of the official limits of your role. Even though there was no chair, I chose strict professionalism in the sense that I acted within the organizational limits of my role as the senior member of the full time HU/SS faculty, while also being collaborative and adopting the role of cheerleader when necessary. Of all the qualities I want to bring to my department and all other endeavors, collaboration and inter-personal trust are the most consistently practiced.

Timely Communication and Classes

I am prompt, and I almost always respond to communications from students and colleagues within a reasonable time frame. On occasion, I might miss an email (which is hard to avoid in an era of digital overwhelm). My classes start on time.

Participation in Meetings and Events

I try to make all meetings and events, including town hall meetings, and as I describe in the above sections, I have been very involved in committee work.

Curriculum Re-evaluation

I strive to evaluate and re-evaluate curriculum within my department on a regular basis. In previous years, I was quite involved in curriculum development. But since the Covid-19 crisis, I have spent most of my time trying to maintain standards within the already-established curriculum.

Feedback to Student Work and Communication

I try to respond to student writing as quickly as I can. As my classes involve so much written communication (student papers, essays, online discussions, emails, texts, etc.) it is continually challenging to keep up. When I am unable to give feedback as quickly as I would like, I am transparent with my students about that and openly tell them when I plan to catch up on my grading. I explicitly teach them about time management and expectation management as part of the professionalism grade and rubric, and remind them that we can't all be perfect, and we have to find ways to manage others' expectations around when we will be there for them in both personal and professional settings.

Supporting Students

I offer as much support as I humanly can. Not all students take advantage of my offer to spend 15 to 30 minutes with them each week in an individual Zoom session, but those that do take advantage of the opportunity greatly benefit. Over the course of my teaching career, I have always been known to create an especially respectful environment that honors the dignity of all. This is similar to the ongoing commitment to being collaborative in my approach with

colleagues. I treat the students as equals whenever possible while acknowledging my own expertise when warranted.

Effective Teaching

I believe I demonstrate effective teaching. I am still developing my teaching approach in the online context, which, admittedly, is not as natural for me as the way I practice teaching and learning, rapport with students, and classroom management in person. I am continually seeking to further develop my practice.

Area of Development

As I mention above, the area of development that stands out for me is the management of the online learning environment. I am currently studying the ESL Library website, and the CAST.org website to develop a more multi-modal approach to teaching and learning. The CAST site is directly related to the implementation of the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which I hope will help me to become a better teacher in distance learning.

Contribution to BFCIT's Strategic Direction

I believe that descriptions above reflect an intentional approach on my part to helping the college to operationalize its strategic direction and the work of others in my own department and other departments and programs.

Overall Performance Rating: Outstanding

It is with humility that I am appraising my work over the past two years, and especially this past academic year, as outstanding. This is in part because our circumstances demanded that we have "all hands on deck". I felt I needed to do everything I could and muster every talent at my disposal to make sure that the Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology remains standing and possibly even a beacon when the crises we have been facing come to pass. I have been teaching in the Boston area since 1996, and have known our population of students for a long time. I lived in Mission Hill and Jamaica Plain for years, and taught in schools all over Boston. I've even had more than a handful of students in my BFIT courses who I taught when they were middle school students. I say this here because, I truly believe in BFCIT's mission. There is nothing I won't do to ensure our students (of whom 74% are students of color) have the brightest most hopeful future possible. And I know that the greater Boston region will benefit from the workforce development and teaching learning of our college. In short, nothing less than outstanding was required during this transitional phase.

Goal (not included yet):

3. Further develop the goals for the Faculty Development Committee (FDC) in collaboration with Dr. Marvin Loiseau, the Dean of Academics. One of these goals is to create an "invitational" approach to faculty development that encourages shifts in perspectives and practices in the areas of inclusion, multi-modal instructional strategies, and the creation of trauma-informed environments. Much of this will hopefully be accomplished with the gradual implementation of a college wide initiative to incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into programs and departments across the college.