An Instructors' Learning Community on Inclusive Teaching: Improving Understanding and Implementation of Inclusive Instruction

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Overview

- What this talk is
  - A description of our Learning Community on Inclusive Teaching,
  - how it was structured,
  - and what we accomplished.
- And what it is not
  - An authoritative exposition on how to teach inclusively.

A Learning Community on Inclusive Teaching

- Our LCIT orginated from a small ($1000) grant from our Center for Research on Teaching and Learning (CRLT) to "create faculty communities looking at inclusive teaching." This is work Nina White, to whom most of the credit should go.

  "...inclusive classroom practices can help address [attraction and retention of minorities]... We will create a community of instructors who will discuss these issues... [to attain] the knowledge and resources to better support [these students]... Our new group—Inclusive Teaching in Mathematics—will... [meet] through the winter semester to discuss readings and research, and will bring in outside speakers, to accomplish its goals."

- Premise: *Prerequisite to meaningful Departmental change are*
  - Exploration and background, and
  - Building a core of instructors with knowledge and appropriate skills.

Departmental Context

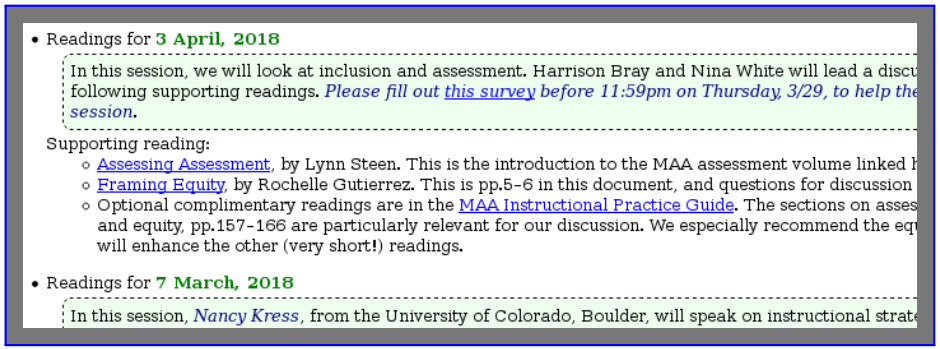
- Our Department of Mathematics is fairly big
  - About 65 T/TT faculty, 70 postdocs, 15 lecturers, and 130 graduate students.
  - Teaching 250–370 undergraduate class sections/semester
  - With a highly structured Introductory Program (our course before calculus, calculus I, and calculus II).

- And has done some work on education and reform:
  - Calculus reform (1992–present) *(instructor training)*
  - IBL center (2004–present)
  - Seminar on Teaching Mathematics (2003–present)

LCIT: Structure and Set-Up

- Invitation to all faculty and graduate students in mathematics, and members of the School of Education.
- Four discussion sessions, one outside speaker, one concluding discussion. *. . . plus a number of follow-up and subsequent sessions*
- Discussion sessions met over lunch (provided by grant funding)

  . . . scheduling issues
  - For each: specific readings, with discussion leaders.
  - Synopsis, questions, discussion.
  - *Partial model: IBL lunches in Department.*
- Supplemental funding from within the Department covering speaker travel



Outcomes: Community

- Readings included blog posts, articles, and (mostly partial) texts.
- Attendance was generally good.
  - Winter 2018 events averaged 16 attendees, 37 in total, with 15 attending at least three sessions.
  - Attendees were approximately evenly split between T/TT faculty, lecturers, post-docs, and graduate students (though graduate students were the least-well represented).
  - *This looks like a community!*
- Collegial and open discussions were the norm.
  - . . . which may reflect Departmental culture.
  - But: note graduate student attendance.

. . . and self-selection

Outcomes: Community Work

- Goal: “[to attain] the knowledge and resources to better support [these students]. . . ”
  - Inclusivity in teaching *is a big issue*.
  - We definitely increased awareness, and knowledge, and
  - increased individuals’ resources.

- Implied Goal: facilitate change in instructors’ teaching.
  - This is *harder to measure*.

Outcomes: Instructional Impact

- It is difficult to measure impact in the classroom. However, the community had a number of key instructional insights:

  - Avoid a deficit perspective: *Look for and emphasize students' understanding and competence, not errors*.
  - Assign competence: *Recognize students' success and contributions publicly*.
  - Manage groupwork: *Take an active role during groupwork to support inclusive group dynamics*.
  - Create classroom community: *Focus on increasing students' sense of belonging in class, and in mathematics*.
  - Be self aware: *Of implicit biases, habits and language*.

Outcomes: New Questions

- And these raised a number of new questions:
  - How do (did) we create community?
  - How do we better recognize what we need to be aware of and change?
  - How do we make all of these things natural parts of our teaching?
  - How to balance uniformity and resistance to academic dishonesty with promotion of a growth mindset and sense of belonging?
  - How to show underrepresented mathematicians and implement strategies meaningfully and authentically?

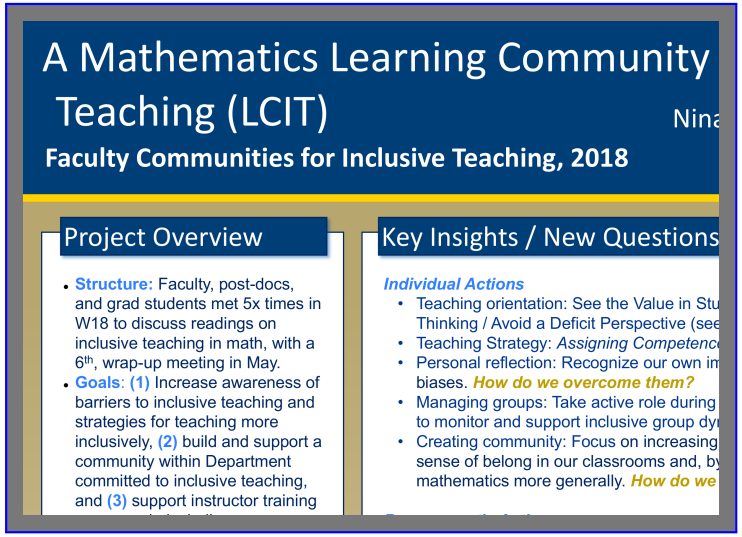
Outcomes: Artifacts and Discernable Impact

- This talk.
- (Forthcoming. . .) post for the AMS inclusion/exclusion blog about our work.

- Work on our new instructor training program.
  - Week-long program, for all new graduate students and post-docs.
  - Increased focus on inclusive teaching, with a CRLT workshop at the start of the week and some interleaving of topics throughout.

Conclusions and Reflections

- Our Community did arrive at some key insights,
- And an underlying framework to think about issues of inclusivity:
  - Levels of Action
    Individual, *Programmatic*, and *Departmental*
- Programmatic actions:
  - Think critically about assessment structures in large, coordinated courses.
  - Highlight contributions of mathematicians in underrepresented groups.
- Departmental actions:
  - Work with our instructor training programs:
    Clearly note that our teaching is not de facto inclusive, and
    Provide instructors with strategies



A Continuing LCIT

- Two meetings in Fall 2018
  With residual funding—due to Departmental support, and cheap lunches.
- Renewed funding for Winter 2019
  - Increase graduate student engagement
    Graduate students teach many of our introductory courses, are a substantial part of our department, and may be teaching for years to come.
  - Improve inclusivity of our Community
    Survey attendees who came only once.
  - Improve application of instructional strategies
    Focus discussions, follow-up surveys.
  - Continue engagement with Department and Introductory Program
    Work on new instructor training, larger programmatic issue.

Questions/Comments

Questions? Comments?

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