

TEACHING CIRCLE FACILITATOR GUIDELINES 2019-2020



Pat Hutchings, in her book *Making Teaching Community Property* (1996), defines a Teaching Circle as

“a small group of faculty who make a commitment to work together over a period of at least a semester to address questions and concerns about the particulars of their teaching and their students’ learning.”

At IUP there are two categories of Teaching Circles:

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY TEACHING CIRCLES (CTC) draw on the varied knowledge, methodology, and pedagogy of colleagues across campus to relieve isolation and accomplish goals personally important to its members.

DEPARTMENT TEACHING CIRCLE (DTC) usually form around areas of pedagogical interest within a discipline. A DTC might be a group of instructors teaching different sections of the same course. This offers a natural opportunity to conduct classroom research that can improve learning in the course as well as lead to scholarly publications and presentations.

10 STEPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FACILITATION OF A TEACHING CIRCLE...

Step 1: ORGANIZE A GROUP

Organize a group that plans to study, experiment with, discuss or implement a pedagogical topic or technique. Determine if your group will be a **Cross-Disciplinary Teaching Circle (CTC)** or **Department Teaching Circle (DTC)**.

Step 2: REGISTER & ENROLL MEMBERS

See the *Procedures for Establishing a Teaching Circle* for instructions on how to register your Teaching Circle and enroll members. As the facilitator, you will receive a notification when a new member enrolls. Be sure to track enrollment to ensure that all members, including the facilitator, are officially registered for the Teaching Circle.

Step 3: WORKABLE SIZE

It can be difficult to function with more than five members or less than three. Consider the **size group** that will best meet the goals of the Teaching Circle. Facilitators may limit the number of members in their Teaching Circle. Once the Teaching Circle has filled, they should send a message to those colleagues who are interested in joining but who cannot be accommodated at this time.

Step 4: SET A GOAL

As a group, set a goal for your Teaching Circle then plan how you will meet that goal over the year. As a facilitator, be sure to include all members in the **goal-setting process** to ensure you are creating an inclusive space. Don't try to solve all of your teaching goals in one semester; rather attempt to accomplish at least one thing, however small, to positively impact your teaching practice.

- NOTE: Consider applying for a **Teaching Circle Mini-Grant** (up to \$500 may be awarded) to support your goals. Deadline for applications is **October 4, 2019, 6:00pm**.

Step 5: ESTABLISH A STRUCTURE

In practice, “**work together**” can mean a variety of things and groups can organize themselves in different ways to accomplish their goals. Some meet every two weeks, some less frequently; some combine socializing with working and some work remotely. Consider early morning breakfast meetings, evening dinner meetings, or longer meetings that are less frequent.

Step 6: SCHEDULE MEETINGS

Plan a **sufficient number** of meetings to ensure members can attend a minimum of four meetings so that they will qualify for *Active* or *Active Plus* recognition with the Reflective Practice Project of the Center for Teaching Excellence. See CTE Website for more information on *Active* and *Active Plus* status.

- NOTE: Meetings scheduled after **April 10, 2020** will not count toward *Active* or *Active Plus* recognition.

Step 7: ORGANIZE MEETINGS

Find and secure a **location** for Teaching Circle meetings or arrange virtual meetings. Send **reminders** to members about upcoming meetings and track attendance. **Record** progress and outcomes of meetings. Another important role as the facilitator is to **moderate** discussions or organize shared facilitation of meetings.

Step 8: SUPPORT

Accountability and personal/professional **support** are important aspects of a Teaching Circle. As a facilitator, encourage members to identify tasks that they can reasonably complete and to ask for help when needed. Keep in mind that Teaching Circles are neither committees nor simply social groups. Teaching Circles are more like development teams working collaboratively to shape their purpose, define their goals, and contribute to the group. They are safe spaces for **learning, exploration, change,** and **accomplishment** at various levels. Effective Teaching Circles are marked by creative discourse and collaborative problem-solving.

Step 9: REFLECTION

Take the time to **reflect** on your Teaching Circle's **progress** at several points along the way and celebrate your group's successes. Have your goals changed somewhat as you've worked together? Was your original goal unrealistic? Are you working at a speed that allows for depth and time for reflection? What are you learning and how are you using that knowledge? What benefits are you gaining from your participation?

Step 10: END-OF-YEAR REPORT

As the facilitator, you will prepare a short **end-of-year report** that provides data on the number of meetings held, attendance at meetings, outcomes of meetings, and accomplishments of the Teaching Circle. Information on how to submit the end-of-year reports will be sent to facilitators in the spring.

End-of-year reports will be due by **April 10, 2020**. This deadline is critical so that we can determine member eligibility for *Active/Active Plus* recognition at the annual Center for **Teaching Excellence Recognition Dinner** that will be held on **April 30, 2020**.

For more information or if there are changes to the name of a Teaching Circle or facilitator status please contact:

Rachel DeSoto-Jackson (jackson@iup.edu)
Reflective Practice Co-Director, Cross-Disciplinary and Department Teaching Circles