Standard 3: Excellence in Professional Practice

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Introduction

In Learning innovation in the digital age (2017), an industry leader notes that higher education is 25 years behind the digital learning curve and suggests new institutions and programs that are co-owned by industry entities or companies. Although I may not agree that industry should be that closely linked to education, I do agree that there is a strong need for innovation in learning. The question is where to begin. Since technology is the driver in this digital learning age and is quickly changing--transforming--the workplace, educational administrators should be the ones charged with leading innovative change.

Standard 3 addresses innovation and the need for professional learning that allows educators a platform for improvement in the classroom that benefits student learning using technology and technology-infused instruction. As a reminder, Egan, Maguire, Christophers, and Rooney (2017) informed educators that engaging learners and sparking creativity should be the primary focus of educators. Embracing this means that educational learners should research the variety of ways to 'educate' (train) the educators on how to effectively use technology in the classroom. I am not stating this lightly as I believe this training can be a daunting task due to time restrictions, resource limitations, access issues, and the many limitations of technology in an educational environment.

Performance Indicators

Standard 3 has four indicators that present a variety of options for educational administrators to provide avenues by which educators can learn about technology and how to use it effectively in the classroom. The availability and sensibility of these options will depend on the educational organization, for instance K-12 versus higher education (university or college).

While staying abreast of educational research may naturally exist as a part of a university faculty's job description, including external stakeholders (parents) and allocation of time (beyond the classroom), may be a bit more challenging for higher education entities. Resources can be an issue for all educational entities due to financial limitations. Effective communication should be a primary goal for all educational entities, with the only issue being whether digital-age tools are used. The computing science (CS) department in the college of sciences at Coastal Carolina University does practice some of the indicator suggestions, while others will need focused planning for the future.

Indicator 1

This first indicator's focus is on professional growth in the area of technology and its integration in the classroom. Educational administrators should identify and model ways to use technology. They should also continue their own training in new technology so other educators will also. Reviewing procedure and assessing the usage of current technology is also important. The computing sciences (CS) department does not have written policy for training and on-going education for technology usage; however, it does not hinder university-available technology training for its faculty and staff. Employees are encouraged to take workshops and training from campus centers such as CeTeal and the office of training and development. Faculty and staff are also encouraged to attend conferences that discuss new technology in areas for which the department offers programming.

The CS department does have an assessment mechanism for technology usage and technology instruction, its Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) accreditation. Because assessment summaries are submitted each year and accreditation visits occur every 4 to 6 years, the department must continually review its courses for current

technology usage and instruction. Although changes to instructional material can change fairly quickly, course descriptions and new courses cannot be implemented as quickly in the university catalog. The department is experiencing this situation now as it cannot implement new programming using new technology in the area of cybersecurity due to deadlines imposed by the university (M. Murphy, personal communication, 2018).

Indicator 2

This second indicator looks to learning communities to cultivate learning amongst administrators, faculty, and staff in the study and use of technology. Successful implementation of standard 3 as it pertains to this indicator would mean that educational administrators review the current technology use in their department, examine the expectation of usage by faculty and staff, self-assess their current use of technology, determine if and how technology is used in communication, and determine if professional development is available for learning technology. Educational administrators in the CS department are also faculty and therefore have the same opportunity for professional development as other faculty and staff; however, there is no review system in place for determining if the use of technology improves productivity for faculty or students.

As for professional development, faculty complete an end of year evaluation with the chair of the department. It is in this document that faculty identifies training, conferences, and additional work (update of skills). A part of this evaluation includes student feedback in semester course evaluations. There is a component for technology use in this evaluation. A summary of the evaluation is sent forward to the dean of the college; however, I am not aware of statements of expectations for currently technology use, professional development, or use of technology in the classroom, in the review of this evaluation.

Indicator 3

This third indicator addresses effective communication using digital-age tools. Communication is important for any department; however, in this digital age of learning, many stakeholders are not receptive of paper—preferring email correspondence, text messaging, RMS streaming, and up-to-date information on the organization's website. Most communication in the CS department is sent to stakeholders via email. The department website is not very up-to-date, so persons wanting information often call the department's administrator or the faculty/staff member whose phone or email data is most prominent.

Parents and community members are not generally a part of the department's communication thread. This is mainly due to FERPA, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, for parents. Community members are included in communication only when there is a specific function for which they are invited. The department's educational administrators, of course, follow these practices; however, there is not procedure in place for when these systems become non-functional (other than to wait for repair).

Indicator 4

This fourth indicator looks at effective use of technology and evaluation of new technologies that will aid in improving student learning. The CS department can be successful in standard 3 as it pertains to this indicator by staying aware of emerging trends and maintaining current educational research in new technologies. As I stated previously, the department conducts an end of year faculty review for which professional development and research is listed. The faculty member and the department chair discuss activities and research (for those on tenure track) completed. Improvements to skill base and course modifications (if any) are

discussed, but there is no direct review of effective use of technology in the classroom or discussion of new technology needs that can benefit students. Faculty is welcome to discuss the topic and suggest new technology and even training, but this is not a standard part of the process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although there is no written policy for reviewing new technologies and determining if current technology is efficient in the classroom, I am pleased with the support given to faculty and staff by the CS department's educational administrators. Members of the department are able to seek professional growth via a variety of training, degree programs, and research. Individually, there are many members of the department who stay aware of emerging trends and new technology by attending conferences, workshops, training on and off campus, and conducting research in their technology areas (computer science, information systems, and information technology). For some, from these activities, learning communities emerge and knowledge is shared with the department and with students.

Educational administrators practice and promote effective communication. The extent to which this communication uses digital-age tools is insufficient. The department website should be continuously updated so that information can be shared with stakeholders like parents, who are typically left out of mainstream communication streams. In addition, the department should facilitate more reviews of current technology use and suggest ways for which faculty could use new technologies in the classroom to benefit student learning. These reviews could easily take place during faculty end of year evaluations, if not during regular monthly department meetings.

References

Learning innovation in the digital age. (2017). *McKinsey Quarterly*, (4), 69-75