<table>
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<tr>
<th>Primary Contact</th>
<th>Heather McGovern</th>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative Team Coach</td>
<td>Peter Baratta, Sonia Gonsalves</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal Title</td>
<td>Teaching Circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration/Time Frame</td>
<td>Pilot groups in 2012-013, preferably ongoing indefinitely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Theme(s)</td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<td>Strategic Objective(s)</td>
<td>ER1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measure(s)</td>
<td>Surveys and/or focus group discussion with participants, reading of white paper or other documents produced by groups</td>
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<td>Partner(s)</td>
<td>Institute for Faculty Development</td>
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**Narrative**

Circles are a commonly used professional development method for faculty in higher education. They commonly involve small groups of faculty who collectively develop and/or further their knowledge and experience about a professionally relevant area. Unlike a workshop or many other local professional development offerings, in a Circle people collaborate together to develop expertise rather than being facilitated by someone who already has more expertise.

Each Teaching Circle at Stockton would have a specific topic, issue, question, or project on which members would focus for a semester or a year. Sample topics might include homiletics, better approaches for teaching lab report writing, better ways to facilitate in-class discussion, or a host of other issues. Circles might address topics of wide interest or might address valuable topics of deep interest to a smaller number of faculty members. Circles might organize differently, some preferring intensive work over a few-day period and others regular meetings spaced out over an academic year. However, each Circle should plan for some communication over time such that members could make and share progress (meeting once or twice or having a panel discussion or workshop, alone, would not constitute a circle).

Circles might run more than once on the same topic, spiraling in a second round to release some of the initial participants but then include new participants from internal and/or external communities, as it is proposed that each of the pilot circles do, or might run only once.
Annually, the IFD would send out an annual call for circle proposals, suggesting some topics but being open to any well-defined project. Groups of faculty with a common interest would propose topics. A group might already be formed upon submitting its proposal or might be partially formed and solicit proposals for participants to complete the group.

Proposals should

1. Clearly indicate why the circle is needed (the situation, history, or context that led to the desire for this circle)
2. Provide some information about the topic/area related to faculty development (defined broadly to include and even extend beyond pedagogy, scholarship, and/or service)
3. Clearly indicate a point person who would be responsible for calling the initial meeting of the circle
4. List circle participants and/or explain criteria for accepting additional participants if the circle planned to put out a call for additional members (including total minimum/maximum number of members) and define who would select those participants
5. Define a time period for the circle and provide a date at which the group would submit its white paper or other public dissemination record to the IFD.

At an initial organizational meeting, the circle should determine organizational issues, like who would schedule meetings or take minutes or whether those tasks would be rotated through the circle. The IFD advisory committee, consisting of the Director of the IFD and current fellows, would review and recommend proposals, contingent upon Provost approval. Circle proposals would be selected for the next year by the IFD Advisory Council on the basis of the quality of the proposal and the need for the project, as established by the proposal.

For the 2012-2013 pilot offerings, there would be two circles, one on faculty mentoring, starting in Fall 2012 with a second phase in Spring 2013, and one on issues faced by faculty who do not represent the dominant race or culture of the students and faculty at the college, starting in Spring 2013, with a second phase in Fall 2013.

Circles whose proposals are accepted could then submit a budget if they desired, explicitly connecting resource requests to the project. Reasonable photocopying and office supplies would be supplied out of the IFD’s regular annual budget. In addition, each circle could apply for and receive a sum of up to $4,000 in order to support its activities. These funds could provide resources and/or support activities central to the Circle’s mission, including but not limited to the following:

- Stipend for author or primary editor of white paper/dissemination product from Circle to larger campus community.
- Books or supplies
- External speaker fees, travel expenses
- Webinar cost
- Conference registration and/or travel expenses for a few Circle members

Each Circle would, before dispersing, produce a white paper or other record of its findings, recommended best practices, etc. for the purpose of sharing what it learned with the wider college community. These records would be published on the IFD website or elsewhere on the Stockton website as appropriate.

The author or primary editor of the white paper/dissemination product would receive a small stipend, and this stipend should be part of the Circle’s budget request.

All faculty, including adjunct, probationary, visiting, and part-time faculty, are eligible to participate in a teaching circle and a proposal could also request staff or student participation if appropriate.

In a multi-semester or multi-year Circle, the group might start off smaller and internal and then release some participants and take in new ones in future terms/years and/or open themselves to participation from others in the larger community (local K-12, community colleges, etc.)

Faculty participants in a teaching circle would then be considered local specialists in the topic of the teaching circle and would be listed as such in publicly available publications and/or online so that other faculty could easily identify potential sources of expertise in pedagogical areas.

**Budget**

Pilot: Three teaching circles for 2012-2013 (mentoring, round one in the fall and round two in the spring, and cultural diversity and teaching round one in the spring) at 4,000 each=$12,000
The ongoing plan would be to have 3 circles proceeding in each academic year.

Sample teaching circles discussions and topic lists
http://www.sjfc.edu/campus-services/petal/circles.dot
http://www.lcc.edu/cte/services_support/teachingcircles/
<table>
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<th>Resources:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Realized/Gained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reallocated</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to $12,000 for the pilot circles in 2012-2013 (3 teaching circles @ $4,000 [max] each)</td>
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### Assessment Plan
Conduct surveys and/or focus groups with circle participants gaining feedback about group processes, perceived learning by faculty, concrete plans for action by individual participants, etc. Analysis of documents produced for the larger community and other impacts.

### Recommended Path
In the context of our discussion of Teaching Circles, the group concluded that the needs I address in my initial proposal for an Employee Readiness learning community, focusing on diversity awareness, would be well suited to a Teaching Circle.

The Need

As I stated in the original proposal, instructors coming from traditionally marginalized social locations, such as those related to race and nationality, share narratives describing classroom experiences marked by students’ blatant disrespect and hostility as well as ongoing disruption from some who have distanced themselves from the instructor. The instructor has little reason to doubt that this distancing is related to his or her race, gender, nationality or the subject matter, under study, which addresses marginal social locations. Opposition shows up in diverse ways from the ongoing smirks from reticent students, with arms crossed, to a student’s complaint over his or her inability to understand an accent. Hostility may also manifest in the student’s rejection out of hand of the reading and discussion material from minority scholars, regardless of how well known and highly respected they may be. W.E.B. Du Bois’ early empirical sociological work and Paul Gilroy’s contemporary discussions of cultural syncretism and heterogeneity are easily called into question. This latter complaint often leads the affected instructor to go further in an attempt to demonstrate a particular concern. He or she may search for the latest statistics, studies, beyond what has been assigned, in order to further demonstrate fundamental realities of American or Global culture.

The faculty members in question have been interrogated and assigned to particular categories as suggested by the following questions: “Who are you? Adjunct?” Or “You only have this job because of Affirmative Action.” The most disruptive students, however, look and laugh and whisper and ask insincere and repetitive questions, over and again. However, a student may write a short note at the end: “I didn’t believe what you were saying, but this course changed my life” (a direct quotation).

We are concerned with the foreclosure on learning while the student is resistant because of the instructor’s identity. These students usually make up a small minority, but they are vociferous and they negatively influence the class atmosphere. With a greater understanding of diverse cultural identities...
and their disparate histories in this country and elsewhere, students would be much further along in their readiness to recognize, understand and learn from diverse people. We as a faculty would benefit greatly from having access to a forum to discuss these issues in the context of effective pedagogies.

Steps Taken, Action Needed

At the request of the Director of the Institute for Faculty Development, I met with a young colleague who was facing difficulties such as those described above. Subsequently I called a meeting of senior and junior faculty of color to discuss the issues and to share experiences. Every person among the approximate twelve (from across disciplines) had multiple stories to tell similar themes of disrespect, of challenges to instructor’s status, and of general class disruptions.

It was evident that aside from their inappropriate questions and personal insults these students were minimally engaged intellectually, likely missing much that the instructor had to offer. A significant number of our students have never been taught by particular ethnic minorities. Moreover, many as they sometimes tell us, have been raised on a diet of overt bigotry.

Teaching circles

I am suggesting that a teaching circle would be an ideal format for the faculty to respond to this perceived need. A teaching circle would hopefully attract faculty from a range of positionalities, for students would be best served if faculty of all backgrounds were prepared to discuss issues of marginalization. When those most directly affected by student naiveté or prejudices are at the center of these discussions, students sometimes regard that faculty as self-serving. Helping our students to understand and appreciate difference is the responsibility of all faculty, not just those who appear to be most directly affected.

Proposed participation and facilitation models

A teaching circle centering on teaching about difference would be an ideal setting for faculty to share ideas, especially if we follow through as we noted this morning, with a framework that is more lateral than hierarchal. Even if we have a facilitator help to begin the conversation, we would want group ownership of the direction of the discussion as opposed to following a leader’s agenda. This notwithstanding, we also thought of at least two other starting points if we adopted the teaching circle model.

- Participants could read a common article in advance.
- Different participants could share the job of facilitation at each meeting.
- This would be open to all interested adjuncts
Moving forward

- This plan will be presented to the Committee on May 9. We agreed to request the initially suggested $12,000 to be used for four circles. This would enable someone to possibly attend a conference or to use the services of a consultant or to bring in a guest speaker, and to cover miscellaneous expenses.

Final accountability will involve preparation of a white paper