

Trendy Techies: a new interdisciplinary learning community that explores new tools for the classroom

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Key Points

- A learning community called Trendy Techies has been established
- This community provides a supportive environment for faculty to share new technology and its application in the classroom
- Trendy Techies has had a steady number of attendees from a diverse group of disciplines

Introduction

- Faculty learning communities have been used in the past to provide a small group of individuals a chance to discuss a common topic¹
- Faculty support and investment in resources for faculty has been shown to be a key indicator of success²
- The University of Findlay established an iPad learning community pilot to increase the usage of iPads in the classroom
- After the pilot ended, two faculty established a spinoff learning community now called Trendy Techies

Objective

- To develop an interdisciplinary learning community focused on the integration of technology in the classroom.
- Idea premise: Creating a focused learning community will be feasible and generate interest from all 6 Colleges at the University.

Learning Community Description

- Two pharmacy faculty collaborated with the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at the University of Findlay to establish Trendy Techies.
- This group of technology adventurers meets once a month during the academic year to share relevant technology tools for the classroom.
- The pharmacy facilitators select new technology tools or software each month and invite experienced faculty or staff users on campus to train attendees on the basics of the technology.
- Academic Technology Services is represented at the meetings.
- Each session provides details on unique characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of the technology with an emphasis on application for the classroom and optimized workflow of a variety of academic responsibilities.

Results

- The learning community began in Fall 2021
- The group has successfully hosted 6 meetings each academic school year for the past 2 years.
- Recent Trendy Techies sessions have included Canva, Zotero, Microsoft Teams, OneNote, and Nearpod (see Figure below).
- Attendance has steadily increased from 4 active members at the beginning to 25 attendees (a number considered high for similar CTE events).
- The learning community represents all 6 colleges at the University, including faculty and staff from disciplines such as pharmacy, business, education, humanities, mathematics, health professions, biology, and chemistry.
- Due to its early success, the CTE has renewed logistical support for Trendy Techies into the next academic year (2023-2024).



zotero



nearpod



Discussion and Conclusions

Pros

- Relatively high attendance
- Represents all 6 Colleges
- Good networking space
- ITS support
- Collaboration with tech committee

Limitations

- Selecting an optimal mode of delivery (face to face vs remote vs hybrid) has been a challenge
- Can be time consuming running the logistics of the meetings and identifying speakers/topics

Conclusion

The Trendy Techies learning community provided a new format for discovering new technology tools and engaged an interdisciplinary following of faculty and staff.

References

1. Cox M. Introduction to Faculty Learning Communities. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. 2004. 97: 5-23.
2. Oestreich J, Guy J. Technology Personalities in the Classroom: A New Classification System of TechTypes from Expert to Techy Turtle. *Pharmacy*. 2023. 11(3): 91.



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