

Titles & Descriptions of PLU Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) 25-26 Academic Year

To sign up for a Faculty Learning Community, complete [this very brief form](#) by Friday, Aug 22nd.

Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart

This faculty learning community will explore Bryan McLaren's book *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart* through the lens of our work in higher education. Meeting for one hour each month, we will engage with the book's themes to examine the overlapping experiences of "doom" facing both our disciplines and our students—from institutional uncertainty to ecological, social, and personal crises. Together, we will reflect on what it means to teach, mentor, and sustain hope in the midst of collapse. Spoiler alert: there *is* life after doom—but only if we're willing to face it with honesty, courage, and community. *(Facilitated by Laree Winer, Wild Hope Center for Vocation, and Jen Rude, Campus Ministry)*

Teaching with the Brain in Mind: Rethinking How We Teach and How Students Learn

This Faculty Learning Community (FLC) invites colleagues to build a supportive, collaborative network while reimagining pedagogy to create more student-centered and engaging learning environments for all. Guided by *The Brain-Based Classroom: Accessing Every Child's Potential Through Educational Neuroscience* by Kieran O'Mahony, participants will explore how current neuroscience of learning research can inform best pedagogical practices. Together, we will reflect on our interactions with students—through syllabi, personal engagement, and classroom strategies—while intentionally elevating diverse thinking and inclusive approaches through a neural lens. Our shared goals include shifting from behaviorist models toward cognitive pedagogy and focusing on the brain as the foundation for equitable and effective teaching. We will examine and practice brain-aligned strategies that promote student success, address challenges such as neurodivergence, dysregulation, hypervigilance, and the impact of social media in the classroom, and tailor these strategies to individual teaching styles and disciplines. This FLC offers an opportunity to think beyond traditional frameworks, embracing innovative, evidence-based approaches that prioritize the cognitive and emotional well-being of all of our students. *(Facilitated by Terri Farrar, Kinesiology)*

Coming to Terms with GenAI in Teaching, Writing, and the World

Centered around [John Warner's More Than Words](#), this FLC will discuss how Generative AI (GenAI) technology is changing our relationships with writing, teaching, and the world around us. Together, we will explore the impacts of this technology in our teaching, and the ways we can address and/or resist these impacts in ways that support student learning. Though final answers and solutions are not the goals for this group, this FLC affords an opportunity for participants to come to terms with this technology as well as an opportunity to rethink their relationship with writing and their teaching. Geared towards faculty that teach writing, the FLC is

open to any faculty that wishes to engage in a conversation about teaching, art, technology, and writing. Our goals, then, are to build a community of practice that together:

- Develops an understanding of the current and future impacts of GenAI in the classroom,
- Explores on a “first, do no harm” basis the applications of GenAI on teaching, or education in general, and
- Designs and develops process-based coursework.

(Facilitated by Roberto Arteaga, Library)

Inclusive Leadership and Managing Change for Unit Heads

This community offers academic unit heads a year-long opportunity to enhance their interests and skills in inclusive leadership through readings, discussion-focused seminars, and peer support from a learning community of peers in other disciplines.

Goals for this FLC include

- facilitating collective wisdom and "best practices" of participants,
- providing a support system for academic leaders, and
- developing inclusive strategies for leading colleagues in the enhancement of teaching, scholarship, and service in this time of dynamic change.

While participants will determine the topics to be covered, possible areas of interest might include (but are not limited to) mediating administrative and faculty ideas and priorities, budgeting and strategic allocation of resources, juggling roles and responsibilities, mentoring faculty, using data to inform decision-making, conducting faculty assessment, and managing conflict.

This learning community is open to department chairs and program directors within the academic division and welcomes faculty who are new to their positions as well as experienced leaders. *(Facilitated by Kate Luther, Sociology and Criminal Justice)*

Transforming Higher Education Through Compassionate Teaching

Using the book [*A Pedagogy of Kindness*](#) by Catherine J. Denial as a framework, this faculty learning community brings together educators committed to creating transformational learning environments where both students and instructors can thrive by reimagining academic culture's traditional emphasis on individualism and competition. Participants will explore the distinction between kindness and niceness while developing practical strategies for creating trust, belonging, and justice in their classrooms. The community combines book discussions, peer observations, and semester-long projects focused on redesigning syllabi, developing compassionate assessment practices, and/or building inclusive learning environments.

Participants commit to implementing at least two new strategies while supporting colleagues through sharing and collaborative problem-solving. This community will emphasize vulnerability over perfection, growth over judgment, and action over theory, creating a supportive network for educators committed to making higher education the compassionate, justice-oriented space that serves both students and society effectively. (*Facilitated by Neal Yakelis, Chemistry*)