Title:

"Mentoring, Managing and Motivating Online Course Instructors: Emerging Chair Responsibilities"

Description of the session:

Regardless of discipline, the responsibilities of the Chair encompass many diverse tasks, but foremost to all is the need to insure that a quality education is delivered to all students through the competent, qualified faculty members in their departments. Typically, faculty are closely observed and mentored for teaching excellence and the implication is that this excellence will continue. Although teaching excellence is always a priority, the rapid expansion of courses offered in the fully online format at many universities has challenged Department Chairs for many reasons. Resources for professional development to prepare faculty to teach online may be limited, yet faculty may not readily "observed" or physically present for discussions about their teaching in this new pedagogy. Some faculty members are reluctant or fearful about tackling this skill as part of professional development. Strategies for mentoring, managing, and motivating online course instructors are the topic for this interactive session, derived from both practical experience and review of what is an emerging literature base.

Specific solutions will be recommended to participants that were concerns on the minds of Chairs and Deans at one university where a strategic direction toward an online course expansion has been undertaken. These concerns included, for example, that Department Chairs wondered the best way to match a veteran (perhaps even tenured) faculty member with no online teaching skills with a peer mentor who may be more novice at the university yet more skilled in teaching online. Other concerns that arose were how to secure training and support from an Instructional Technology staff that is already stretched in supporting all faculty

members on campus and online, and how to truly use student feedback on end-of-course evaluations as tools for improving online teaching technique.   During this presentation managerial level concerns such as helping faculty manage work load, insuring office hours, and protecting intellectual property rights will be addressed and solutions suggested. Strategies for handling annual performance reviews for faculty who primarily teach online will be explored. Finally, ideas will be presented for motivating faculty to try this new approach to teaching, through on-going team round tables and faculty development, in order for this dramatic change to occur with the least amount of stress.

Participants who are already mentoring, managing, and motivating online course instructors will be invited to share their experiences, positive as well as unresolved, so that the exchange of ideas benefits all attending. Department Chairs new to overseeing online teaching challenges will submit scenarios and pose questions for the presenters and other participants to problem solve, with special consideration and table discussion time given to smaller institutions who may have limited resources but who are considering online initiatives in their settings. A network of Chair-to-Chair support will be established for participants interested in continuing the conversation.