

Professional Development Grant Final Report

Best Teachers Summer Institute 2017

Jessica Young

Assistant Professor of Physics

Department of Physical Sciences

Restatement of problem researched, creative work, or professional enhancement

opportunity

The purpose of this grant was for Dr. Young to attend the 2017 Best Teachers Institute hosted by Ken Bain, author of “What the Best College Teachers Do”. The 2017 Institute was the 20th annual Best Teachers Summer Institute and featured the ideas and people from “What the Best College Teachers Do,” by Ken Bain and “Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning” by James Lang. Bain and Lang, along with three other award winning faculty presented at the workshop.

Brief review of the professional enhancement opportunity, creative work, or research procedure

The three-day workshop taught participants how to create their own Natural Critical Learning Environments that Dr. Young plans to implement as soon as possible. In addition to learning about ideas that can transform student learning and how to implement these ideas, she learned ways to bring some of these ideas back to other faculty at Arkansas Tech.

Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences had

The format of the workshop for most sessions was a brief “mini lecture” by one of the facilitators followed by table and then entire group discussions. The background of other participants at the workshop varied from other STEM fields and medical to performing arts educators. The

discussions with other faculty was an invaluable experience. Dr. Young plans to stay in touch with a few other participants, the other physics professor Dr. Goldberg, in attendance in particular. Dr. Goldberg teaches in a classroom environment similar to Dr. Young's General Physics I and II courses.

In addition to learning how to think about how to create big questions that are relevant and interesting enough to students that a natural critical learning environment can be established, participants learned how to deal with perceived bias and fixed mindsets that can impede student learning. Another topic that was very applicable to the Arkansas Tech learning environment was cheating. During the workshop we discussed why students cheat and ideas for how to set up a learning environment that is less conducive to cheating.

Conclusions and recommendations

Dr. Young looks forward to starting to implement the methods learned at the workshop in her own classes and sharing the best teaching practices learned with other faculty at Arkansas Tech University as soon as the opportunity arises. Dr. Young intends that the primary outlet for dissemination of the topics from the Best Teachers Institute to be at the May 2018 at the ATU *Teaching Innovations Conference*, hosted by the CETL, if chosen to host a session.