# High-Impact Practices (HIPs) for All: Developing a Campus-Wide HIPs Training Plan

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Kristen L. McCauliff, Ashley Coker, Mary E. Konkle, and Carole Kacius

Ball State University’s (BSU) bold strategic plan, which was drafted in 2019, states that all students will have access to one of four specific High Impact Practices (Immersive Learning, Undergraduate Research, Study Abroad, and Societal Issues) before they graduate. This goal is not surprising given Ball State University’s long history of providing a premiere undergraduate learning experience. The campus recognizes the benefit of high-impact instruction and learning experiences for students. In particular, the campus values high-impact practices’ ability to cultivate student learning and also prepare students for future careers (Kuh 2008). Campus stakeholders are also drawn to HIPs due to the connections between high-impact instruction and student engagement. Given the well-proven impact of High-Impact Practices (HIPs), BSU undertook the task of ensuring each student would have access to one of our four premier experiences very seriously. This article will document the key steps that occurred as the Ball State campus worked to meaningfully integrate HIPs into our campus curriculum and culture. It will highlight one significant tool—a faculty learning community—and provide testimonials from two faculty members who have been crucial to campus implementation.

The campus work began after the four high-impact practices were defined in the strategic plan. Those four are:

1. Undergraduate Research. Students are engaged in all stages of the pursuit of important questions including the initial stage of design to data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results. Mentors provide systems of accountability and structure that create a framework beyond the boundaries of a traditional classroom with the goal of enabling students to develop expertise in communication, in the use of cutting-edge technologies, and in critical thought. Engagement by students in relevant, authentic research has the potential to exert profound influence on their careers. Public demonstration of competence occurs through oral or poster presentations at annual Teacher-Scholar Celebrations and Student Symposia.
2. Immersive Learning. Projects are high-impact learning experiences that involve collaborative student-driven teams, guided by faculty mentors. Students earn credit for working with community partners such as businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to address community challenges through the creation of a product that has a lasting impact. Public demonstration of competence occurs through oral or poster presentations at Immersive Learning Showcases each semester.
3. Study Abroad Study Away. Students engage in some portion of study (either partial or full semester) in an off-campus setting (i.e., another city, state, or country). Study abroad incorporates credit-bearing academic programs outside of the United States including classroom study, research, intern or externships, and service learning. Study away refers to academic activities within the United States. For example, field studies that take students off campus for a week or more would qualify. The location of study must be central to the course objectives. One-day field trips do not constitute study abroad/away experiences.
4. Societal Issues or Global Challenge. Students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power.

Starting in 2020, faculty across campus worked collaboratively to establish six student-learning outcomes (SLOs) for the four HIPs. The six SLOs were aligned with AAC&U’s essential learning outcomes in the VALUE Rubrics: problem solving, civic engagement, integrative learning, teamwork, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. Students are assessed on two of the six SLOs in each HIP.

Our campus is dedicated to making high-impact learning experiences accessible and affordable for all. As a result of this commitment, our need to assess both the students participating as well as the ones not participating is very important. Our institution is guided by the sobering claim from Kuh, O’Donnell, and Schneider (2017) that HIPs participation remains inequitable, with “first generation, transfer students, and African-American and Latino students least likely to participate” (p. 12). Given the high and growing percentage of each of those populations on our campus, we are committed to changing that. This commitment has empowered our institution to fully assess our HIPs and ensure access for all. Finley’s (2019) work helped us understand that broad, collective understanding campus wide will “help to address a deep well of questions about quality, equity, and learning” as we continue to develop these practices (p. 13).

One tool we used to develop a collective understanding of HIPs was the faculty development model of a faculty learning community. A faculty learning community (FLC) is often defined as a cross-disciplinary faculty and staff group of six to 15 members (eight to 12 members is the recommended size) who engage in an active, collaborative, yearlong program with a curriculum about enhancing teaching and learning and with frequent seminars and activities that provide learning, development, the scholarship of teaching, and community building (Cox 2004). Our FLC was cohort based, meaning all faculty enrolled attended the same sessions and all shared the same characteristic of wishing to fold one of our four institutionally supported HIPs into their courses. In the FLC, facilitators modeled the behaviors and practices associated with high-impact teaching. The FLC facilitated “a continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done” (McGill and Beaty 2001, p. 11).

The participants met every other week for 90 minutes, with a small amount of preparation work in between. The preparation work included readings about HIPs best practices, gathering information about their discipline’s experience with high-impact teaching, and spending time thinking about their syllabus. Within the 90-minute sessions, participants would participate in a full-group conversation, but the session would also include time in small groups and pairs. In those small groups, participants would have a chance to be experts and share what they have been learning, doing, and planning to do in the future. The small groups and pairs would also spend significant time on the task of revising a syllabus. By the end of the semester, the pairs were checking in (and sometimes meeting!) with each other in between sessions as well. This was to ensure each participant got a significant amount of feedback on their revised syllabus. The FLC was punctuated by a post-test that gave participants a chance to reflect on what they had learned and changes they knew they would make to their teaching. This intentional design allowed for individual change for each faculty member, but also contributed to overall organization change on our campus as participants were often empowered to share their knowledge and changes with other colleagues outside of the FLC.

We now turn our attention to two testimonials from BSU faculty members who have been involved with the efforts.

Testimonial One. A few years before I became a member of the HIPs faculty learning community, I served on my institution’s first taskforce for high-impact practices planning and implementation. We knew that HIPs were in our strategic plan with the goal that every student would have access to at least one HIP by fall 2024, but in many ways this taskforce was starting at ground zero, as the details of the implementation plan didn't previously exist. That taskforce was my first introduction into what a campus-wide rollout of HIPs would mean, from definitions to student learning outcomes to assessment instruments. We recognized that the success of this plan would depend not just on the assessment itself but also on the buy-in and engagement of our faculty colleagues.

That's where the FLC came in. While faculty were exploring new teaching practices, sharing ideas, and discovering how HIPs can benefit students, we were also practicing the pedagogy and behaviors required for HIPs. FLCs are characterized by peer-to-peer learning, time-on-task, meaningful feedback, and opportunities for reflection, all of which are conveniently also essential elements of HIPs.

During and after the FLC, I was able to go back to my own academic unit with this faculty learning content fresh in my brain. I helped my department strategize about integrating HIPs into our curriculum, and I was able to easily explain what the implementation and assessment processes would be, solidifying my own buy-in and also inadvertently getting more faculty members (even those who hadn't been in the FLC) involved. As a result, I became a somewhat accidental ambassador not only for FLCs, but for high-impact teaching practices and the new assessment rollout on our campus. It’s a win-win-win; my involvement in a HIPs FLC has helped me understand the benefits of high-impact experiences for students, develop behaviors consistent with HIPs, become part of a larger community of faculty who are passionate about this work, and gain the confidence in my own ability to both implement these practices myself and to help others do the same.

My experience has been very convincing to me. FLCs are a powerful way to expand high-impact practices to a whole campus. By providing a structured way for faculty members to learn from one another and explore new teaching practices, FLCs help to create a culture of high-impact teaching and learning on our campus. I’m proud to be an ambassador for FLCs and high-impact teaching, and I’m grateful to be involved in this work.

Testimonial Two. I came to faculty-mentored undergraduate research (FMUR) at the very institution where I now mentor, Ball State University. As I finished my doctoral education, the transformative experience confirmed my career path as a faculty member at a Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI). During my time at Trinity University as a postdoctoral fellow, I was introduced to the Council of Undergraduate Research (CUR). While CUR was started by chemists, expansion into non-STEM academic disciplines over the past 20 years has increased access of FMUR to students who are not enrolled in STEM courses of study through faculty-to-faculty mentoring and advocacy.

Following this example of how FMUR could be expanded as a practice across disciplines and institutional types on a national level, I was eager to join in a campus-wide effort in the FLC to make that same transition at Ball State University. A troubling observation about FMUR in STEM fields is that it was not accessible to all students. URM and other student populations with limited academic cultural capital (such as first-generation or early career students) did not equitably benefit from this HIP. During the FLC, faculty from programs in Study Abroad shared how they increased inclusive recruiting practices. We also had the space to brainstorm across the sessions about solutions to the inherent privilege that has come with prior policies and assumptions for both HIPs.

Despite the success of this effort, admittedly the internal resources of Ball State are not enough to achieve the goal of HIPs for all without partnering with external funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) is an NSF-funded program whose stated goal is to increase the number of URM students graduating with bachelors in STEM degrees. Ball State University belongs to a six-campus alliance called the IN LSAMP and this funded grant places FMUR as its centerpiece. Only a single student, 2% of the students supported, was neither actively enrolled nor had graduated. As a Co-Director of the LSAMP I was able to share the successes and challenges in this program with other faculty within the FLC.

I learned to think more deeply about reflective pieces and assessment instruments from my colleagues in the FLC. This is key to capturing the qualitative gains we are making during FMUR. In a shrinking post-secondary educational landscape, clear challenges and roadblocks threaten the expansion of HIPs. These practices are key to securing sustaining institutional support within a shrinking landscape in post-secondary education so that we can continue the upward trend of HIPs for all.

Ball State University is so lucky to have such wide support for this work. And as this work continues to evolve, BSU knows that our faculty are our biggest champions. We look forward to following their lead on this important initiative.

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Kristen L. McCauliff is associate provost for faculty affairs and professional development, Ashley Coker is director of study abroad, Mary E. Konkle is associate professor of chemistry and co-director of Indiana LSAMP Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation, and Carole Kacius is director of assessment and accreditation at Ball State University.