Report to CIRTL MOOC Team: Summary of MCLC Facilitator Survey Data

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1. Overview

This report summarizes data from surveys of the MOOC-Centered Learning Community facilitators gathered following the fall 2014 and fall 2015 implementations of the online course, *Introduction to Evidence-Based Undergraduate STEM Teaching*. The facilitators are a well-informed and thoughtful group, many with expertise on the MOOC material, whose perspectives and ideas should be valued.

2. Analytical Approach

The report is primarily descriptive rather than interpretive.

Where possible, I have organized quantitative or categorical data to facilitate comparison between the 2015 and 2014 groups, although changes in question wording or the type of response available mean that responses are not always directly comparable. Numerical values in the tables are frequency counts unless otherwise identified.

I have focused qualitative analyses on the 2015 data, as it appears that the team is aware of (at least) and has addressed (in some cases) many of the concerns raised in the 2014 open-ended comments, which emphasize concerns about the amount of material provided and the time needed to cover it. In some cases, I coded responses to specific individual items. In other cases, I have summarized the nature of comments made in response to a variety of more general open-ended items.

3. The MCLC Facilitator Samples

The sample is comparable in size between the two years, although the proportion responding in 2015 is smaller relative to the total number of MCLCs. Respondents come from research-intensive institutions for the most part, consistent with CIRTL's target audience.

	2015	2014
Respondents who did (did not) facilitate an MCLC	30 (1)	25 (2)
Unique institutions	22	≥14*
Institutions identified as research-intensive	19	11
*Not collected from all respondents in 2014		

4. Composition of MCLCs

These items focus on data provided by facilitators about the group with whom they worked .

	2015	2014
Mean MCLC size	13.7	11.0
Range of sizes	2-63	3-30
Main MCLC audience	"majority" audience (could select 1)	"primary" audience (could select >1) / only audience
Graduate students	16	21 / 11
Postdoctoral researchers	7	13 / 2
Faculty	4	3 / 0
Instructional staff/Other	4	0 / 1 (CTL staff)
Mean (estimated) proportion who were active participants	61% "completed"	69% "regular"
Range of participation	0-100%	10-100%
"Completed" seems to have been interpreted by some to mean complete with certification from Coursera.		
If graduate students, target cohort:		
1st-year	1	1
2nd-3rd year	5	5
4th-5th year	6	8
unsure	4	5
Disciplines represented Broad categories only; specific subdisciplines are not named as potentially identifying of institution	biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, engineering, health sciences, math, natural resources, physics	Not asked

5. Structure of MCLCs

These items focused on the information facilitators provided about how they organized their local MCLC offerings. It includes their comments on the broader MOOC content and organization, as they experienced it working with their MCLC, as well as their local activities.

	2015	**2014**
Number of meetings	6.0	7.0
Range of meetings	0-10	0-13
Credit or non-credit? 'Credit' includes required or optional stand-alone credit, component of a course or certificate program, including CIRTL Associate program	15 noncredit 12 credit	14 noncredit 10 credit
Timing of meetings Discussed within week covered on MOOC	 11	 6
Discussed week after covered	17	17
Discussed 2+ weeks after covered	1	2
Perceived value of participating in the global (online) MOOC	Categorical response	Open-ended response, categorized parallel to 2015 response choices
A lot of benefit	5	1
A little benefit	18	8
No benefit	6	7
Don't know/misunderstood question (responded in terms of local not global community)		8

5.1. "More Successful" Activities

For 2015, 56 responses to an open-ended item identified specific activities that their MCLC found successful. These were grouped by general theme as follows:

- Make a concept map of MOOC course topics (7)
- Open discussion of concepts or videos (5)
- Writing learning goals, discussing & relating to Bloom's Taxonomy (4)
- Reflection on inclusive teaching; microaggressions, inclusivity, group dynamics, stereotype threat (4)
- Talking through pros and cons of active learning; sharing own experiences or local use (4)

- Jigsaw discussion on classroom assessment techniques; workshopping exam questions (3)
- Experience peer instruction; develop a clicker question (2)
- Think, Pair, Share activities (2)
- Sharing syllabi, giving feedback (2)

5.2. *"Least Successful" Activities*

For 2015, 23 responses identified specific activities that their MCLC found less successful. These were grouped by general theme as follows:

- Issues due to participants' lack of experience with particular concepts (3)
  - Concept mapping (2) – did not have enough experience
  - Peer evaluation of lesson plans: 'Most of my participants did not have experience writing lesson plans and did not choose to complete the peer-graded assignments, so this week was hard to plan.'
- Discussion of diversity/inclusion topics; mindset (4). Described as superficial.
- Issues due to participants' lack of preparation prior to the meeting (4)
  - Interview protocol: 'We didn't realize that we would have to assign 1-2 hours of outside work to get use out of most of the LC activity suggestions.'
  - Note: 9 respondents assigned extra assignments outside the MOOC; 16 did not.
- Assigning extra readings/materials (2)
- Discussions intended to clarify MOOC content (2). 'Defining characteristics of active learning' was one topic mentioned as leaving participants confused.
- Reviewing syllabi
- Participating in MOOC discussion forums
- "Generally any activity that included the students sitting and writing, such as minute papers or reflection papers, [was] not well received."

5.3. *Improvements Noted to the MOOC*

Overall, respondents who had participated both times indicated that their experience of the MOOC was better the second time.

The number of concerns about the amount of material and time required were much reduced in 2015 compared to 2014. Some still would like the MOOC to move more slowly. What options do facilitators have around timing, and are facilitators aware of these options?

The session on Learning Objective and the session on Inclusive Teaching were called out in particular, more than once each.

Some concerns about the videos were addressed by including shorter clips the second time.

5.4. Ongoing Challenges for the MOOC

A number of comments indicate that the online forums are not very useful to MCLC participants. Some suggest that participation overall was lower in 2015 than 2014; one respondent felt that there was less instructor participation by the MOOC team. Some note that their MCLC participants do not participate in the online community because they are experiencing good community locally, which is indeed the goal of the MCLCs, and thus do not need the online community. Given the many comments about the positive and supportive interactions of MCLCs, t may not be realistic to expect MCLC members to participate extensively in forums, and it may be more worthwhile to think about different ways to engage the online participants rather than trying to get the MCLC members to engage online.

Several comments noted that the shorter videos were better, but some also noted that some coherence was lost. There was reference to video segments no longer part of the course. For instance, Module 5 was described as "frankensteined" together and lacking some coherence as a result. There are some issues with video consistency and quality as well. Several noted that they watched the videos on a faster speed because delivery of information was slow-paced.

One commenter suggested that the multiple-choice quizzes are not modeling good assessment design, and preferred the more meaty assignments, which s/he felt should not be optional.

5.5. Good Ideas for Running an MCLC

A few ideas seemed particularly worth capturing for sharing with others:

"We followed the flipped classroom model of assigning pre-work and an accountability assignment and then leveraged the pre-work during the session. This was a successful model for us as our participants were ready to engage on a common content which may not have been the case if we hadn't narrowed down the content and/or if we didn't have the accountability work."

"Doing a pizza lunch kickoff meeting prior to the MOOC start was a GREAT idea and drew 14 people to plan next steps and discuss what we wanted to get out of it. After that, we met at 5:00 pm and served dinner. …We even did a final capstone social activity upon [participants'] request where we shot videos about what we learned from the MOOC and will do differently."

"We enjoyed having a mixture of disciplines as well as roles in our MOOC. We had Physics, Chemistry, and Biology disciplines represented, as well as grads, faculty, and teaching staff present in our MOOC. We shared syllabi and gave feedback and observed each other teach."

6. Leading an MCLC

This section focuses on information the facilitators shared about their own experience as an MCLC leader, including the supports they needed and used.

	2015	2014
Mean preparation time for meetings (hr per week)	2.6	2.3 (1.8)*
Range of preparation time	1-6	0-6 (0.5-4)*
*Estimates drop for time required to do this again		
Use of MCLC Facilitators' Guide		
Chose activities from guide	16	8
Reviewed to get ideas, then designed my own	7	12
Did not use	2	4
Most helpful aspect of Guide (could select multiple)		
Learning goals of online modules	10	12
Description of main activities	10	10
Learning goals of in-person sessions	10	15
Online discussion questions	5	3
Suggested activities/discussion topics	20	22
Facilitator notes	8	11
Used videos to prepare for meetings		23 responses to open-ended question, 22 favoring any/all facilitator contact mechanisms: e-mail list, discussion board, early communication/access to materials
Yes	16	
No	8	
Didn't know they were available	5	
Had contact with other MCLC facilitators		
Yes	8	
No	17	
Would facilitate an MCLC again		
Yes	23	22
No	1	0
Undecided	2	3

6.1. Benefits to MCLC Facilitators

An open-ended item in 2014 probed benefits of leading an MCLC to the facilitators themselves. Seventeen respondents provided 28 distinct items, which were grouped by theme; 24 of these items referenced benefits to the facilitators:

- Learned new teaching techniques or tweaks on techniques (6)
- Enjoyed discussing teaching with colleagues or students, feeling supported by others in my teaching interests (5)
- Appreciated or came to recognize my own expertise about teaching (4)
- Gained skills or insights about leading and organizing a group (4)
- Appreciated or learned from the diverse perspectives of group members (3)
- Gained insights about tools and challenges in helping others to change their teaching (2)

The main negative outcome for facilitators (4 comments) had to do with challenges of time and participation, in working with group members who did not prepare or did not attend. Comments in 2015 echo these themes, although a specific question about benefits was not asked.

6.2. Ways to Help MCLC Facilitators

The MCLC Facilitators' Guide is appreciated. So is early access to the material. Some respondents noted that they plan to use (or want to use) some of the videos for other types of sessions, such as workshops offered by a teaching and learning center. Also suggested as useful would be a good summary of key points in the MCLC Facilitators' Guide, and some help selecting videos if time was constrained.

Facilitators had a lot of good ideas for how to organize their groups and select activities. Helping them interact with each other (optionally) would add value to this role and would help to build a national network of skilled facilitators with this common interest in supporting future faculty development.

Some offered specific ideas that seem concrete and useful:

- "A specific, better managed and curated space for facilitators to post specifically what they do associated with the specific content.
- More Google Hangouts for facilitators.
- Facilitator recruitment power point to use in different departments and colleges.
- Data from this year's MOOC as a motivator."

"I worked with three other on-campus MOOC facilitators to determine how we'd run our weekly meetings. This was very helpful for me and I could see that if others did not have a facilitator-to-facilitator community, an online source of this would be highly appreciated. One thing that we discussed a lot was the level of teaching experience of our participants and how that dictated what we focused on each week-- perhaps having f-to-f discussion boards based on specific characteristics of learning communities might be helpful (either by

discipline vs. not by discipline, experienced vs. not experienced, taking the MOOC for credit vs. not for credit, etc.).”

“One suggestion was the lesson plan is a significant assignment that didn't seem to match the scaffolding and assignments prior to it. We came up with maybe next time, at least our learning community, would have the lesson planning as a more deliberate thread/goal throughout each meeting where they work through a piece or think about a specific piece for the lesson plan. While it was aligned with forum questions, the participants asked to have it completed over time with more scaffolding/time designated for it earlier.”

7. Kudos

Overall, many of the comments were appreciative and positive. Several comments note that the MCLC helped to build community among participants and provided a starting point for increasing community-mindedness around teaching and learning on their campus. Some illustrative quotations include:

“I enjoyed facilitating the MOOC, learning from it, and sharing my experience with the participants in our learning community.”

“Our face-to-face discussions based on the MOOC content were very fruitful…. Even experienced faculty and teaching staff learned new things from the MOOC.”

“The sessions were scheduled for only an hour but found ourselves many times going closer to 90 minutes each week and/or continuing our conversations via email or as we walked to our buildings/cars.”

“It's one of my favorite things to do, every though I am doing it as a volunteer.”