# Sustaining Communities of Practice for OWIs: Emphasizing a Distributed System for Self Care

Community of Practice (CoP): a term largely attributed to cognitive anthropologist Lave and educational theorist Wenger. A CoP can evolve naturally because of the members' common interest in a particular domain or area, or it can be created deliberately with the goal of gaining knowledge related to a specific field (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
- CoPs are documented in training new OWIs (Melonçon & Arduser, 2013; Stewart, Cohn, & Whithaus, 2016)

Stages of Development
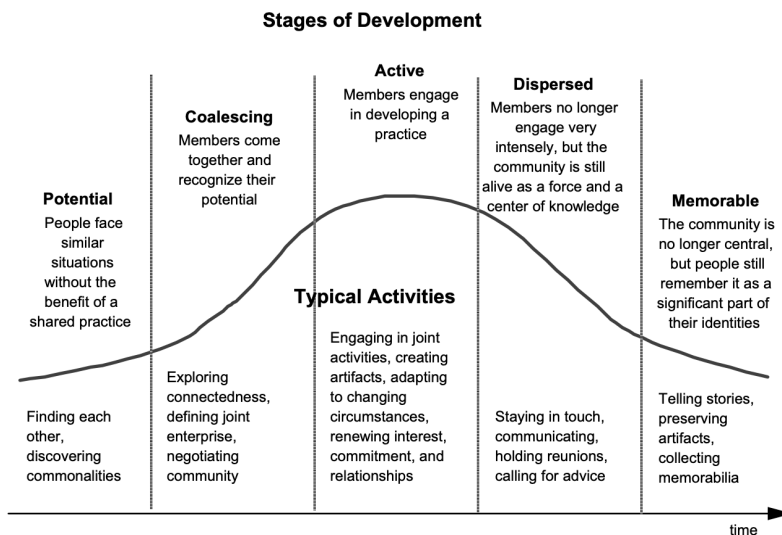
CoPs go through different stages of development where some disperse, despite being needed.

The ideal is that your CoP lives in the active state where people are engaging, adapting, creating artifacts, reviewing.

Strategies for Sustaining CoPs

1. **Create Distributed Community Practices**
    a. A take-one, leave-one mentality to sharing curriculum
        i. A list of SLOs with example assignments for each one
        ii. Downloadable modules that can be modified and mixed and match
        iii. Reading/Assignment Databases
        iv. Share and not duplicate efforts (Rice, 2015)
    b. Leverage asynchronous work & consider time fluidity
        i. No need to have meetings to convey information: try communal Google Docs or Discussion Boards to ease new OWIs in
    c. Decentralize the Leadership: Share the load across members
2. **Leverage Technology to Support CoP**: Sustained Communities of Practice rely on archived resources, which are best served by a central location that connects each participant. Technology helps to sustain CoP efforts (Wenger, White, & Smith, 2010):
    a. Sharing Resources: Canvas or LMS shell, Google Folder, Department blog, Etc.
    b. Connectivity & Communication: Slack, Discord, etc.
    c. These technologies also allow CoPs to archive and document their work

Sources: Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge university press.; Meloncon, L., & Arduser, L. (2013). Communities of practice approach: A new model for online course development and sustainability. *Online education*, *2*, 73-90.;Rice, R. (2015). Faculty professionalization for OWI. *Foundational practices of online writing instruction*, 389-410; Stewart, M. K., Cohn, J., & Whithaus, C. (2016). Collaborative Course Design and Communities of Practice. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, *9*(1).