Substantive Project

Substantive is defined as requiring a minimum of 15 hours per year to complete. Substantive projects have a clear outcome or product as a result of the project; they meet a clear need of the Department, College, or individual’s professional growth and are pre-approved by your Department Head / Program Director and Associate Dean.

Example:
College Service
Outcome: A standardized text to be used in teaching CO 101 Introduction to Computer Systems will be chosen. The need for a standardized text has been an identified need for several years. Additionally, for my own professional growth, I believe I will benefit from leading this review of instructional materials.

Reflection
I think this was a very beneficial project for our department. It required a lot of collaboration—both at the department level and at the college level. I needed to learn more about the average capabilities of our entering students (reading and comprehension), more about what courses students who completed CO 101 would likely take after CO 101 (i.e., “what could CO 101 best prepare them for, in a general sense?”) and review many instructional materials, including those being used at our transfer universities. I also reviewed possible instructional materials for accessibility and alternative formats.

Examples of what I learned about myself as a faculty member
While I am well aware of a range of commonly used computer applications, the rate at which applications are changed or new ones introduced really complicated this project. And the requirement to make sure that instructional materials be accessible made the project even more complicated. I learned that I had to let go of some “favorite materials,” seek input from my colleagues, and facilitate compromise. Getting everyone to agree on a standardized text was no easy task. But in the end, we all pulled together and made a decision. I learned that I can be more flexible than I thought! I also learned that flexibility is a very necessary skill for this sort of project.

What I might do differently
This project really needed a lot of input and guidance from the Department Head. While the project had been approved, I didn't proactively seek his guidance until I had started getting input from other faculty. That was definitely backwards. I underestimated the range of materials available and so time management was really rough. If I were giving advice to someone else doing this project, I will encourage them to have a plan and timetable. I also would encourage the development of a rubric or at least a list of “have to haves/good to have/we can do withouts.” Not having that made every book and resource conversation start from scratch. I learned a lot from this project and enjoyed the feeling of accomplishment, but doubt that I will do it again.