

Building a Solid Communication Across the Curriculum Program

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One of the guiding principles for communication across the curriculum established at the NCA Summer Conference “Engaging 21st Century Communication Students” was that CXC program goals and objectives should be grounded in the culture and mission of the institution. Given that, I provide general guidance with the disclaimer that you should start by addressing the needs of your institution as well as the specific structures that might fit with your culture and mission.

Carefully Consider Issues of Administrative Structure and Mission

- Address the “turf” difficulty (Where is the program located? What are the reporting lines?).
- Create administrative positions that are compensated, evaluated, and considered a substantive part of faculty review.
- Request staff support for program activities.
- Incorporate graduate and undergraduate students as consultants.
- Develop a mission statement with key institutional members and create a representative advisory board.
- Encourage a broad range of program goals (e.g., using communication to enhance learning, increasing competence in teamwork, creating better members of civic society).
- Bring in outside consultants to deal with administrative resistance.

Identify Possible Institutional Partnerships

- Complete an institution-wide needs assessment.
- Piggy-back on other initiatives (undergraduate affairs, teaching and learning centers, office of student support, technology initiatives)
- Consider working with established writing-across-the-curriculum programs, even if only on an ad hoc basis
- Become involved with other affiliated efforts (e.g., new faculty orientation, preparing the professoriate, etc.)

Develop a Public Relations Plan

- Consider having students work with you to develop a PR plan, if they are available.
- Visit faculty in their departmental “homes.”
- Get connected with the student, faculty, and administrative news services early on
- Have someone in a higher administrative position introduce early activities.
- Create a website that describes program activities and events.
- Pursue any natural local connections with the community.

Establish Methods for Increasing Faculty and Student Involvement

- Get involvement from and support of faculty in communication and other affiliated programs.
- Be wary of administrative mandates—if possible, frame programs in a supporting role, not an enforcing role.
- Start with disciplines that are eager and have some investment in working with communication instruction (e.g., ABET).
- Create a variety of faculty development activities that range from intense workshops to quick, fun events.
- Celebrate and reward faculty who work with the program.
- Have early adopters respond to resistance with their own experience.
- Bring in outside workshop facilitators and consultants.

Pursue Scholarship

- Develop a way for scholarly work to emerge from programmatic activities (e.g., monograph series, research reports).
- Spotlight teaching and learning scholarship.
- Gather a library of CXC resources that illustrate scholarly work.
- Get involved in collaborative grants with other disciplines or initiatives, if appropriate.
- Turn administrative questions or challenges into scholarly questions.
- Sponsor research presentations.

Establish a Thorough Assessment Plan

- Establish a multifaceted plan for programmatic assessment (workshop evaluations, faculty surveys, student surveys, student focus groups).
- Maintain records of participation (e.g., disciplinary affiliation, teaching experience).
- Publicize annual reports that are simple, succinct, and persuasive.
- Develop some measure of outcomes-based assessment.

For additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be glad to talk further about any of the above issues in light of specific institutional needs:

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