

Team Members

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Point of Inquiry

How can faculty teaching teams continue to support student success through remote integrative learning communities?

Expected Outcomes

- Recommendation of best practices and equity-based strategies for online spaces in learning community courses, starting with Fall 2020's LC150: Speaking Up!
- Compilation of instructor toolkit including resources to support community-building in virtual integrative learning spaces

Innovative Teaching and/or Assessment

- The cohort-based learning community model has been recognized as a high impact practice that bridges the achievement gap for students, especially those from historically underrepresented and under-served groups. The challenges of learning in an online environment are even more impactful for these students.
- Our project will explore proven strategies for virtual integrative learning communities that incorporate creative and critical pedagogies and curriculum design. We want to ensure that retention and academic achievement for virtual learning communities will be consistent with rates for in-person learning communities.

Student Populations

- Previous and expected students represent the following populations: historically underrepresented; first generation college; returning adults; formerly incarcerated ; veterans; Seattle Promise; Running Start; international students; ESL Transitional Studies.
- 50 students who enroll in the Speaking Up FQE Learning Community each fall
- 200+ students who participate in Integrative Learning Projects each quarter

Benefits for Institution, Students, and Project Team

- Students will participate in a virtual hybrid learning community that is based on critical pedagogy. Teaching teams will infuse equity and inclusive practices in the design and facilitation of learning outcomes, activities, assignments, and assessment. As a result of this highly engaged and interactive classroom experience, students will have a strong sense of belonging and self-efficacy to continue and complete their educational journey.
- LC150 Speaking Up: Having Our Say, Shaping Our Education. "Highly interactive, community-centered course where student voices are the starting point to explore the importance of how narratives shape our understanding of visibility and power in education. Looks at the importance of individual voices and opportunities to "speak up" to transform education.
- CIPE team members will learn how to translate the relationship-building and circles of trust that occur in the physical classroom space to the online learning space.

Deliverable

- Submit Final Report AND Project Link: by Sept. 20, 2020
- Present Poster (project description, outcomes, findings, ideas/practices): on Convocation Day, Sept 23, 2020

Summary of Findings

Focus Area #1:

Research best practices for designing integrative online curriculum

We found that there are no clear answers on how to do learning communities in a virtual space. Most institutions use the linked model vs. the fully integrative one that is in place at Seattle Central (formerly known as Coordinated Studies). LC coordinators and instructors nationwide feel drawn to this latter model as a better way to engage students and build strong connections. Many asked about a shared Canvas shell with all teachers collaborating to design and assess integrated assignments. The research and discussions yielded less about curriculum and more about pedagogy.

Focus Area #2:

Explore opportunities for critical pedagogy in online learning communities

There's no doubting that the COVID pandemic revealed and exacerbated disparities faced by historically underrepresented students (BIPOC, non-traditional, low-income, first generation in college, and more), many of whose jobs are designated 'essential services' putting them at higher risk for infection. In addition to the widespread stress and anxiety brought on by the virus, our community is also affected by the steady stream of racial violence and protests. As we look to equity-minded practices in our online learning spaces, we need to consider the whole person. Mental health concerns are liable to take a huge toll on our students' and our own lives moving forward.

Focus Area #3:

Identify technological tools and other resources for building student engagement online

So many tech tools... so little time to get a handle on which ones work best for our students' needs. While the tech industry responded promptly to the demand for online learning, it felt like trial by fire for instructors and students who had to learn the tool while learning their content. We found previously published evaluations of web-based applications and platforms, and welcomed the generous sharing of tools and tips from a supportive community of instructional designers and online teaching veterans. We remain concerned about the disparity students face regarding access and tech literacy skills given that the digital divide is alive and well.

Focus Area #4:

Compile equity-based strategies for assessing online assignments and activities

The pandemic and remote learning, followed by a powerful rejection of racial inequity have come together to push educators to re-examine their philosophy and practice of teaching and learning. Given the new reality of change, instability, and a reckoning with the status quo, how do we prepare our students for a future of uncertainty? How do we prioritize grades and student learning? Does sticking with traditional assessment methods help our students? We are facing a compelling call to explore alternative assessment practices, to consider labor and effort with compassion, to contextualize learning in the 2020 world.

-flexibility-compassion-humility-presence-relational-contextual-creativity-predictability-consistency-grace-

Areas of Focus Mapped Resource List

- Included below is our annotated list of articles, webinars, slide decks, and presentations that relate to our project's four focus areas. These resources include key takeaways and relevant content for an instructor toolkit to support integrative learning communities in an online environment.

Focus Area #1: Research best practices for designing integrative online curriculum

1. Learning Communities Matter in Times of Crisis [National Learning Community Collaborative]

<https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/learning-communities-matter-in-times-of-crisis/>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HBwSz4lAnwH8j2K_A9QZ9_0p7F202TK8Hz7rZpcukfA/edit

Offers a rationale for sustaining the learning community (LC) curriculum model amidst the COVID pandemic. Reminder of the unique role of LCs as an interdisciplinary space for critical thinking and problem solving that invites integration of students' life experiences, local and global events, and academic research and concepts. Gives prompts for us to question how we will adjust the way we do LCs in a remote education environment. How will we ensure that they truly align with the demands of 'high impact practices'? Open Google Doc compilation of ideas, shared resources, and questions gathered during monthly virtual social hours. Add yours!

2. Transitioning LC/LLC Curriculum to an Online Setting, [Learning Communities Association (LCA) virtual social hour]

<http://www.lcassociation.org/webinars--virtual-socials.html>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HBwSz4lAnwH8j2K_A9QZ9_0p7F202TK8Hz7rZpcukfA/edit

In our virtual hybrid LC space amidst shifting outside forces, we want to prioritize the essential elements of LCs: making connections, finding campus resources, and learning through integrative assignments and activities. Discussion tips and takeaways:

- Form small groups (project based or other) in asynchronous model based on mutual schedules for cohort building to replace in-person friend groups that form on campus.
- Give faculty flexibility and permission to let go of things; do the best you can with the time you have. Prioritize regular touchpoints with every single student.

3. Designing Co-Curricular Programming in Virtual LCs/LLCs [LCA virtual social hour]

<http://www.lcassociation.org/webinars--virtual-socials.html>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HBwSz4lAnwH8j2K_A9QZ9_0p7F202TK8Hz7rZpcukfA/edit

Discussion tips and takeaways:

- Early support and planning with partners for co-curricular campus programming and activities:
- Use peer mentors to bolster co-curricular programming and build relationships among students for resilience factor; Link more assignments to reduce workload; Use Canvas platform for co-curricular engagement; Ensure that the variety of opportunities for engagement are accessible but not overwhelming, and also considerate of technology limitations.
- Create a map for the course/experience showing where and how students will make choices. This can reduce anxiety about the unknown, especially for the asynchronous elements of the LC.

4. Transitioning Learning Communities Virtually for Community Colleges [LCA virtual social hour]

<http://www.lcassociation.org/webinars--virtual-socials.html>

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HBwSz4lAnwH8j2K_A9QZ9_0p7F202TK8Hz7rZpcukfA/edit

Discussion tips and takeaways:

- "No new learning in the synchronous space! Its function is to build connections, support, and coaching."
- Limit video lecture content to 15 minutes. Use narrated PowerPoint slides; lower bandwidth than video formats. Audio is better for students who use phones for course work. And be sure to include a transcript.
- Use a pre-survey to learn about your students' capacity and availability; responses help schedule regular online student support hours for immediate response via email (like in-class communication).
- Be open to communicating via text (GenZ preference); if uncomfortable sharing your personal smartphone number, set up a free Google Voice number.

5. Employing Equity-Minded & Culturally-Affirming Teaching Practices in Virtual Learning Communities, Dr. Luke Wood and Dr. Frank Harris III [CORA webinar]

https://youtu.be/aMrf_MC5COK

Defines equity mindedness as: “recognizing and addressing systemic inequities, institutional underperformance, perceived deficits; and engaging in critical self-reflection on roles and responsibilities”. Refers to Garrison’s framework of three presences that are required for online teaching: social (communication and relational); cognitive (understanding and applying information); and teaching (fostering high order thinking). Claims that additional presence relates to EQUITY (visibility of students of color, accessibility of tech, external pressures). Goal of equity-minded teaching is to obtain optimal balance between challenge and support; convey high expectations; demonstrate authentic care. Describes five equity minded practices for teaching online and lists specific actions for each: to be intrusive, relational, race conscious, community focused, and culturally relevant and affirming.

6. Designing High-Impact Practices for Equity and Impact in New Contexts [AAC&U Faculty Friday]

<https://www.aacu.org/events/designing-high-impact-practices-equity-and-impact-new-contexts>

Chris Navia, UWisconsin: Offers strategies to more fully address equity in online courses:

Engage in the hard conversations. Learn about students before and during class. Share your own experience of confusion and stress. Flexibility is key! Make time in class to talk about life events outside the classroom content (COVID-19, racial unrest, elections, environment/climate change). We can use online platforms to connect the students’ learning and coursework with a wider personal audience of family and friends.

George Sanchez, USC: Encourages us to lift the veil of ‘racial uplift’ ideology. Without campuses, students’ privilege or lack thereof impacts their learning. We must incorporate these remote environments into our teaching as we attempt to create transformation for individual students and for our broader society. So many instructors perform the invisible labor that forges connections, support, and mentoring with students, especially those from traditionally underrepresented groups. Challenges us to replicate or reimagine this informal relationship building that happens in campus spaces; to maintain with returning students, and to develop for incoming students. Sanchez also asks that we consider the impact of pandemic on mental health of employees and students. Leadership check ins with employees, resource sharing, normalization of the stress that we are all feeling. Faculty can do the same for their students.

7. Working with Generation Z/Running Start Students, Dr. William Jackson [Seattle Colleges Faculty Development workshop]

<http://facdev.seattlecolleges.edu/workshops/>

<https://youtu.be/slkidw2iBN0>

<http://facdev.seattlecolleges.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WilliamJacksonGenZWorkshopFinal.pptx>

Offers context for GenZ students who seek to make a difference in their world, to remove hierarchies and address inequity in multiple arenas. They value active participation and want to see change happen right away. Research suggests that we engage with Gen Z students through:

- Social and emotional leadership happens in different learning spaces, both physical and online. How are our learning spaces culturally responsive?
- Skill development in content areas. Is the work properly scaffolded to meet student needs? How do students learn to grow academically in our learning spaces?
- Relating learning to the bigger picture. How does what they’re doing have direct benefit to personal growth or the development of society? What opportunities do we provide to receive and respond to student feedback?

These are all crucial points as we welcome increasing numbers of Seattle Promise and Running Start students!

8. Online Teaching: The Great Equalizer? Students of Color Identify Strategies that Work for Them, Dr. Kayleen Oka [Seattle Central College]

Contact Dr. Oka for additional information and slide deck

Dr. Oka's sabbatical project shared recommendations on the importance of student community building in online formats for students of color. Findings from a literature review, student surveys, student focus group, and faculty interviews revealed these recommendations:

- Increase opportunities for online interaction: faculty get to know students and students get to know each other.
- Add diversity in the presentation of content through videos storytelling, and group activities
- Carefully consider how group work is structured, fostered, monitored, and assessed
- Incorporate students experiences and prior knowledge in assignments
- Provide options and choices for students
- Invite feedback that's frequent, constructive, and timely!

Focus Area #3: Identify technological tools and other resources for building student engagement online

9. Leading Groups Online: a down-and-dirty guide to leading online courses, meetings, trainings, and events, Jeanne Rewa and Daniel Hunter [ebook & template]

https://www.trainingforchange.org/training_tools/leading-groups-online-book/

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1laL3MG0Ghaq5LUOq7RqIrDsydyHpx-cj-1YN8rVA9wk/edit#slide=id.g57cfa781d9_1_62

Useful description of effective activity types to utilize during online sessions including journaling, use of chat, drawing, group list building, go-around participation, poll responses, spectrum, fishbowls, and breakout groups. Platform-neutral, accessibility conscious, and addresses the psychological impact of moving into an online space for highly relational group work. Includes a useful guide to handling common technology mishaps in real time with students. Template in Google Docs includes slides that can be downloaded, edited, and re-used.

10. Moving Online: Ten Ways to Pack and Unpack Your Courses, Brad Garner [National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition]

https://youtu.be/nSKkqkkrt_M

https://issuu.com/nrcpubs/docs/toolbox_18.5

Chock-full of practical tools and engaging activities to connect with students in the online learning space, and to rethink how we assess learning and give feedback. Recommends that we build predictable pacing, apply consistent formatting/navigation, while allowing for flexibility and options to accommodate varying off campus learning conditions.

11. Student's Guide to Zoom

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1x2H1b1KddyIpON57ML2zU-SOVqwMWsN484eRMzhGiu0/edit>

Adaptable guide from University of North Carolina that orients students to Zoom features and best practices. Student-friendly language.

12. Delivering High-Quality Instruction Online in Response to COVID-19 Faculty Playbook [Every Learner Everywhere]

<http://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources>

Co-authored by O'Keefe, Rafferty, Gunder, and Vignare, this playbook contains several topics (Designing with Equity in Mind, Assessment, etc.) that are key to quality course design and delivery, from continuity planning during a crisis, to developing and maintaining high-quality online courses.

13. Small Talk and Chit Chat: Using Informal Communication to Build a Learning Community Online, Agatha Beins

Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship & Pedagogy, 26(2), 157–175.

<https://doi-org.seattlecentral.idm.oclc.org/10.1353/tnf.2016.0022>

Shares research, practice, and student response on intentional creation of space for informal communication where students get to know each other independent of the instructor's guidance or direction. Reframes learning community spaces: instead of settling for a comfortable safe space, there's benefit to building brave space. References Garrison's social presence scholarship: "how students feel in class relates to how well they learn". Immediacy and intimacy help alleviate the feeling of disconnect and distance in online learning experience.

Uses first day introductions to encourage students to see each other as "important, complicated, vibrant, and knowledgeable". Recommends blogs and video chats using platforms other than the learning management system, as ways to create space for socialization and peer education.

Focus Area #4: Compile equity-based strategies for assessing online assignments and activities

14. Designing High-Impact Practices for Equity and Impact in New Contexts [AAC&U Faculty Friday]

<https://www.aacu.org/events/designing-high-impact-practices-equity-and-impact-new-contexts>

Chris Navia, UWisconsin: Is our assessment practice grading students on performance or privilege? Center the situation of individual students in the remote learning environment; ask and meet them where they are instead of making assumptions about conditions. Students cannot focus on mastery of content and development of skills if they are struggling with life demands. Ask 'what am I doing to promote student learning?' not, 'what grade can I give?'

15. Delivering High-Quality Instruction Online in Response to COVID-19 Faculty Playbook [Every Learner Everywhere]

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Co-authored by O'Keefe, Rafferty, Gunder, and Vignare, this playbook contains several topics (Designing with Equity in Mind, Assessment, etc.) that are key to quality course design and delivery, from continuity planning during a crisis, to developing and maintaining high-quality online courses.

16. How to Assess Learning in a Pandemic, Rebecca Koenig [EdSurge]

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-07-29-how-to-assess-learning-in-a-pandemic>

Panelist Susan D. Blum (U Notre Dame): Throughout the quarter, increase intrinsic motivation by focusing on learning, not grades. Invite students to engage in honest reflection and self-assessment of their learning, to offer feedback and recognition to classmates whose contributions enrich their own personal learning. At the end of the quarter, students conference with instructor for thoughtful discussion and decision on the fair and appropriate grade for their level of effort and evidence of learning. Relates to Asao Inoue's research on labor-based grading.

Panelist Tony Crider (Elon U): Developed the concept of "epic finales" at the end of the quarter where the instructor could see who the students had become by demonstrating their learning in a scenario experience. It allowed students to respond to a new and different situation using concepts and strategies gained during the quarter.