

The Center for the Arts in Society
Interdisciplinary Education Workshops

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Impetus: CAS Model for Research in Teaching

Value of Interdisciplinary teaching at CMU?

Enriched learning experience for students:

- Layered content
- Novel combination of skill building
- Exposure to faculty and other students with different habits of mind

Faculty stretches pedagogical approach and translation of research expertise

Process

Structure of CAS:

3 Years of funding for 'Themed Initiatives'

The initiative has a faculty coordinator from CFA and Dietrich, respectively

Initiative Coordinators devise CFP with the Director,

- short proposals for new projects reviewed
- projects selected
- coordination between Director, Initiative Coordinators, and Project Initiators to articulate 3 year plan

Project initiators articulate specific thread of research to align with broad theme

- discrete funding within the grant encourages translation of research material for class development

An advisory board is configured based on the themed initiative

- Advisory board offers regular review



Process

Structure of Workshops:

- A series of 4 workshops highlighting courses from across the campus
- 2 courses were discussed at each of the first 3 workshops
 - Presentations included course title, learning objectives, brief overview of content and information on enrolled students

Attendees:

- Faculty teaching or interested in teaching Interdisciplinary classes were invited to attend and to share their practice or interest

Process

September 24th: Transfer of research into teaching

October 20th: Methods for team vs individual teaching; allocation of materials/ resources technology infusion into arts/humanities courses

January 26th: Models for teaching; communal learning, new spaces for learning

February 25th: A discussion on sustainability of interdisciplinary teaching practices



Lessons

- Various successful models for team teaching
- Heavy overhead to work in a team in initial offering; new overhead in subsequent offerings but momentum can be maintained
- Elegant models can allow faculty and students to work with faculty in their subject area, but develop a rich and practical space for combined efforts
- An offering can be embedded in the curriculum
- Students' work creates a bevy of material that can then lead to the development of a new course or a next iteration, in regard to moving to an editing or curating of materials model
- First and second iterations of prototypes for tools (tech or otherwise); something that could be 'worked on' with future cohorts

Sustainability: Challenges

- Repeat of course offerings
 - workload of iteratively improving course
 - articulating value in departments of faculty instructors
- Lowering barriers for implementing new courses:
 - finding a partner (interdisciplinary) and identifying strengths and weaknesses in expertise
 - no community to debrief with/learn from
 - course failure frowned upon (missed opportunity for lessons learned)
- Overhead of developing and implementing an integrated teaching model (there is added value above and beyond the tag-team approach)
- Integration in curriculum
 - (e.g., counts as elective, meets high-level reqs for major/minor, count for general ed req) vs. not (independent, experimental course or 1-off)

Sustainability: Strategies Recommendations

- Staff person to gather materials and examples of/people engaging in interdisciplinary practice on campus, wiki
- Bring faculty teaching and wanting to teach interdisciplinary classes together for twice a year meeting
- Create a community of practice with a college-level liaison (Eberly?)
 - *An example would be the Teaching Awards -- Eberly works in collaboration with the Provost
 - Course design institute
 - faculty come in with a germ of idea and work with Eberly for the year to develop a fleet of courses and find funding structure to support various efforts and support systems. An email list could be kept as a forum for topics that were compelling to them from the workshops.
 - Awareness campaign
 - Educate students to the value of the class, possibly as gen ed elective

Goals:

- Explore what would success look like for different stakeholders?
- Create new courses (how many? how many enrollments? what is the baseline now? how do we feel about the baseline?)
- Sustaining courses beyond 1-2 times, given overhead
- Community of practice - freedom to participate in this space without detriment to faculty or college/dept
- Students able to connect to faculty, smaller sections with project interactions with faculty increases
- Explore the interdisciplinary skills and learning outcomes achieved by courses
i.e. direct and indirect measures
- Central venue for evolving discourse on what interdisciplinary teaching is at CMU and in higher education:
i.e. two fac from different disciplines? 1 faculty member teaching different perspectives?

End

