

Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice Part I

A. Learning Community (LC) Title

Design for Leadership Course Transformation Process Learning Community

B. Community Curator(s). Who has prepared Part I of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Dr. Marian R. Plant, Sections A, B, C, D, E
 Dr. Spiro Mavroidis and Dr. Michelle Tabit, Section F
 Prof. Robin Kratzer and Director of Pilgrim Library Ann Bible, Section G
 Dr. Kenneth Christiansen and Prof Jerri Courtney, Section H

C. Abstract (75 Words or less) *if it has changed*

No change

D. Learning Community Members, Units, Roles. List your community members, their units or disciplines and roles, *if they have changed*. Who has been added, deleted?

Core members Contributions	Unit/Discipline	
ADDED Ann Bible, M.L.I.S.	Director of Library and Instructional Resources, Pilgrim Library, Defiance College	"Promoted" from Associate to Core member by unanimous acclamation of the DOL Learning Community (DOL/LC). Ann has attended every DOL/LC meeting, taken on LC tasks, brought new technology to our attention, and

		provided insight from her perspective as a student in various online classes. She will in all probability take the lead in creating informational and orientation "packets" to imbed in online courses to facilitate student use of online library resources, etc.
No deletions of Core members		

Associate Members
Contributions

Unit/Discipline

ADDED Wayne D. Buchanan, Ph.D.	Associate Professor, Business Administration	Joined the Learning Community in late fall as representative of Graduate Studies programs of Defiance College. Currently teaches online courses for an eastern university.

E. **Background & Context.** Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. What do you intend to achieve? What technologies are you using and how? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have? What types of support would you like?

The Design for Leadership Online Course Transformation Learning Community (shortened to Design Online or DOL/LC) came into being in

response to the need of Defiance College's Design for Leadership Distance Learning Program in Christian Education to evolve its technology-enhanced distance learning program to a fully online academic program without sacrificing the integrity of the courses, including supervised field education. The Design for Leadership has provided college courses through guided independent studies for about 30 years. Its students are nontraditional age men and women serving in local churches, church agencies, and the military who do the work of staff people in educational ministries but without formal academic study and praxis. With the increased availability of internet access across the Design for Leadership's student base, plus the appeal of distance learning within a structured (read that also as "disciplined") semester framework, some current students and most all prospective students are expecting the courses to be fully online.

Our DOL/LC is working to create a PROCESS by which courses can be TRANSFORMED from their current technology-enhanced guided independent study form to fully online courses. Simultaneously our DOL/LC is creating the PROCESS so that traditional on-ground classes can also be TRANSFORMED to fully online. Why a PROCESS? Because with a PROCESS we will be able to (1) offer a set of criteria that meets the objective of TRANSFORMING said courses while maintaining course integrity (i.e. substantive student engagement, quality teacher-student, student-teacher interaction, academic rigor), and (2) teach the PROCESS to other instructors in the Design for Leadership and across the Defiance College campus. Better to teach a person to fish than to just give that person a fish for the day.

We first focused our attention on WebCT as our primary technology since that is the course management system available at Defiance College. As you will note in later sections, we've explored other technologies. At the time of writing this report we are on the cusp of determining our next steps regarding the information we've accumulated.

We have several major endeavors before us as we move through the Spring Semester. (1) To solidify the COURSE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS and pilot it with selected Design for Leadership courses and the Global Civilization on-ground course, (2) To create a format for teaching the PROCESS to instructors on-campus, (3) To host a Course Transformation Process Workshop on campus for Design for Leadership instructors who live beyond the Defiance, Ohio area, and (4) To identify essential support services for fully online courses. On a related note, we are working to gather information related to registration, billing, add/withdrawal, and student attendance policies and practices for online courses so that these necessary considerations

can be addressed.

Probably the support most needed from the institution will be the "Support" discussed in section G below, beginning with basic tech support for brand new online students and extending to assistance with course design. We will get a better sense of that reality as the Design for Leadership and the Global Civilization program pilots their fully online courses. That will help the institution gage the level of support that will be necessary to help sustain graduate studies courses when they go fully online.

F. Description of Your Early Work, Planning and Preparations.

Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Region's Learning Institute (March 14, 2008). What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impacts have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

Preliminary work as you prepare for your community project and for attending you Region's Learning Institute:

The group met every other week throughout the fall semester. The general project objective for the fall semester was to gather and discuss peer-reviewed literature pertinent to online teaching and pedagogy. More specifically, the learning community reviewed and discussed issues such as (1) maintaining course integrity with online courses, (2) optimal class sizes for online courses, (3) teaching and learning styles in an online format, (4) varying student abilities with technology, (5) proper planning for online teaching and learning, (6) student and faculty accessibility to technology, (7) proper time management by students and faculty, (8) characteristics of successful students, and (9) characteristics of successful courses. This background work set the stage for creating the framework which will allow us to transform traditional classes to an online environment.

What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?) :

WebCT was used as the primary tool for sharing resources and coordinating schedules. Timelines were followed as close as possible by assigning specific tasks to an individual or group of individuals which reported to the entire group the following meeting. The learning community is comprised of a diverse group of individuals, each bring

expertise from their own academic discipline and experience with technology and the online environment.

What were key issues and concerns, and how did you sort them out?

The main concern in transforming traditional courses to an online format was maintaining the “integrity” of the course. This was addressed by reviewing the literature and holding discussions with various individuals which have had online experience as students or faculty. In addition, a four-hour workshop was held that addressed many of the member’s concerns.

What were the key successes and what impacts have they had?

One of the main challenges the group faced was building the conceptual framework of transforming traditional courses to online courses. We had gathered the various components piecemeal but it wasn’t until the four-hour workshop that it all came together. That was a key success!

Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

Since that workshop, we have been able to examine components of a traditional course and start work on the transformation process.

G. Community Building and Project Development. Describe early phases of building your community and developing your collaborative project. What key challenges and problems do you face and how do you handle them? What did they - or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? What resources are you using to support community building and how are they making a difference?

Since we are such a small campus, all of the members of the learning community already know each other. We have worked together in other learning communities or committees. Our learning community represents faculty from every discipline. At the first learning community, we went around the group and talked about our background and experience with online courses. The background varied from no experience to some using it as students to some faculty who have or are currently teaching an online course. Having this variation of experience is extremely helpful to the community as it allows us to approach the project from all aspects.

Sometimes the various levels of technological experience make it difficult to communicate when some members have so much knowledge

and others are novice. Another challenge is differing viewpoints on what is sound pedagogy.

To increase technology knowledge, we have conducted demonstrations of various technologies, held a workshop hosted by the IDEAL department at BGSU on how to create a course online and how to teach in an online environment, and webinar on supporting applications. We will continue demonstrations and workshops to educate faculty on new technologies to be used in online courses.

One of the key challenges facing our learning community is the support of offering online courses. The institution has been very hesitant on moving towards online courses because of fear of losing the very thing that we market our institution. That is the small friendly campus atmosphere where you get to know your professors and the face to face interaction.

Another challenge facing the learning community is building online courses in a course management system that will probably change in the near future. The institution was forced to update the Course Management System (CMS) a year ago because the one that was previously being used was no longer supported by the company. The version that the institution updated to is not the current version produced by the company and will only be supported until January 2009. Therefore, the institution will probably be making another CMS change within the next year or so possibly to an open source CMS. This brings with it many challenges such as needing an administrator to oversee the new CMS package.

Our learning community also sees the need for a person to serve as a developer and coordinator for online courses to give assistance to faculty in creating online courses and support to students enrolled in the courses.

One of the most successful and beneficial resources has been a workshop conducted by Michael Kudela and Carolyn Matzinger from the IDEAL Department at BGSU. The workshop was discussing the training they give faculty on setting up Online Courses. This was a fabulous workshop that not only gave us lots of ideas for pedagogy, policies, and procedures but also valuable websites that can be utilized in online courses.

H. Planning Your Assessment Strategies. How will you evaluate your work/successes? How will you assess member learning, (including technology learning)? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project? Both formative (this Portrait is part of this) and summative methods should be used.

The long-range goal established in the grant proposal was "to move all the Design for Leadership courses from technologically enhanced to fully online courses. This would be a program-wide transformation of 27 courses." "Challenges" listed in the proposal, include the following:

- C3. Training Design for Leadership instructors (local and outside Ohio) to transform their course(s) from technologically enhanced to fully on-line course(s)
- C4. Creating a process for training new instructors, and for developing new courses in on-line format.
- C5. Making available to Design for Leadership students, who are over-traditional-age students geographically distant from the Defiance College campus, an online version of AH111 and AH112 Global Civilization...
- C6. Moving to a significantly different course management system...

Short range goals listed in the proposal include:

- S1. Marriage of sound pedagogy and effective teaching with course management technology ...
- S2. Review of selected existing courses for on-lining: Some Design for Leadership courses, AH111 and AH112 Global Civilization, an Education course.
- S3. Articulate pedagogy and create a course transformation process based on results of 1 and 2 above. Train and coach instructors in a process for transforming their courses from technologically enhanced to fully on-line.
- S4. Determine the viability of a model for fully online courses that work with open enrollment as an option to standard semester enrollment.
- S5. Research virtual worlds such as Second Life as an avenue for disseminating materials and providing space for students and faculty to interact.

The evaluation of our group effort will combine summative and

formative elements. It will be summative insofar as we will report on our progress as a group toward each of the goals listed above - and we have made substantial progress on most of them. And it will be formative insofar as there will still be much to do in relation to implementing the full meaning of most if not all of the goals as stated.

The evaluation of individual member learning will also have summative and formative elements. Individuals will be asked to self-assess their own learning in relation to a list of the topics and technologies that have been studied by all members of the Learning Community, or presented to the group by individual members of the community or consultants. Additionally, we will construct a list of objective individual accomplishments. These will include: 1) understanding the needs of the online learner; 2) understanding different learning styles and directing our design efforts toward accommodating multiple learning styles; 3) first successful uses of new technologies and 4) occasions of demonstrated leadership in researching and teaching the group about the strengths and weaknesses of particular technological tools and/or particular "best practices" for distance learning programs. And last but not least for formative evaluation, 6) a section entitled "What do we each have left to do as individuals to implement the overall group goals?"

This is the end of Part I
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[Submit Part I to nwlccenter@bgsu.edu]
