

Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice Part II

To be worked on after your **March 14, 2008** Learning Institute and finalized before the end-of-year EXPO.

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

Dr. Marian R. Plant, Sections I, M, O
Director of Pilgrim Library Ann Bible and Dr. Spiro Mavroidis, Section L
Dr. Michelle Tabit, Section J
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Sections were completed between May 1 and May 16. Final compilation and submission done on May 17, 2008.

J. **Key Resources.** Who and what are the beneficial people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you have utilized? What help/support did you get from instructional designers, IT staff and other tech support personnel? What types of support did you receive from departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential and why were they essential?

During the course of our learning community we worked with the Bowling Green State University [BGSU] Instructional Design and Education Specialists [IDEAL] and our own technical advisors on campus. The three key figures in this process were Michael Kudela and Carolyn Matzinger [IDEAL] and Robin Kratzer, Defiance College's WebCT administrator. Throughout our learning community we explored the use of various websites, online programs, and resources.

Skype
FAQ
Wikis
Googledocs
Google Video
Google
Flickr
Blogs
Merlot

Flash
MEEBO
Creative Commons
Second Life
Youtube
Audacity
Lame
NVU
Netvibes—RSS
Web 2.0
Internet Archive
Thinkature

With their help we learned importance of these programs and had the opportunity to see them demonstrated. In essence, we learned how to integrate them into the classroom. Some will enhance the learning experience, some will enliven teaching strategies, and others will allow us to tap into new information that will strengthen both on ground and online teaching. Finally, through consultation of the Ohio Learning Network [OLN] we participated in a Webinar that demonstrated some unique teaching styles. Moreover, their web-forums, knowledge base, and list-servs provide a strong utility if one has questions about how to use the various resources.

Departments across campus demonstrated their support for this project with both their questions and participation in the learning community. Administration, the members of the graduate school office, and faculty members offered their support through their questions that often took us in new directions. Faculty members requested a list of sources that detailed programs and guidelines for how to use those programs in an online environment. From these questions we determined the need for a handbook, internal program guidelines. Most specifically, the Design for Leadership program provided their courses as a model for the transition of on-ground/distance learning programs to be moved into a completely online environment.

One of the most essential components of this learning community is its interdisciplinary nature. The Arts and Humanities division including: English, History, and Religious Studies; the Sciences, the Business Administration Program, Library Sciences, and our WebCT administrator all worked in a collaborative effort to examine pedagogical strategies, teaching styles, and the importance of various computer programs and technology to the online classroom.

K. **Your Assessment Strategies.** How did you evaluate your work/successes? How did you assess member learning, (including technology learning)? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project?

What have you observed or concluded at this point with respect to member learning, your community's growth, and student learning?

We evaluated our work/ successes by two methods. Our first method involved three meetings of the Learning Community during which the whole community addressed specific issues regarding our work together. The second method was by means of a questionnaire which we sent to individual members asking them to assess our progress in addressing our short range goals and also to self-assess their individual accomplishments.

Whole Community Evaluation Meetings

The results of our community evaluation meeting are specifically addressed in other areas of the Part II report. Some examples of the issues we addressed at those meetings:

- Resources and Support Systems—What resources and support systems are in place and what needs to be added or boosted? (Our Key Resources are discussed in Section J.)
- Development of policies for online courses—While the community has addressed this area, the completion of policy development has been delegated to a summer task force of members of our Learning Community. The task force will finalize such things as basic skills and technology requirements for students to be accepted into online courses and “The Bar” or specific standards required of faculty who will transform and teach these courses.
- Course Transformation Process--Plans for transformation of Design and Global Civilization courses are in place. Actual training of instructors will take place in Fall 2008. The community noted that transformation is strongest when solid pedagogy is already in place in face-to-face course design. Our experiences in the Learning Community have taught us that technology encourages instructors to be more engaging, creative, and innovative.

Individual Participant Evaluations

These results are based on the responses of a sampling of Learning Community participants.

How well did our Learning Community address our short range goals?
S1. Marriage of sound pedagogy and effective teaching with course

management technology so that Design for Leadership courses in particular, and traditional age student courses in other programs such as education, could function with integrity as on-line courses.

Overall, respondents indicated that this goal was well addressed, but that some details need to be finalized. We learned about ways in which people both on and off campus were combining sound pedagogy and technology. The community strongly addressed this area in regard to the Design for Leadership courses and our emphasis on sound pedagogy in the use of new technologies carries significant application to other courses.

S2. Review of selected existing courses for on-lining: Some Design for Leadership courses, AH111 and AH112 Global Civilization, an Education course.

Responses generally indicated that the community addressed this very well with the clarification that Design courses were already partly online.

S3. Articulate pedagogy and create a course transformation process based on results of 1 and 2 above. Train and coach instructors in process for transforming their courses from technologically enhanced to fully on-line.

Beginning with the research we did early in the year, and continuing with the help we received from the BGSU team and in other meetings/settings, responses indicated significant progress in this goal, but that we still need to create final documentation.

Participants in the Learning Community gained in knowledge of technology and course transformation strategies, but the actual training of instructors is scheduled to take place in Fall 2008.

S4. Determine the viability of a model for fully online courses that works with open enrollment as an option to standard semester enrollment.

Design works with the open structure now. Those working directly with the Design for Leadership have re-evaluated the benefits of semester-based enrollment rather than open enrollment for a fully online delivery system. The current plan is to slowly transition into a semester model, allowing present students a period of time to complete work in the open enrollment model. Strategies for moving to a cohort system are also being researched. The community now needs to finalize and document this work.

S5. Research virtual worlds such as Second Life as an avenue for disseminating materials and providing space for students and faculty to interact.

Participants learned about virtual worlds mostly from our experience at the OLN meeting in the fall. Some have experimented with programs such as Second Life and find it could be useful for engaging the different learning style of some students. Others indicate that virtual

worlds have some advantages, but are not a necessary component of an online design.

Self-Assessment of Individual Accomplishments

Respondents indicated that they had gained either some or considerable understanding of the needs of the online learner, even in the case of those who already had experience in online teaching.

From our study of different learning styles, respondents felt that they were very able to conceptualize or design online learning activities and/or presentations that could accommodate multiple learning styles. An area for further development is the need for hands-on experience in execution of new designs.

Some participants were able to implement new technologies in courses they were teaching at the time. Some examples:

- Creation of a podcast and a vodcast and imbedding the podcast in a WebCT page.
- Creation of postings that addressed different learning styles and provided interactive content.
- Use of a document sharing program to enable students to engage in peer review of the first draft of an assignment.
- Creation of a video and embedding that video in a WebCT content module.

Virtually all members of the learning community demonstrated leadership in researching and teaching the group about the strengths and weaknesses of particular technological tools and/or best practices for distance learning programs. Some examples:

- Presentation of reports on research about areas such as components of the online classroom, different learning styles, and optimal class size
- Demonstrations of techniques and best practices already used in online components of both Design and Global Civilization courses.

The consensus of our respondents on the key things we as individuals have yet to do to implement the overall group goals:

- Complete documentation and communication of the results of our work to our college community
- Complete arrangements for training instructors in course transformation
- Ensure that the transition to new technologies is workable and without glitches
- Continue to communicate and work with each other

L. **What Others Know About What You've Done.** Beyond your community members, who else is vested in what you're doing? How did you communicate and update these stakeholders on your efforts and successes? What questions do your colleagues have? What have you told your students about your learning community?

Essentially everyone on campus is vested in our learning community because we are outlining a process for offering online courses. This would include the academic dean, the Center for Adult Programs, the registrar, faculty, staff, and students.

The main mode of communication of our progress has been word of mouth. Because our learning community is an interdisciplinary group with representation from all but one division, our members have communicated our progress to their colleagues at division meetings.

Due to the fact that we are not quite finished with our project, we have not done a formal presentation to our colleagues or to students, but we plan to do so in the fall.

M. **Dissemination.** What visible bridgework -- structural elements, findings, lessons, ideas, beauties, legacies, processes, relationships, etc -- is your learning community leaving, that inspires others to *build their own bridges as they walk on them*? What digital resources have you developed that you will place into the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio? What might members offer, such as informal "brown bag" lunches, research, written articles, and presentations about your work? What is important to tell others "not to do"?

The full title of this Learning Community - The Design for Leadership Online Course Transformation Process - set the bridgework in place from the beginning. We have been about the task of creating a PROCESS by which the Christian Education distance learning program of Defiance College (known as the Design for Leadership) could be taken from technology-enhanced to fully online, AND in the process of creating that process, we would also be creating a PROCESS that would be viable for transforming traditional face-to-face courses to fully online without compromising the pedagogical integrity of those courses.

We could have jumped into the seductive technology available for on-lining courses - from the most fundamental to all the bells and whistles. Indeed some in our Learning Community were experienced enough already with

online course management systems as well as other resources available through the internet to move comfortably into the expanded technology end right away. To their credit, they walked with the rest of us who not only were exploring the technology slowly, but who needed to come at the task first from an exploration of sound pedagogical practices for in-class teaching and learning, and next from an exploration of the literature informing sound pedagogical practices for on-line teaching and learning. Then the Learning Community engaged in a hands-on technology-rich workshop that demonstrated best practices for online course development and instruction. In many ways, we "made the road by walking it" as Paulo Friere would say. The "road" we made provides us with the PROCESS we sought to develop to meet the needs of the Design for Leadership distance learning program and for the Defiance academic community as a whole.

We will be in conversation with our Academic Dean in order to craft proposals for online course development and instruction guidelines based on our learning and the Course Transformation Process. Our work is helping to address this need for Defiance College academics as a whole.

The Design for Leadership instructors, some of whom live out-of-state, will come to campus for a 2-full-working-day workshop in early Fall 2008. During that time they will be trained in the Course Transformation Process, learn the technological skills needed to successfully transform and teach their respective courses fully online, and do much of the course re-vamping necessary. Members of the Learning Community will participate in this workshop as interested.

Training for on-campus Defiance College faculty in the Course Transformation Process will be identified.

There is significant work to be done in the areas of technical support for both instructors and students. We have identified the needs, but will hand that project off to others, as it goes beyond the scope of our mission.

Work is being done regarding online course policies (registration, scheduling, withdrawal dates, fee schedules, etc) by a task force appointed by the Academic Dean. A few members of our Learning Community will join them this summer to assist in completing those recommendations and guidelines.

If one undertakes a project such as, keep in mind the following:

- *It is important to not rush the process; it is equally important not to get bogged down at any one point.*
- *It is important for the facilitator to keep the LC moving in a constructive direction; it is not important for the facilitator to have all the answers as to what that direction might be as the LC*

moves forward in its work.

- *It is important to recruit LC members from across the disciplines, and that they be colleagues who value collaboration; it is not important that everyone brings the same skills or perspectives, because the whole will become greater than the sum of its parts.*

The people who said “yes” to the invitation to be part of the Design for Leadership OnLine Course Transformation Process Learning Community brought their best selves to every work session. Terrific questions were raised, conscientious prep work was done, expertise was shared while egos were left at the door, thoughtful counsel was offered, successes were celebrated, and humor affirmed both work and colleagues. None of us had the answers coming in. Together we created answers and discovered directions that will benefit the college that none of us could have envisioned just on our own. We were a true Learning Community. That’s what’s important.

N. **20/20 Hindsight.** If you were to start over again, what would you do differently and why? What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, would you handle differently? To what degree would you change your goals? What additional successes would you enjoy? What worked - or didn't work -- and why?

1. Do not meet weekly. It is too time consuming to meet each week. Every other week would be fine for groups who are looking to do this type of activity. (Fall semester followed a twice-monthly meeting schedule)
2. We spent too much time in the Fall researching online courses. There are many courses out there and you only need to look at a few to understand the differences between f2f and online courses.
3. Consultants (BGSU) should have been brought in much earlier in the process to present a workshop. I think they should have come in October instead of February. By having them early, you can see where you want to go and how the trip will progress. You can then bring them back in the later phases for follow-up activities.
4. Learn what is out there, but the initial version of your course does not need all the bells and whistles. Work just to get the course(s) converted.
5. We did not change our goals since they provided a great start for the program.

O. **What's Next?** Will your community continue? Formally? Informally? What could be next in another cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be totally predictable, yet they may take you in another fruitful direction that builds upon your community's growth and knowledge.

We requested and received an extension of this OLN ReVision Grant through Fall 08. As noted in earlier sections of this report, several projects will come to fruition during that semester:

- written proposal regarding specific standards ("The Bar") required of faculty who will transform and teach online courses
- written proposal regarding basic skills and technology requirements for students to be accepted into online courses and these courses
- written articulation of the course transformation process identified by the Learning Community
- instructor training in online-course preparation and/or course transformation using the course transformation process. Design for Leadership instructors who live out-of-area to come to campus for training workshop.

Several of the Learning Community members will continue to work through the summer, particularly in relation to planning for fall training workshop(s) and in writing the various proposals.

The Learning Community as a whole will meet occasionally in the Fall semester as needed to draw the Learning Community's work to conclusion.

This is the end of Part II
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