Lots of Cooks in the Kitchen:
A Model for Increasing Faculty Involvement and Ownership in General Education Assessment and Curricular Revision

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Trinity University
Central Questions

• How can colleges engage faculty in the assessment of general education curriculum on their own terms?
• How can faculty involvement in the assessment of student work inform curricular revision?
• How do you engage faculty in a wholesale curricular revision?
Trinity Gen Ed Background

• General Education = “Common Curriculum”
• Distribution style “understandings”

• As high as 58 of 124 credit hours (19 of 41 courses)
CACC – Basic Structure

University Curriculum Council appoints

Committee for the Assessment of the Common Curriculum (CACC)

Each year appoints about 2 committees, each charged with assessing 1 area of the Common Curriculum.

- e.g., Committee on Assessing the First Year Seminar
- e.g., Committee on Assessing the Natural Science Understanding

Over a period of four years, each component of the Common Curriculum assessed once.
After review of catalog language, the committee determined that the students in these courses should demonstrate:

- Contextual awareness
- Intellectual independence
- Creative Insight
CACC-Examples of Assessment

Understanding the Arts and Literature - 2013

Example: British Literature: Romanticism and After

Student work: an assigned paper

Expanded rubric criterion:

- **Contextual Awareness**: The student demonstrates an awareness of historical, cultural, artistic, or conceptual contexts for Romantic, Victorian, or modernist literary texts.
Example: Sculpture: Clay

Student work: a presentation on an architect and the student’s final sculpture

Expanded rubric criterion:

• **Contextual Awareness**: The student demonstrates contextual awareness through the content and creative development of the sculpture. ... the presentation answers the questions, “Why is this relevant to me?” “What was the artist trying to accomplish?” ...
Rubrics used on student work in third semester courses.

“Students can fulfill this graduation requirement by ... taking the third year of a single language in high school and receiving a B or better in the final semester of the last year.”
CACC- Examples of Assessments
Foreign Languages, 2010-11

High School Transcript and Placement Test Analysis

17%
CACC-Feedback from Committees

Committee assessing area of Common Curriculum

CACC

University Curriculum Council

Faculty Assembly
CACC-Examples of Changes Made

Before:
Lifetime Sports and/or Fitness Education

“students should possess sufficient knowledge, understanding, and skill to enable them to make intelligent decisions relating to health and fitness through life.”
CACC-Examples of Changes Made

After:
Fitness Education

• Possess the basic skills needed to participate in a lifetime sport or activity and/or
• Understand the importance of exercise as it relates to their health now and in the future, and/or
• Understand what physical fitness is, why it is important, and how it is developed.
• No high school work now
CACC-Examples of Changes Made
Understanding Human Social Interaction 2011-12
CACC-Examples of Changes Made

Understanding Human Social Interaction 2011-12
CACC-Examples of Changes Made

Process changes:

• Templates for reports

• Standardization of the rubric format and levels
CACC- Ongoing Challenges

- Learning objectives not clear
- Faculty members new to committees
- Constant reminders
- Communication of results
- Key learning objectives overlooked
CACC- Advantages

• Extensive faculty involvement.
• Faculty discussion of learning objectives.
• Opportunity to see methods used by other faculty members.
• Awareness of areas needing improvement.
• Increased appreciation for value of assessment.
Context for Change

2010
Arrival of a New President

2011
Launch of a Strategic Planning Process

2011
Findings from HERI Faculty Survey

2011, 2014
Planning and Implementation Resources
Growth Areas To Address

Why did 88% of faculty think that curricular adjustments were needed?

- Unwieldy, Complex, Incoherent
- A need to clarify shared learning goals
- Improve the First-Year
- Untapped Potential
  - Interdisciplinarity & Experiential Learning
In how many of the courses that you teach do you use each of the following?

### Multiple drafts of written work

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Summaries from the HERI Faculty Survey, College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ), College Senior Survey (CSS), HEDS Alumni Survey, etc…
Growth Areas to Address

What assessments told us...

1. Writing instruction and support
2. Review foreign language exemptions
3. Revise problematic “Understandings”
Creativity, Collaboration, and Iteration

Hasso Plattner Institute for Design (or d.school) at Stanford University
Step 1
Symposium
September 2011
Goal: Engender a “fire in the belly” and mandate for change

Step 2
Retreat Day
Mid-September 2011
Goal: Agree upon First principles & Basic Outcomes

Step 3
Ideas Lab
January 2012
Goal: Draft curricular models that deliver a 21st century liberal arts education

Step 4
Curricular Development Lab
March 2012
Goal: To identify the most promising elements/prototypes and develop a single outline

Step 5
Curricular Revision Committee
Summer 2012
Goal: Refine and flesh out the proposal and address concerns raised

Step 6
Final Packaging
January – May 2013
Goal: Develop new Course of Study Bulletin language, Student Learning Outcomes, and Course Guidelines

Step 7
Approval Vote
January 2014
Step 1
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September 2011
Goal: Engender a “fire in the belly” and mandate for change

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January – May 2013
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Step 7
Approval Vote
January 2014
Ideas Lab

Step 1 – Free-wheeling, Broad-Brush Brainstorming
Ideas Lab

Step 2 – Work it Out in Small Groups
Ideas Lab

Step 3 – Present Draft Ideas, Get Feedback
Ideas Lab

Step 4 – Make Sense of Feedback, Resolve Issues
Ideas Lab

Step 5 – Present AGAIN, Get Feedback, Repeat…
**Step 1** Symposium  
*September 2011*  
**Goal:** Engender a “fire in the belly” and mandate for change

**Step 2** Retreat Day  
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*January – May 2013*  
**Goal:** Develop new Course of Study Bulletin language, Student Learning Outcomes, and Course Guidelines

**Step 7** Approval Vote  
*January 2014*  
**Goal:** Open Forum, Online Poll, Dep’t Mtgs
Connecting the CACC and the In-Progress Curriculum

October 2012 - meeting between the CACC leadership, the Curriculum Council, and the group coordinating curricular revisions.

- Review a mid-point draft of the curriculum
- Point out anticipated assessment challenges (i.e., convoluted learning goals)
- Recommend wording changes and/or flag areas for additional attention
- Policy recommendations
- Leverage faculty assessment expertise
Learning Goals In Process

Stage 1: Common Curriculum – “Understanding Cultural Heritage”

- Verbose and vague rationale statement

- Goals for students or expectations for a course?
Learning Goals In Process

Stage 2: Mid-Point Draft (September 2012)

- Phrased a student learning outcome

- Ambitious and complicated

- Inclusion of traits that are challenging to assess in academic work (i.e., engagement in the community)
Learning Goals In Process

Stage 3: Approved Text (January 2014)

- Phrased as a student learning outcome

- Simplified and focused

- Outcomes are likely to be visible in academic work (i.e., use of scholarly sources)
Insights from the path toward implementation

Persistent culture change

Single authors vs. multiple voices

Resource-intensive process

Being inclusive and collaborative never stops