

External Review Report, "Collaborative Pedagogies in the Digital Age"

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Process

Dr. Rebecca Frost Davis, Director of Instructional and Emerging Technology, St. Edward's University visited Austin College for 1.5 days, where she observed classes, and met with faculty, staff, and administrators. In addition, she reviewed grant reports, the original grant application, and the project website, http://acdigitalpedagogy.org/.

Purpose

Austin College requested a third party review of the Collaborative Digital Pedagogies initiative during Year 3, as specified by its original grant application. Since Dr. Davis provided a consulting report to Austin College during the planning stages of this grant (when she was a NITLE program officer), she was invited to complete the review.

Objectives

In particular, the project director requested:

- 1. Assessment of how well the initiative has met its stated goals from the grant application
- 2. Assessment of the initiative's impact on teaching and learning
- 3. Recommendations for sustainability

Deliverables

Dr. Davis completed this report in review of the initiative, "Collaborative Pedagogies in the Digital Age", which has been funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This report will include findings from the visit and review of initiative related materials, analysis of those findings, and recommendations for the initiative moving forward.

Findings

Completion of stated project goals

The purpose of the grant is to help Austin College faculty enhance their teaching by means of digital practices and resources. Austin College has fulfilled this purpose by:

- Increasing digital teaching on campus as evidenced by 27 digital teaching projects supported by the grant.
- Expanding interest in and practice of digital pedagogy as evidenced by 33 faculty engaged in grant funded projects
- Digitally enhancing the curriculum as evidenced through 27 digital teaching projects supported by the grant.

Assessment of the project's impact on teaching and learning

- Austin College has successfully built capacity among faculty for digital pedagogy across the institution.
- Digital teaching practices have had multiple effects, including:

- Technology affordances enable flexible pedagogy, e.g., teaching with tablets and adjusting material covered in class on the fly.
- Digital course materials allow students to time shift and review material delivered in class later.
- Online simulations allow students to experiment and practice concepts repeatedly.
- Technology allows for more efficient course administration, e.g., grading.
- Faculty members using technology to solve teaching problems offer models for students of how to partner with technology to solve problems.
- Multiple projects center on students as active learners and producers of knowledge, from first-year students using Scalar to engineering students prototyping designs through 3D printing..
- Many projects focus on digital tools as ways of knowing and analysis, etc., such as social annotation, digital mapping, collaborative google docs, etc.
- Many projects focus on digital communication, presentation, and publication, e.g., use of Scalar, Storymaps, blogs, etc., which supports the Austin College strategic plan pillar, "Liberal Arts in a Digital Era", which states.
 - "Our curriculum and our classrooms will be reimagined to enhance student learning through expanded access to both traditional and new communication technologies. We will improve student outcomes in written, oral, and visual communication. We will emphasize both intercultural and intergenerational communication."

Other Findings

- Collaborative Digital Pedagogies has created faculty community around digital teaching practices through its cohort program.
- Collaborative Digital Pedagogies provides important support for pedagogical experimentation through faculty incentives, technology resources, a community of practice, and support from the digital project designer and digital learning fellow.
- The website for Collaborative Digital Pedagogies offers a valuable resource in the form of a knowledge base about digital teaching practices on campus and beyond.
- Some principles for technology selection are implicitly present on campus as evidenced through technologies chosen for digital projects.
- Collaborative Digital Pedagogies has encouraged a focus on collaboration and includes multiple partnerships outside of the college.
- The capacity built for digital teaching practices has been in part a cultural change that has enabled other changes, as evidenced by a recent discussion of a proposed hybrid course by faculty and by eportfolio pilots.

- Grant assessment has been based on measures of faculty capacity in terms of faculty touched across the curriculum.
- Multiple findings represent areas of opportunity for advancing the work begun by the Collaborative Digital Pedagogies initiative. They include:
 - o Curriculum revision offers opportunity for moving this work forward.
 - The Johnson Center for Faculty Development and Excellence in Teaching has a strong reputation and may offer a path forward for sustaining collaborative digital pedagogies through a focus on pedagogy. The instructional designer already reports to the director of the Johnson Center.
 - Austin College has a strong faculty culture with the potential to drive initiatives that it owns.
 - Austin College professional preparation ethos might be leveraged to develop support for digital learning as preparation for professional work.
 - There is an eportfolio pilot for general education assessment; eportfolios are a valuable tool for collecting digital artifacts and reflecting on digital learning experiences. (Kathleen Yancey. "ePortfolio." In *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Concepts, Models, and Experiments*, ed. Katherine D. Harris, Draft version undergoing peer-to-peer review, 2016. https://github.com/curateteaching/digitalpedagogy/blob/master/keywords/eportfolio.md.).
 - There is a writing across the curriculum initiative on campus, with a new writing director to be hired in the near future; writing as a discipline has a strong record of digital teaching practices.
 - Digital pedagogy has support in the strategic plan, through "Liberal Arts in a Digital Era".
 - o Interest in 3D printing might be developed into a Makerspace.
 - There is a leadership initiative in the sciences with a nascent version in the humanities.
 - There is a newly organized undergraduate research office, with a focus on inquiry-driven learning.

Concerns

- Sustainability of the program is a key concern, especially with the loss of the instructional designer position, but more broadly, can this work continue without key faculty, staff, or adminstrators?
- An essential aspect of faculty capacity in digital teaching must include technology resilience.
- There is not a common understanding of digital pedagogy on campus. Some faculty members perceive digital pedagogy as transformative for their practice, while others view technology as a support tool.
- Multiple initiatives on campus may pose threats to collaborative digital pedagogies though competition for resources and faculty time.

- Sustainability of grant activities depends on finding a path forward rather than just maintenance of current practices. The capacity for digital teaching built among faculty needs to find its purpose.
- There is a perception of a split between the humanities and sciences on use of technology.
- The concept of collaboration has been redefined from the initial proposal.
- There is a need for intentionally scaffolding student technology skills within the curriculum (building student capacity). Currently, the student experience of digital learning depends on individual faculty initiative.
- There is a need for assessment of the effect of facilities included in the grant, e.g., flexible furniture and other technologies funded by the grant.

Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on strategies for advancing the work begun by the Collaborative Digital Pedagogies Initiative.

- Derive structured approaches from grant activities. This grant used faculty
 incentives, technology resources, consultation, and support to encourage
 pedagogical innovation. While the capacity built resides in individual faculty
 participants, it also resides in the collective experience and lessons learned.
 Moving forward, consider what structures could be created on campus to
 further this work. What patterns have emerged? What lessons have been
 learned? These might include
 - Methods for building partnerships
 - Strategies for technology resilience (Rather than learning one new tool, develop approaches for finding, evaluating, and learning any new tool.)
 - Strategies for innovation, e.g., managing student expectations, setting up pedagogical experiments, evaluating pedagogical experiments. For some examples, see the Innovator Toolkits linked here: http://sites.stedwards.edu/innovationfellowship/innovator-toolkits/
 - $\circ\quad$ Structures for encouraging innovation, e.g., recognition and incentives
 - Advisory group on digital pedagogy practices with representation across campus, e.g., a Teaching, Learning, and Technology Roundtable or similar body, such as this one at NC State: https://www.ncsu.edu/tltr/roundinit.html.
 - Articulate principles of choosing technologies, e.g., the grant has focused on free and open source tools. One grantee spoke about tools that students could take with them. Be sure to include IT staff in this discussion.
- *Create a cohesive narrative* about what the grant has accomplished and share this message widely across campus as a foundation for future work. Focus especially on the concept of capacity built. Include the new, broader, more flexible conception of collaboration.
- *Develop a common definition for digital pedagogy* that is shared across campus based on work done for this initiative as a basis for work going

forward. This definition might be a project for faculty participants. Productive definitions shared by faculty focused on thinking with technology, students as producers of knowledge, networked learning, and crossing the boundaries of the traditional classroom and course. You might also consult the following resources:

- Bass, Randy, and Bret Eynon. "Open and Integrative: Designing Liberal Education for the New Digital Ecosystem." Association of American Colleges and Universities, June 16, 2016. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/publications/open-and-integrative-designing-liberal-education-new-digital.
- Rebecca Frost Davis, Matthew K. Gold, Katherine D. Harris, and Jentery Sayers, eds. *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Concepts, Models, and Experiments*, 2016. https://github.com/curateteaching/digitalpedagogy.
- Focus on digital learning for students. This initiative has focused on faculty; now focus on students through active student learning; students as digital creators rather than digital consumers, students partnering with technology to solve problems. This approach might tap into the professional preparation culture at Austin College.
- Consider intentionally scaffolding digital learning into the curriculum. The upcoming general education revision (with a very ambitious timeline) offers an opportunity to scaffold student technology skills within the curriculum, which builds student capacity to match faculty capacity. Integration with general education would ensure that all students benefit rather than just those who take classes from faculty practicing digital pedagogy. A campuswide conversation about these ideas may build faculty ownership of digital pedagogy. Several institutions have undertaken efforts to consider this idea, including:
 - Quality Enhancement Plan, Virginia Commonwealth University, <u>http://sacs.vcu.edu/quality-enhancement-plan/</u>
 - Kenyon campus wide conversation on "The Essentials", <u>https://cip.kenyon.edu/essentials</u>
 - Digital Learning at Keuka College, https://www.keuka.edu/academics/digital-learning
 - Bryn Mawr Digital Competencies Framework, <u>http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=oer</u>
- Refine the assessment approach for digital pedagogy in consultation with college assessment leaders. Move beyond assessment based on faculty engaged or student surveys to assessment based on impact on learning and university strategic priorities. Models include:
 - SAMR Model: Puentadura, Ruben. "SAMR and Bloom's Taxonomy: Assembling the Puzzle." Common Sense Education. N.p., 24 Sept. 2014. Web. 24 Aug. 2016.

- https://www.commonsense.org/education/blog/samr-and-blooms-taxonomy-assembling-the-puzzle (rubric of technology use)
- Innovation Fellowship Final Reflection (Appendix, signature assignments as evidence of pedagogical innovation)
- o If Austin College participates in NSSE, examine NSSE data for potential changes after grant. (http://nsse.indiana.edu/)
- Assess active learning spaces enhanced by grant funding. See the "Learning Space Rating System | EDUCAUSE.edu." N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Oct. 2016.
 http://www.educause.edu/eli/initiatives/learning-space-rating-system
- Build capacity for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in
 partnership with the Johnson Center to demonstrate the impact of digital
 teaching practices on student learning. Some projects already take this
 approach and report outcomes in terms of retention, grades, and other
 measures of student learning. See this page for resources:
 https://sites.stedwards.edu/innovationfellowship/2014/05/28/scholarship-of-teaching-learning-sotl/
- Faculty survey. To assess effectiveness of faculty development for digital teaching practice, survey faculty periodically on use of a variety of digital pedagogies. Build on baseline surveys done in the past.
- *Partner with eportfolio initiative* to use eportfolios to aggregate student digital work and encourage students to reflect on their digital skills and technology resilience.
- Link capacity that has been built to other campus initiatives; partner rather than compete. The methods of evaluating the ecosystem of an initiative described in this article might be a useful starting point: Bloom, Paul N., and Dees, J. Gregory. "Cultivate Your Ecosystem." Stanford Social Innovation Review 2008.winter (2008): 47–53. Web. 1 Mar. 2016. http://ssir.org/articles/entry/cultivate your ecosystem
- Tie this work explicitly to the Austin College strategic plan.
- *Create a pipeline model* to track faculty who have been engaged with grantfunded activities and consider how to move faculty from workshop participant to digital project creator.
- Foster faculty ownership of this initiative
 - Consider inviting the Johnson Center to take a lead role with an explicit tie to pedagogy.
 - Create and maintain a faculty learning community around digital pedagogy. Activities might include:
 - Maintaining the Digital pedagogy @ Austin College website.
 - Peer support and evangelism
 - Monitoring and providing a link to external communities focused on digital pedagogy, e.g.,
 - HASTAC, https://www.hastac.org/
 - Online Learning Consortium (OLC), https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/

- Educause Learning Initiative, https://www.educause.edu/eli
- Digital Media + Learning, http://dmlcentral.net/
- New Media Consortium, https://www.nmc.org/
- Hybrid Pedagogy, http://www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/
- Create rotating faculty fellows positions, with a course release, in each division to support digital pedagogy and compensate for the loss of the instructional designer position.
- Consider student support models, e.g., University of Mary Washington Digital Knowledge Center, http://dkc.umw.edu/
- Consider how humanities and sciences can connect around the use of technology.

Appendix: Innovation Fellowship Assessment Assignment

For this discussion we would like you to reflect on your overall experience with the innovation fellowship, as well as how this work links to larger university priorities. We will use this post to help us assess the innovation fellowship as a university initiative.

Please address the following:

1. **Alignment with University Strategic Priorities**: How do your student learning outcomes relate to University Essential Learning Outcomes (UELOs)? Which of the UELOs are met (partially or in full) by your course and assignment. You can find a list of these outcomes here: http://sites.stedwards.edu/seugened/essential-learning-outcomes/

If your innovation project aligns with other university, school, or departmental priorities, please also list them here and explain how your redesigned course maps to those priorities.

- 2. **Signature assignment**: Choose a representative or signature assignment for your innovation. Please supply the assignment description and assessment mechanism.
- 3. **Assessment Results**: Provide a summary of your assessment results, as well as supporting documentation, for example rubric data evaluating the assignment.
- 4. **Reflection**: Reflect on your overall experiment by discussing strengths, weaknesses, and areas for continuous improvement. What lessons have you learned and what will you do differently next time?