

CREATING A MORE VIBRANT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To transform Kalamazoo College into a more vibrant learning environment by entraining a regular pulse of query, exploration, documentation, conversation, and action to improve student learning.

Means:

- Uncover pockets of innovation by inviting faculty and staff to explore questions “that they have come to regard as important, intriguing, or beautiful” (Bain).
- Fund projects with mini-grants.
- Support Teagle Learning Fellows (faculty and staff with mini-grants) through a community of practice that provides opportunities “to try, fail, receive feedback, and try again – before anyone makes judgments of their efforts” (Bain) and to engage in structured reflection about what they’re learning through their projects.
- Highlight innovations and accomplishments at a campus-wide Symposium on Teaching and Learning, during which Fellows give presentations on insights into student learning gained through challenges and successes encountered in their projects.
- With external support, carry out a proof of principle leading to an internally funded, sustainable program that will improve Kalamazoo College while also possibly serving as a model for other institutions.
- Assess effectiveness of our project using a list of attributes of a vibrant learning environment as part of a baseline “culture audit,” and employing the list again to gauge the extent of the college’s transformation at the end of the project.

Structured Reflection catalyzes transformative learning by employing intentionally designed exercises, activities, or assignments that help students (and others) make connections between (a) assumptions held and experiences encountered, (b) assumptions held and theories/concepts known, and (c) experiences encountered and theories/concepts known.

Figure adapted, through many recursive conversations at Kalamazoo College, from: "Culture, Religion, and Nationality: Developing Ethnographic Skills and Reflective Practices Connected to Study Abroad," by Carol S. Anderson and Kiran Cunningham. In *Integrating Study Abroad Into the Curriculum: Theory and Practice Across the Disciplines*, Elizabeth Brewer & Kiran Cunningham, eds. Stylus Publishing, 2009.