Quality Collaboratives (QC) Case Study – September 2015
QC Dyad: University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley (UWFV) & University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO)
Contact: Martin Rudd, campus executive officer and dean (UWFV) and Carleen Vande Zande, associate vice chancellor for curricular affairs and student academic achievement (UWO)

Clarifying Student Pathway and Learning Expectations as Students Transition from a Two-Year to a Four-Year Campus

Action Steps for Change

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, in frequent collaboration with UW-Fox Valley, has engaged in a significant reform of its general education over the last five years. Funding from Lumina Foundation, through AAC&U’s Quality Collaboratives (QC) project, supported the development of several courses focused on civic learning for students in their first two years at the University. Major activities related to the curriculum reform included holding faculty forums to discuss what civic learning looks like across the curriculum, general and content based faculty professional development workshops where faculty explored best practices in civic learning pedagogies and assessments, creation of new courses and assessments, faculty peer review of new courses, and then sharing of syllabi across programs and faculty at the two institutions. During the initial phase of professional development, faculty members from both campuses reviewed the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP: http://degreeprofile.org/) competencies for civic learning. Faculty members created courses based on the DQP competencies, as well as the civic learning and engagement outcomes from the AAC&U publication A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future. At the end of five semesters, faculty members completed a review of their courses using the DQP framework to identify how their course outcomes and assessments aligned with the DQP. In addition, faculty members participated in two culminating discussion sessions to provide a critique of the DQP 2.0 civic learning competencies and to construct learning outcomes for civic learning that they would suggest on campus.

This project also expanded to focus on another general education requirement of interest to both Oshkosh and UW Colleges transfer students. The need to examine the existing Non-Western requirement at UW Oshkosh emerged through broader pedagogical and curricular discussions surrounding the campus curriculum reform. Throughout 2012-13, the Center for Excellence in Teaching

---

1 The QC project tasked campus partners to beta test the first version of the DQP. During the project, Lumina Foundation released a second version of the DQP.
2 See this link for a description of the University of Wisconsin System: https://www.wisconsin.edu/campuses/.
and Learning, together with the College of Letters and Science, initiated a series of visioning sessions with faculty and staff from across campus to begin identifying the characteristics of a globally competent UW Oshkosh graduate. In fall 2014, the Faculty Senate passed a revision of the Non-Western into a Global Citizenship Requirement, designed to provide students with opportunities to gain deep knowledge about the world, build capacity for civic engagement at local and global levels, and prepare students for the responsibilities of informed citizenship in a complex, interdependent and changing world.

Supportive Processes and Project Challenges

Curriculum review processes for both campuses were already in place as well as university-wide committees for the oversight of assessment and course review. Professional development activities are organized and offered through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Collaborative faculty dialogues across institutions in the region of the two campuses in the QC dyad are an ongoing practice. The fact that civic learning outcomes exist in the curriculum of both institutions is another anchor for this work.

Challenges for this collaboration were related to the logistics of scheduling faculty from the two institutions to get together more often to exchange ideas. In some departments, UW-Fox Valley faculty members were able to teach some courses at UW Oshkosh. This was very helpful for collegiality and for understanding the competencies related to the shared learning outcomes. More faculty interaction on this level would have been helpful. UW Fox faculty members were invited to attend faculty development activities at UW Oshkosh that were scheduled during teaching time. UW-Fox Valley held colloquia meetings and invited Oshkosh faculty to attend when possible. Faculty members from both institutions were able to attend events in common for faculty development.

In addition, the curriculum development process at the two campuses was very different due to the different structures of the two institutions. Transfer agreements that are course-based and already approved by UW System are not based on learning outcome themes such as the DQP. Grounding this work in a learning outcome paradigm and not a course-to-course paradigm is a challenge to systems already in place.

We hoped to increase collaboration through this project, and we achieved collaboration by extending discussions beyond our original focus. We are now looking at the expansion of degrees from Oshkosh to the Fox campus in select areas, developing the concept of the transfer center advisor,
offering more faculty development opportunities, and working with community partners to identify community contexts for student learning experiences. The DQP opened up campus dialogue to more topics of importance for two campuses that serve the same population.

**Sustainability of the Work**

This work will be sustainable because there are structures and guidelines in place that support faculty work related to civic learning. At both campuses, there are course guidelines related to civic and global learning that will undergird future course development. Both campuses share transfer policies, and transfer guides are in place to ensure that student work is equitably evaluated. Assessment committees and other governance committees are in place at both campuses to support and guide this work. As faculty members continue to build a shared understanding of civic and global learning, more refined learning outcome rubrics will reflect these understandings. Ongoing assessment of student work and course review will sustain the civic learning outcome work from the QC project. Further, course development, peer review, and the ability of faculty to engage across disciplines will continue through the efforts of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and through ongoing faculty dialogues related to AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes ([https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes](https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes)). Course development based on civic learning themes and competencies will continue as the general education program evolves at UW Oshkosh. This work has been embedded in the UW Oshkosh general education program, the University Studies Program, as well as in the curriculum at UW-Fox Valley. At UW-Fox Valley, faculty will continue to develop and offer service-learning courses that emphasize civic learning and are informed by assessment results and course guidelines established by faculty governance.

Dialogue across the campuses will continue and will be more specific in terms of student learning expectations. It may be possible for UW Oshkosh faculty and staff to participate in future meetings at UW-Fox Valley dealing with civic learning. In turn, UW-Fox Valley faculty will be able to attend professional development activities at the UW Oshkosh campus. Currently, we are using the AAC&U Civic Learning rubric to guide the assessment of this learning outcome. The University is also in the process of creating its own rubric for civic learning. It is our hope to share this rubric with UW-Fox Valley faculty in the future so that a shared understanding of civic learning is built between the campuses. Faculty panels that meet to discuss transfer concerns should become a part of the ongoing campus relationship. A transfer coordinator or advisor will continue to work with both campuses to identify issues.
Connecting the Work to the QC Strands (Assessment, Faculty Leadership, and Policy)

Professional development of faculty was a key component of the activities to assist faculty in integrating pedagogies of engagement, designing assessments, and transitioning existing courses to fit the new University Studies curricular model at both campuses. Faculty development was a very important component of the QC project that allowed faculty to reflect on how civic learning could be integrated into their curriculum. Campus leadership also modeled collaboration and encouraged faculty participation in dialogues in the Northeast Wisconsin Educational Resource Alliance (NEW ERA) faculty dialogue group, which assisted in the expanded vision for work across campuses. These faculty development activities in the QC project took many forms to accommodate faculty groups who had an interest in civic learning and the design of civic learning experiences. Faculty activities took place within and across the departments of each institution as well as through inter-institutional and system activities. Faculty members at UW-Fox Valley and UW Oshkosh participated in national, regional, and local civic engagement professional development experiences. Faculty engaged in interdisciplinary discussions, seminars, and faculty development activities focusing on student learning and building a shared learning of civic and global learning and pedagogies. The Provost’s Teaching and Learning Summit at UW Oshkosh focused on civic learning and global learning over a two-year period. Faculty created new syllabi or adapted existing syllabi to meet newly established understanding and guidelines related to civic and global learning.

At UW-Fox Valley, six different faculty members and the CEO/Dean attended two national conferences convened by Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER). The conferences provided an opportunity to discuss national models in civic engagement at both public and private universities. In addition to the SENCER faculty development experiences, UW-Fox Valley was also able to obtain a National Science Foundation sub-award to compensate faculty for course redesign. Within the UW Colleges, a new Associate of Arts and Science degree designation (Service Learning, SL) was developed and approved by the faculty senate during 2013-14, a significant institutional policy change to recognize the value of civic engagement in the transferability of liberal arts classes.

Engaging with the DQP

The focus of civic learning was a theme that several elements of the campus could identify with as the work unfolded across both campuses in this dyad. Using a thematic approach centered on civic learning, faculty from many disciplines engaged together to dig deeper to identify their understanding of
how civic learning could be integrated into many academic disciplines. Taking the DQP criteria to the disciplines and centering the DQP language in the development of assessment and learning experiences kept faculty focused on common criteria. This was a new approach to curriculum development and assessment. Faculty focus was informed by a specific set of criteria that evolved and had increased meaning as the faculty completed their course and assessment design. This enabled both institutions to build curriculum coherence across the competencies identified for civic learning.

The DQP afforded faculty at both campuses the devoted time to look at shared learning expectations across institutions as students transitioned from one campus to another. In some instances, expectations at the two-year campus mirrored those of the four-year campus courses, while other course expectations were at advanced levels at the two-year campus. Themes that emerged from faculty development activities also showed that civic learning methodologies include both curricular and co-curricular elements as well as community-based learning experiences. Collaboration with outreach offices, alumni offices, and student clubs and organizations enriched the design of learning experiences related to civic learning and service learning. With a theme such as civic learning and service learning, expanding opportunities for area alumni, business leaders, and agencies to assist in the design, evaluation, and supervision of student learning experiences is important to the success of such efforts. A mark of quality that emerged from these experiences was the expansion of the internal and external community’s participation in university curriculum reform.

References