Creating Curricular Coherence: Three Examples of Institutional Change
AAC&U, Thursday, January 24, 2019, 10:30-11:45 AM

Project Pericles is a vibrant consortium of 31 colleges and universities that seeks to advance civic engagement within higher education. Building on the innovative vision of Eugene M. Lang, Project Pericles works in the classroom, on the campus, and in the community. Project Pericles incorporates civic engagement and social responsibility in areas including faculty and curriculum development, research into best practices, and student engagement. We encourage and facilitate commitments by colleges and universities to include social responsibility and participatory citizenship as essential elements of their educational program.

Our goal is to strengthen our democracy and democratic institutions by developing college students who have the habits, skills, knowledge, and disposition to be active, engaged citizens. It is critical to ensure that colleges graduate students who can apply academic knowledge to real-world problems in ways that are meaningful, thoughtful, and that they can sustain over their lifetimes, and that these opportunities be made available to all students.

Creating Curricular Coherence through Inquiry-Based Curricula and Thematic Pathways

Higher education institutions face the challenge of creating efficient and cohesive educational experiences for students that integrate academic learning, civic engagement, and preparation for life after college. Project Pericles and a cohort of Pericleans (Macalester College, Morehouse College, and Widener University) are exploring unique, but allied, approaches to creating streamlined and integrative curricular pathways within majors, interdepartmental initiatives, and college-wide general education requirements. This $225,000, three-year project is part of The Teagle Foundation’s Faculty Planning and Curricular Coherence initiative and is also supported by the Eugene M. Lang Foundation.

Project Pericles is facilitating inter-institutional collaboration across these partner campuses as well as our network of member institutions. The three campuses and Project Pericles meet on a regular basis to collaborate, to provide feedback, and to exchange information.

Lessons from the initiative will be shared with our member institutions and higher education more generally. In July, all Periclean campuses will be invited to a convening, where we will discuss insights and best practices on curricular organization, streamlining, and institutional change.

About the Projects:

Macalester College is creating civic engagement pathways within two academic departments (Geography and History), as models for other departments and as a foundation for broader institutional change. A third department, Environmental Studies, was added in 2018. The project supports the development of sequenced course offerings paired with increasingly advanced community-based opportunities and highlights the public purposes of disciplinary learning. By focusing on change within departments rather than individual courses, the project creates more effective and efficient pedagogy and allows students to design more coherent academic careers. Staff from Macalester’s Civic Engagement Center are working intensively with faculty members to map and assess learning goals, create pathways, and document best practices for replication at other institutions.

Macalester has undertaken a year-long process of reviewing the curriculum in the Geography and History departments, reviewing all courses, and conducting research on best practices for integrating civic engagement. They formed a community of practice comprised of faculty from the two departments holding a daylong “deep dive” and regular meetings. Interviews were conducted with all
members of the Geography department. In addition, the History department has moved to completely revise its approach to the curriculum based on thematic pathways. This will serve as a replicable example for other departments as they join the Community of Practice at Macalester.

Morehouse College is transforming a large general education program. Their redesigned “general education integrative learning experience” focuses on the African Diaspora and six other learning outcomes. Morehouse approved and started implementing in Fall 2018 an entirely revised and streamlined set of general education requirements that combine learning outcomes from 11 to 7 and reduce required general education credit hours from 53-59 to 32-46. The project involves a challenging process of gaining approval for this large-scale undertaking and of redesigning courses to meet the new requirements.

Morehouse is building on three years of work reviewing their general education program. During the first year of the grant, a general education committee comprised of faculty members revised plans for the new program, worked with departments to develop course proposals to meet the new requirements, and reviewed course proposals to ensure that they are in sync with the new learning outcomes. Morehouse held faculty development workshops to assist faculty in revising their courses and to bring the courses in line with the new general education program.

Widener University is developing a new Sustainability and Civic Engagement pathway with links to general education requirements and courses in a variety of majors. The pathway introduces more coherent curricular options within Widener’s existing general education distribution system and thus, a more cohesive experience for students. The pathway model supports an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based approach employing multiple high-impact practices. The pathway network of courses features a freshman seminar, multiple approved pathway courses across nine academic departments, and an option for an interdisciplinary capstone experience. Widener is developing this thematic pathway approach with an eye to replication at Widener and at other colleges and universities.

If successful, this pilot program in 2020 will feature a coherent array of well-attended, sustainability and civic engagement-focused courses that students can apply toward fulfillment of general education requirements. Completing this particular pathway will benefit students by providing a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of environmental, ecological, social, political, and economic systems, while also encouraging calls for intergenerational respect and stewardship. Promoting participation in this program through workshops and incentives will additionally benefit interested faculty members by offering demonstrable support for their efforts, while also furthering cross-disciplinary collaborations and information sharing.

The initiative will further enhance Widener’s institution-wide commitment to sustainability and should promote greater curricular/co-curricular integration toward fostering stronger relationships with community partners in the City of Chester, the greater Philadelphia metropolitan region, and in Widener’s global hubs in Costa Rica and China.

Periclean Colleges and Universities
Allegheny College • Bates College • Berea College • Bethune-Cookman University
Carleton College • Chatham University • Dillard University • Drew University
Elon University • The Evergreen State College • Goucher College • Hampshire College
Hendrix College • Macalester College • Morehouse College • New England College
The New School • Occidental College • Pace University • Pitzer College • Reed College
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute • Rhodes College • St. Mary's College of Maryland
Skidmore College • Swarthmore College • Ursinus College • Wagner College
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“Creating Curricular Coherence: Three Examples of Institutional Change”
Lessons from a cohort of Teagle Foundation funded members of Project Pericles
April 2017 - March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periclean Institution</th>
<th>Macalester College St. Paul, MN</th>
<th>Widener University Chester, PA</th>
<th>Morehouse College Atlanta, GA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope &amp; Nature of Project</strong></td>
<td><strong>Departmental:</strong> Building developmental civic engagement pathways in three academic departments, consistent with civic learning standards of good practice, student learning outcomes, and disciplinary association goals.</td>
<td><strong>Divisional:</strong> Establishing a sustainability and civic engagement thematic pathway within existing general education offerings across three divisions of the College of Arts &amp; Sciences.</td>
<td><strong>Campus-wide:</strong> Transforming a large, fragmented, and costly campus-wide general education program toward a more integrated learning experience.</td>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>- AAC&amp;U publications on departmental civic engagement - Academic professional organizations, disciplinary associations - AAC&amp;U VALUE rubric - Faculty and dept. chairs - Student researchers - Civic Engagement Center - Assessment Staff</td>
<td>- An ad hoc faculty working group oversees the pathway - Grant funds for faculty development mini-grants used as incentives for participation - Matching funds from the Office of Global Engagement support student travel - A Bonner student assigned to support Periclean and pathway initiatives on campus - Proposed alignment with the new capstone course and the Periclean Faculty Leadership Program</td>
<td>- A committed general education committee with faculty from different disciplines - Provosts, a general education director, department chairs, and a chair of the College’s curriculum committee - Administrative support to organize meetings and manage data - Reliable data to demonstrate the need for a new curriculum - Federal and private funding to support faculty travel, stipends, retreats - Pro-bono consulting support from Dr. Ann Ferren of AAC&amp;U</td>
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<td><strong>Primary Challenges</strong></td>
<td>- Group scheduling conflicts and collaborative planning among faculty - Mapping community impact along with student learning outcomes</td>
<td>- Spreading awareness of the pathway among faculty &amp; students - Difficulties in explaining the non-sequential nature of the pathway - Devising and implementing common assessments</td>
<td>- Faculty resistance in departments that heavily depended on the old requirements for student enrollment - Beliefs about the traditions of the College - Departments and faculty who have had the tendency to work in isolation</td>
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<td>Evidence of Progress</td>
<td>Lessons for Replication / Best Practices</td>
<td>Lessons for Replication / Best Practices</td>
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| - Curricular maps for departmental civic engagement  
- Course redesign  
- Departmental website and public communication changes  
- Faculty ownership and engagement in planning  
- Collaborative civic projects  
- Additional departments joining the initiative | - Faculty ownership  
- Tie-in with other departmental and institutional initiatives  
- Document multifaceted civic partnerships on departmental websites for broad audience  
- Staff and student support for moving the process forward and background research  
- Leadership of Dept. Chair to build consensus and common goals  
- Learning Community approach | - Liaison with Curriculum & Planning and Gen Ed committees to promote codification of pathway options  
- Collaborate with University Relations for feature stories on pathway course activities  
- Reciprocal relationships with Student Affairs and Global Engagement offices to strengthen curricular / co-curricular relationships |
| - Year one featured 14 approved pathway courses, with 12 different faculty members across nine academic departments  
- Spring 2018 enrollment (146 students); Fall 2018 enrollment (140 students)  
- Eight additional courses and seven different faculty members added in year two  
- Interdisciplinary first-year and capstone seminar options in development | - Working with a consultant, someone who has done it before  
- Staying focused on the College mission, as written  
- Clarifying learning outcomes first  
- Keeping students at the center of the discussion  
- Engaging in both campus-wide and grassroots discussions of curricular change  
- Funding a small group of faculty fellows who were the first in their department to develop First-Year Experience courses and incorporate service learning | - New curriculum passed by faculty and approved by the Board of Trustees  
- Incoming class subject to the new requirements  
- Reduction of general education requirements from 53-59+ credit hours to 32-46 credit hours  
- New requirements for service learning integrated into First-Year Experience courses |
PANELISTS

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INSTITUTIONS

More about Macalester College (St. Paul, Minnesota) The college mission of being a preeminent liberal arts college with high standards for scholarship and a special emphasis on internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society is central to the institutional identity and operations. The student body of 2,000 are from 49 states and 88 countries. Mac’s vibrant urban location and the many institutional partnerships of the college provide hundreds of opportunities for experiential learning in and out of the classroom.

More about Morehouse College (Atlanta, Georgia) The mission of Morehouse College is to develop men with disciplined minds who will lead lives of leadership and service. A private historically black liberal arts college for men, Morehouse realizes this mission by emphasizing the intellectual and character development of its students. In addition, the College assumes special responsibility for teaching the history and culture of black people.

More about Widener University (Chester, Pennsylvania) Widener University is a private, metropolitan university that connects curricula to social issues through civic engagement. Dynamic teaching, active scholarship, personal attention, leadership development, and experiential learning are key components of the Widener experience. A comprehensive doctorate-granting university, Widener comprises seven schools and colleges that offer liberal arts and sciences, professional and pre-professional curricula leading to associate, baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees.
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