AAC&U WEBINAR

Signature Work from First Year to Capstone: Scaffolding throughout the Curriculum

Friday, April 27, 2018
Livestreaming at 2 p.m. ET
Use Q&A for:
Panel discussion

Use Chat for:
Technology support

Slides and recording will be posted online: www.aacu.org/webinar/signature-work
Welcome

• Signature work and Integrative Learning
• LEAP Challenge
• Highlighting three institutions from our latest project in New England

Thanks to the Davis Educational Fund for generous support.
www.aacu.org/leap-challenge
Defining Integrative Learning

Integrative teaching and learning is marked by:

• the capacity to see and make productive connections (across disciplines, between the curriculum and co-curriculum, between theory and practice).

• shared curricular questions and priorities.

• rich conversation and cross-talk between the disciplines. Courses are not monologues.

_Adapted from “Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain” (Huber and Hutching)_
Signature Work

• In Signature Work, a student uses his or her cumulative learning to pursue a significant project related to a problem she or he defines. In the project conducted throughout at least one semester, the student takes the lead and produces work that expresses insights and learning gained from the inquiry and demonstrates the skills and knowledge she or he has acquired. Faculty and mentors provide support and guidance.
Signature Work

- Signature Work might be pursued in a capstone course or in research conducted across thematically linked courses, or in another field-based activity or internship. It might include practicums, community service, or other experiential learning. It always should include substantial writing, multiple kinds of reflection on learning, and visible results. Many students may choose to use e-portfolios to display their Signature Work products and learning outcomes.
Sample Guided Pathway with Signature Work

E-Portfolio Shows Student’s Problem-Based Learning and Proficiencies Over Time

First-Year Inquiry and College Writing
Cross-Cultural and Global Studies
Quantitative Reasoning
Creative & Artistic Inquiry
Cultural/Historical Interpretation
Science Explorations
Socio-Economic Analysis

Second-Year Inquiry Seminar*
Cross-disciplinary questions and student signature project

Thematic Course Clusters
Three or more courses across multiple disciplines, including the major field. A student examines questions important to him/her and to society.

Signature Work
A student’s best work, which can take many forms (e.g., capstone; internship; field work; research; community-based projects)

Thematic Course 1
Thematic Course 2
Thematic Course 3

*For students in two-year degree programs, this work is Signature Work. For students in four-year degree programs, it is preparation for Signature Work. Transfer students may take the second-year inquiry seminar at the original institution or following transfer.

www.aacu.org/leap-challenge
Speakers

**MODERATOR**

Amy Jessen-Marshall  
Vice President for Integrative Liberal Learning and the Global Commons, AAC&U  
jessen-marshall@aacu.org

William Hogan  
Associate Professor of English and Director, Center for Engaged Learning, Providence College  
whogan@providence.edu

Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux  
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Professor of English, Boston University  
ebloiz@bu.edu

Susan McWilliams  
Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Southern Maine  
Susan.mcwilliams@maine.edu

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**Signature Work from First Year to Capstone:**  
Scaffolding throughout the Curriculum
Providence College

Building a Foundation for Signature Work in the First Year

Signature Work from First Year to Capstone:
Scaffolding throughout the Curriculum
Our institutional context...

- Catholic, Dominican liberal arts college in Providence, Rhode Island
- Approximately 4,000 students
- Primarily full-time, residential, traditional age undergraduates, though we have an accredited School of Business that offers an MBA as well as undergraduate degrees
- We also have a School of Continuing Education, which attracts part-time students of all ages
- We have a fairly extensive core curriculum, including a two-year, team taught, interdisciplinary introduction to the humanities required of all undergraduate students
- We had not had a ‘First Year Experience’ program
Our question:

• What skills, habits, and resources do first-year students need to prepare them for Signature Work?
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Our answers:

• Integrative learning
• Metacognition
• Reflection and dialogue: ‘discernment’ of purpose
• A robust network of mentors and advisors
Our FYE course: not reinventing the wheel

1. Our initial target population was Undeclared students
2. Academic advisors to teach the course
3. A team teaching model including staff and administrators from non-academic units
4. Tied to a common academic experience
5. Key learning objectives:
   a) acquire the tools to build a liberal arts education, and to take ownership of your PC experience
   b) learn how to establish short and long-term goals, and how to manage available time and resources to achieve those goals
   c) contemplate personal career/life choices and what it means to live a life of meaning and purpose
   d) gain a greater appreciation for the nature of learning and how you might grow as a learner
Major assignments:

1. Interview a professor
2. Visit and reflect upon the major/minor fair
3. Create an e-portfolio
Signature Work and the BU Hub: University-Wide General Education at Boston University

Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Professor of English
The BU Campus Community

- 2 campuses, 17 schools and colleges
- 3,920 faculty
- 16,478 undergraduate students
- 14,150 grad and professional students
- 9,500+ degrees awarded annually
- 8,455 international students from 133 countries
  - 23% Undergraduate body international
- 300+ research, teaching and learning activities on 7 continents
- More than 130 majors and 75 minors across 10 undergraduate schools and colleges
- Each school or college has had its own general education program; some have more than one.
Articulating A Vision for All BU Undergraduates
November 2014–May 2016

- Charge: Develop a set of core areas -- knowledge, skills and habits of mind--that will equip all Boston University undergraduates to thrive in their personal, professional and civic lives in an increasingly interconnected world.

- General education articulates what we value as an intellectual community and conveys the distinctive value of a BU education.

- A commitment to residential education that prepares graduates to be leaders in a global society.
The BU Hub: 6 Essential Capacities
Core Knowledge, Skills, and Habits of Mind for All BU Undergraduates

http://www.bu.edu/hub/

- Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation
- Scientific Inquiry and Social Inquiry
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship
- Communication
- Intellectual Toolkit
What Makes the BU Hub Distinctive?

- Flexible, integrated into students’ courses of study, pursued along pathways of the students’ choosing
- In the major and outside the major; across all four years
- In co-curricular experiences as well as courses
- Courses that combine more than one area encourage students to draw connections among fields of study and ways of thinking.
- BU is a highly ranked global university, and the BU Hub places strong emphasis on communication skills and global citizenship and intercultural literacy.
The BU Cross-College Challenge
The BU Hub’s Signature Program
Pilots begin Fall 2018

• Affords every undergraduate an interdisciplinary opportunity to collaborate with classmates across the University
• Completed in junior or senior year
• Teams of four to six students address contemporary issues and enduring human questions, creating a tangible work product.
• Guided by 2 faculty members from different disciplines
• The XCC fulfills 4 Hub Units
  – Oral and/or Signed Communication
  – Research and Information Literacy
  – Teamwork/Collaboration
  – Creativity/Innovation
Pilots Begin Fall 2018

- 4-6 Students per Team
- 2 Faculty Mentors
- Each Faculty Pair Supervises 4 Teams
- 4 Credits
- 24 Teams
- Projects from Inside and Outside BU

Signature Work from First Year to Capstone: Scaffolding throughout the Curriculum
Sample Projects

• Create leadership, inclusion, and training opportunities for performance artists with disabilities
• Design marketing campaign to increase students’ awareness of campus sustainability for Sustainability @BU
• Plan the re-enactment of “The Great Debate” between Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and Harvard President, A. Lawrence Lowell
• Develop increased student engagement in Boston city life with BU Initiative on Cities
• Redesign the Mass Historical Society website
• #MeToo and the Workplace of the Future
• Addressing Modern Boyhood and Toxic Masculinity
Questions for the XCC Pilot

• Did students, faculty and clients find it a challenging, stimulating, ultimately satisfying experience?

• Have students achieved the outcomes for the 4 areas of the BU Hub?
  – Oral and/or Signed Communication
  – Research and Information Literacy
  – Teamwork/Collaboration
  – Creativity/Innovation

• Were the projects well-enough defined: substantial, meaningful, challenging, and do-able in a semester?

• Did the mechanics of grouping work efficiently and effectively?

• Is it sustainable?

• Can we scale it further?
University of Southern Maine:
Signature Work in the Capstone

Susan McWilliams
Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs
Why Signature Work?
Outcomes, Outcomes, Outcomes!

Your top priority is to identify the intended purpose and outcomes of signature work for your students.

At USM, our intended outcomes are that students will:

• Articulate a significant theme, topic, issue or problem, drawing on the specialized knowledge of the major
• Design and generate a significant oral, written, creative or applied final project
• Collaborate or consult with others to research, create or discuss solutions or approaches to the project
• Analyze, apply, and integrate multiple sources of information and specialized perspectives to complete the project
• Apply their learning in general education and other courses to reflect on and critically interrogate learning within the capstone and the major.
Signature Work in the Capstone at USM

**The Context:** Our Core Curriculum provides scaffolding for Signature Work through flexibly sequenced requirements that prepare students for application of their learning in culminating, signature work.

- **Foundations** (First Year Seminar, College Writing, Quantitative Reasoning)
- **Perspectives** (introductions to majors; intercultural knowledge and competence)
- **Integration** (Ethical Inquiry, Engaged Learning, Advanced Electives)
- **Application** (Signature Work in the Capstone)

**The Opportunity:** Scaffolding in the majors.
Scaffolding in the Major:
From Novice to Advanced Application Skills

Scaffolding allows students to move from novice-level exploration to formative-level practice to signature-level application and evaluation. Curricular components involve increasingly complex outcomes and experiences.

**Example:** What is a meaningful question in the discipline?

**Example:** How do practitioners approach meaningful questions?

**Example:** Student addresses her own significant question and applies it in context.

Introduction to the Major (novice exploration and application) → Mid-career major course (intermediate, explanation, application) → Capstone (advanced application and evaluation)
Building Signature Work into ALL Capstones—A Little Goes A LONG Way!

The Method: All capstone courses are reviewed to ensure engagement with and assessment of the Capstone outcomes. Programs also must demonstrate attention to scaffolding—preparing students for culminating, signature work. In their course proposals and assessment plans, programs address the following:

Identify at least two foundational concepts or methods in the discipline(s) and describe where and how these are currently being introduced and explored in the major, and how they are applied within the capstone course.
Results

In response to a simple request to think about scaffolding, degree programs are engaging in curriculum change to better prepare their students for signature work in the Capstone.

Examples from the majors:

- Introduction of new/additional Capstone prerequisite course or courses
- Modification of assignments in preceding courses
- Redesign of major curriculum

As a result, we have better integration/alignment of learning in the major and learning in the Core Curriculum and a clearer pathway to signature work for ALL students.
Celebrating Our Students and Their Signature Work

Thinking Matters USM’s annual student research symposium showcasing student innovation, creativity, research and signature work.

UROP: USM’s Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program provides funding for student research and creative projects and hosts a poster session and symposium.

Other Events and Activities
Student signature work is also celebrated in public events and programming at the program and college level, in recitals, performances, presentations and award ceremonies.
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Moderated Discussion

Amy Jessen-Marshall
Vice President for Integrative Liberal Learning and the Global Commons,
AAC&U
jessen-marshall@aacu.org

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