

## **Designing Senior-level Culminating Assignments that Help Students Integrate their Learning**

Workshops with Dr. Pat Hutchings  
Washington State University, May 25-26, 2016

### **Details for Faculty Participants**

#### **WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

- **Day 1:** Wed, May 25<sup>th</sup> (9:30am - 3pm, with lunch provided, CUE 518)
- **Day 2:** Thursday, May 26<sup>th</sup> (9:30am - 3:30pm, with lunch provided, CUE 518)
- **Follow up:** assignment revision due by August 31

This two-part interactive workshop will focus on one of the most important challenges in undergraduate education today: providing students with opportunities to connect and integrate the various elements of their learning. This means making connections across courses, within the major and/or between general education and the major, connecting academic coursework and work, citizenship, and personal life. Such connections do not happen automatically; they require intentionally designed experiences--including assignments--that help students integrate their learning.

The workshop is especially intended for faculty who have taught a capstone course -- or similar culminating experience course for seniors to integrate learning -- and are interested in refining the assignment.

#### **Workshop goals**

- Share a capstone assignment you are working on with others who will ask good questions
- Stimulate ideas about how to strengthen your assignment
- Make revisions to your assignment

#### **WORKSHOP DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**Workshop Day 1:** One of the most powerful contexts for integrative learning is the senior capstone. This first session will be an occasion to explore the varieties of capstone experiences at WSU and beyond: What are the different models, and what are their distinctive benefits, especially for integrative kinds of work? Within capstones, what kinds of assignments--papers, projects, community engagement experiences, and the like--both foster and provide evidence of students' ability to make connections? Day 1 will help set the stage for work on your own assignment the next day.

**Workshop Day 2:** Developing powerful assignments is one of the most consequential intellectual tasks that faculty undertake in their work as educators. Yet that work is often private and unavailable for collegial exchange and knowledge building. This session, modeled on the [NILOA Assignment Library Initiative](#), will be an opportunity to talk with other faculty who teach in capstone contexts about the design of an assignment you're working on. The session aims to 1) stimulate ideas about how to strengthen the assignment you bring to the session, 2) think together about how assignments might be linked to one another in ways that create more integrated, coherent pathways for students, and 3) open up a productive space for discussion about teaching and learning. Day 2 will set the stage for you to revise your assignment as a follow-up to the workshop.

**Follow-up: Revise your Assignment:** Revise your assignment by August 31 and complete a survey about the revision process. Optional: Faculty will be invited to participate in a follow-up activity in August or fall semester.

### PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

**Assignment:** Please come to the workshop ready to discuss an assignment designed to foster and assess integrative learning in a capstone course for an undergraduate degree or UCORE, and your related rubric or evaluation criteria. This might be a draft assignment you are working on and would like to share with colleagues, one that has worked well but may be in need of a "refresh," or one that has not worked as you hoped. If your course involves a sequence of scaffolded assignments, bring the culminating assignment or the one you have questions about.

**Reflective Memo:** To facilitate informed and constructive discussion, prepare a short reflective memo (approximately one page) to accompany the assignment, and a rubric or set of criteria you use to evaluate the students' work. The reflective memo should address the following questions:

- 1) What is the purpose of the assignment? What outcomes is it intended to foster and elicit?
- 2) In what context is it used?
- 3) What does *integrative learning* look like in your capstone course and assignment?
- 4) How would you evaluate the quality and character of students' work in response to the assignment? What do they do well? What is challenging?
- 5) What questions do you have about the assignment-- or what would you like feedback about?
- 6) Anything else that your colleagues need to know to be helpful

**By 5/18/16:** Please send your one-page reflective memo, assignment, and rubric to ATL by 5/18/16, so ATL can make copies for the small group discussions. Contact ATL if you have questions.

**Pre-workshop survey:** Please complete the pre-workshop survey by 5/18/16, coming in Qualtrics.

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### **FACULTY SUMMER STIPEND AND TRAVEL FUNDS**

- Participating faculty can receive a \$500 summer stipend and a letter of recognition. Expectations include participation in the workshop both days, assignment revision by August 30<sup>th</sup> and completion of a brief survey.
- Matching funds are also available for travel reimbursement for faculty participants from other WSU campuses.

### **Expectations for Faculty:**

#### **In advance**

1. Review your assignment prompt, syllabus, and your program's curriculum map, if available; provide your assignment prompt and rubric / evaluation criteria for the workshop.
2. Write a one page reflective piece about the course/assignment that will be shared with other faculty along with your assignment prompt (see Reflective Memo questions on page 2)
3. Do a short pre-survey (survey will be sent to you in advance of workshop)

#### **Two workshop days**

1. Participate in workshop both days
2. Provide your assignment prompt, rubric/evaluation criteria, and reflective memo for peer discussion
3. Review your colleagues' assignments after day 1 and come prepared to discuss on day. You can expect to review assignments from about 5 colleagues
4. Leave the day 2 workshop with notes about possible adjustments to your assignment
5. Provide a one page "intent" summary of what you plan to change in your assignment

#### **Follow up**

1. Revise assignment and submit to ATL by August 31
2. Do a post survey about revision process by August 31