

Project Charter

Project Title: Learning Communities

Project Description:

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement learning communities over a three-year time frame.

Executive Sponsor:

Ernie Barber, Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning

Project Manager:

Tom Steele and Tonya Wirchenko

Working Group:

Jim Greer
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Decision Makers:

Working Group

Need:

Learning communities have been defined as the delivery of student support programming through linked or clustered classes within a given academic term, often around an interdisciplinary or identifying theme, thereby enrolling and supporting a common cohort of students. This model intentionally structures learning experiences in order to build community and to foster more explicit connections among students, among students and their teachers, and among disciplines. This model also creates an excellent delivery mechanism capable of providing programming that facilitates student development (e.g. academic planning, career goal setting, study skills, personal wellbeing). Overall learning communities foster an engaged student experience.

Scope:

In Scope:

- Review of learning community models at other institutions
- Review of pilot programming in the College of Arts and Science
- Assessment, design and piloting of learning communities
- Phased in implementation of learning communities
- Training and planning workshops for involved colleges

Not In Scope:

Opportunities:

- That a common student support infrastructure will address many of the academic and University transition challenges that arise for first year students, resulting in a higher retention rate and improved student success
- That learning communities will provide a mechanism for the colleges to provide a nuanced experience to their students as follows:
 - Ag&Bio – early and structured transition for students from communities outside of Saskatoon
 - Kin – early and structured developmental support related to professionalism and engagement
 - A&Sc – early connections to develop college and divisional identity and community building in such a vast first year student body.

Deliverables:

By 2012

- 2000 first year students in Arts and Science
- Entire first year student body in Kinesiology and Agriculture & Bioresources
- 500 upper year students

Milestones:

- January 2009 – April 2010
 - Continuation of learning communities in A&Sc – expand from 200 to 320 students
 - Training and planning workshops for 3 involved colleges
 - Development of pilot projects in Ag&Bio and Kin for Fall 2009
 - Assessment, design, piloting
 - Identification of measures of program impact and success
- May 2010 – April 2013
 - Continuation and growth of learning community models in 3 colleges
 - Achieve student number deliverables as noted above
 - Approach ESB and Engineering about learning community model possibilities
 - Development of pilot programs for continuation of learning communities into upper years
 - Explore the application of learning communities model to Aboriginal student programming

Expected Impact on Enrolment

- Increased retention rate
- Improved student experience