

Learning From Experience: “Developing Portraits of Practice:

CASE RECORDS”

A. Project Title: *Your kingdom for a few words?*

Best Practices in the Development of Web-based Instruction

B. Project Overview: *Tell the world what you’re doing. 75 Words or less!*

Owens Community College has formed a nine-person Learning Community for the purpose of sharing and developing common best practices of web-based instruction across the curriculum. This Best Practices Web Course Module will include development issues related to the various disciplines involved, institutional restraints, and technology requirements. The primary goal of the OCC LC is to collaboratively develop a web course module that will serve as an online mentor for faculty members who are new to online teaching and learning.

C. Case Recorder(s): Identify the person(s) preparing the case record on behalf of the LC. *Who are you?*

- * Mark Karamol, Mgr. Alternative Learning / LC Principle Investigator - Part I
- * Mary Kaczinski, Assistant Professor of Environmental Technology / FLC Member - Part II

D. Learning Community Members, units, roles:

List your community members, their units or disciplines, and roles in the LC. *Who are core members and associates (key people involved in the community project other than core members) of your LC? What experiences do each bring to the community and project?*

Community Member Name	Unit/ Title	Role/s in the Community
1. Mark Karamol	Manager, Alternative Learning	Principle Investigator
2. Mary Kaczinski	Assistant Professor of Environmental Technology	Case Recorder / Faculty Content Contributor
3. Dr. Rose Kuceyeski	Professor, Information Technology	Faculty Content Contributor
4. Deb Richey	Communications/Humanities Faculty	Faculty Content Contributor
5. Dorothy Bonser	Professor of Developmental Writing and Reading	Faculty Content Contributor
6. Bruce Gamble	Professor of Developmental Writing and Reading	Faculty Content Contributor
7. Lorry Cology	Psychology Professor in the Arts and Sciences Division	Faculty Content Contributor
8. Dr. John Klocinski	Professor of Business	Faculty Content Contributor
9. Amanda Dominique	Instructional Designer	LC Support

E. Background & Context:

Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. *What do you hope to achieve? How will this contribute to learning at your institution? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have or would like?*

- Enhance course instruction within a variety of academic levels and disciplines and, in turn, increase student success.
- Make the “best practices” and the techniques used to achieve those practices available to instructors with varied levels of computer experience who wish to access information about adding an online component to their courses.
- Provide a forum for faculty and technical staff to exchange ideas to facilitate the development of web courses.
- Foster a collaborative environment and team approach in the development of six cross-discipline web courses.

By combining the expertise of six online faculty members from various disciplines, we hope to create a reference place, or starting point for issues that may arise. This learning community will hopefully serve as a foundation to the establishment of future OCC/Ohio communities in the area of web-based instruction.

F. Description of your early work, planning and preparations.

Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Learning Institute. *What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impact have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?*

Our preliminary work has involved creating a Blackboard site for the development of the web course module. Each member has been individually contributing their “best practices” under key areas: technological practices, pedagogical practices, administrative/organizational issues, and discipline-related practices. The team then collaborates at BI-monthly meetings to share, evaluate, and revise their approaches. Additionally, members have been using the discussion board as a communication tool and documents have been posted to the web site for their use.

Vignettes

- The Principle Investigator has taken responsibility to set up the best practices course shell, coordinate meetings, plan for the layout of the best practices site, and solicit ideas from the group.
- An email list and electronic discussion board was used for communication.
- One of the biggest issues has been how to categorize and present information in the course site. The group is planning to utilize Learning Management System (Blackboard) upgrade features to better organize the content.
- Momentum is a concern. There are eight core members with completely different schedules working on one project. Productivity is high at the face to face meetings, but slows down during the interim periods.
- There is a lot to get done in a short amount of time. Being a Learning Community that is attending a January Learning Institute has some major drawbacks. We have Thanksgiving break, finals, commencement and other end of semester duties, and also Christmas break during the time that we should be accomplishing most of the work prior to our Learning Institute. Also, the Learning Institute takes place during the week in January just before spring classes begin. This has been a major concern for many of our team members who are also faculty.

Two instructors in the group are collaborating on the development of an enhanced web module for their on-campus course. They stated that they have met at least 6 – 8 hours per week to plan for and evaluate their course. They also mentioned that time has been an issue. They predicted that the time factor will become less of a problem once their learning curve levels off and initial goals have been met. They also identified the following as methods in the development of their contributions:

- Information gathering
- Research
- Attending online conferences
- Attending conference institutes and workshops
- Reading
- Evaluating information

- Brainstorming
- Collaborating
- Putting “best ideas” into practice
- Ongoing evaluation
- Revision
- Re-implementation

G. Description and learning about your community building and project development.

Describe early phases of building your community and developing the project. *What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures do you have and how do you handle them? What did they – or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? How are you utilizing the Learning Communities information provided by Milt Cox on October 15?*

Some of the early challenges, problems, struggles, and failures encountered in our Learning Community have been:

Personnel changes

Confusion about specific requirements and responsibilities

Inexperience with communities and working collaboratively in a learning management system (LMS)

Limitations of LMS

Organization of content

The question of whether or not we have attempted to tackle too broad of an area.

The approaching upgrade of our LMS will hopefully solve the majority of our organizational issues within the site. As we develop our project, the goals become clearer and more focused.

The future revisions and renditions of the Best Practices site should make for an easily navigated interface for our targeted audience.

One faculty member stated that "our community had a slow start with several changes in membership and the distraction of the summer. I think we all had to figure out what a learning community is and how ours was going to function. While it isn't truly a "team" with an assigned leader who doles out the responsibilities, we all still tended to wait for our coordinator to "remind" us to keep doing things (some of us still do this!). I personally had some trouble figuring out what my contribution could be, but I think it will increase as I actually teach a web course."

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This is the end of Part 1.

Take your completed DRAFT of your “*Portraits of Practice: Case Records*” Part 1 to your Learning Institute and send the final version to OLN by February 1, 2003.
