

**California Learning Communities Consortium
(CLCC)
Sixth Annual Curriculum Development Retreat**

**Designing Purposeful
& Integrative Assignments**

Designing Purposeful & Integrative Assignments

- ▶ **An emphasis on integrative learning can help undergraduates put the pieces together and develop habits of mind that prepare them to make informed judgments in the conduct of personal, professional, and civic life.**
- ▶ **A Statement on Integrative Learning, Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)**

This work session introduces an effective teaching strategy addressing the needs of 21st Century students. Faculty members will examine one method of designing an interdisciplinary assignment which intentionally fosters integrative learning.

This strategy is divided in two parts:

First, it will offer faculty members the opportunity to deepen their understanding of integrative learning.

Second, participants will identify a public issue relevant to students' lives that will be used in developing an integrative assignment.

This session will examine some of the steps in creating a purposeful integrative assignment:

- to make clear the learning outcomes this assignment supports for each of the classes**
- the curricular and co-curricular resources to use**
- the stages (scaffolding) of students' preparation for the assignment**
- the ways in which the students' work becomes public.**

▶ **What is integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning?**

- ▶ **integrative learning is the “capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more discipline in order to produce a cognitive advancement - to explain a phenomena, fashion products, solve problems in ways that would not have been unviable through a single disciplinary means.”**

▶ **Veronica Boix-Mansilla**

What is integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning?

- ▶ Integrative learning (IL) includes but it is not limited to interdisciplinary learning.
- ▶ Interdisciplinary learning integrates disciplinary learning and modes of inquiry specific to each discipline.
- ▶ Interdisciplinary learning is one kind of Integrative learning.
- ▶ While integrative learning can be interdisciplinary, it can pull from other areas such as skill-based expertise.
- ▶ Integrative learning can mean working with multiple perspectives even from within one discipline
- ▶ Integrative learning can take the form of integrating personal experiences with academic modes of inquiry.

What is integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning?

- ▶ Integrative learning builds in the capacity to use knowledge rather than in the accumulation of knowledge
- ▶ Interdisciplinary knowledge is *disciplined*-deeply informed by *disciplinary expertise*;
- ▶ Interdisciplinary understanding **builds on knowledge and modes thinking** central to the work of experts
- ▶ Interdisciplinary understanding involves the *integration* of disciplinary views; they actively inform one another
- ▶ Interdisciplinary understanding is **purposeful**. It is a means to achieve a **cognitive advancement**: a new insight, a solution, or an explanation

What is integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning?

- ▶ Interdisciplinary Understanding definition is stringent; its ***performance*** criterion distinguishes from accumulation of knowledge
- ▶ Its emphasis on ***disciplinary grounding*** is sharply different from intuitive common sense
- ▶ Its call for ***Integration and leverage*** is more demanding than multidisciplinary juxtaposition
- ▶ Its ***purposefulness sets is apart from integration as an end in itself***

What is integrative and/or interdisciplinary learning?

- ▶ A rigorous account of the nature of interdisciplinary understanding - epistemological foundation and the cognitive challenges it present-
- ▶ provides a *blueprint* for examining student interdisciplinary work to find *evidence* of accomplishment, and to *identify ways* to support improve understanding

What do students want to know and be able to do?

Our goal is to be able to articulate the following:

**Students will integrate _____
with _____
in order to do _____.**

Work Session

Steps for Designing an Integrative Assignment

What do you most want students to learn from your discipline/area of expertise?

1) Write 5 items on sticky notes

2) Write 5 more on sticky notes

3) Have 4 or 5 people share one or two sticky notes

SHARING

What do you most want students to learn from your discipline/area of expertise?

4) Choose a partner that you don't know and that doesn't share the same discipline/area of expertise

5) With your partner examine your sticky notes and look for commonalities

6) Share one or two commonalities

What do you most want students to learn from your discipline/ area of expertise?

7. Select one of the commonalities and identify a public issue/or critical question relevant to students/students' lives

**8. What is a possible integrative assignment/project?
(Public Issue)**

Explore the following questions:

- **What learning outcomes will this assignment/project support?**
- **How are these related to the outcomes for your particular disciplines or courses?**

What do you most want students to learn from your discipline/ area of expertise?

- **What curricular, co-curricular, and/or community resources will you use?**
- **What will students do in each course to prepare for this assignment/project?**
- **How will students' work become public?**

Designing Purposeful & Integrative Learning

What is the public issue?

Integrative assignment

1. **What is the integrative assignment?**
2. **What learning outcomes does this assignment support? How are these related to the outcomes for your particular disciplines or courses?**
3. **What curricular, co-curricular, and/or community resources will you use?**
4. **What will students do in each course to prepare for this project?**
5. **How will students' work become public?**

What do you most want students to learn from your course (or discipline)?

What curricular, co-curricular, and community resources will you use?

Name: _____ Course: _____ Campus: _____
Name: _____ Course: _____ Campus: _____
Name: _____ Course: _____ Campus: _____

Public issue:

1. What is the integrative assignment?
2. What learning outcomes does this assignment support, for each of your classes (or disciplines)?
3. What curricular, co-curricular, and/or community resources will you use?
4. What will students do in each course to prepare for this assignment?

Designing Integrated Learning for Students: A Heuristic for Teaching, Assessment, and Curriculum Design

Gillies Malnarich and Emily Lardner. Washington Center Occasional Paper. Winter 2003.

What students learn is shaped by the assignments or assessments they are invited to do. The focus of this heuristic, which can be adapted for use in many kinds of institutional settings, is on designing compelling, substantive and integrative experiences of learning for students.

Assessing Student Learning at Disciplinary Crossroads

Veronica Boix-Mansilla. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning. January/February 2005.

This article explores what "interdisciplinary understanding" means and describes a framework for assessing student interdisciplinary work.

A New Era in Learning Community Work: Why the Pedagogy of Intentional Integration Matters

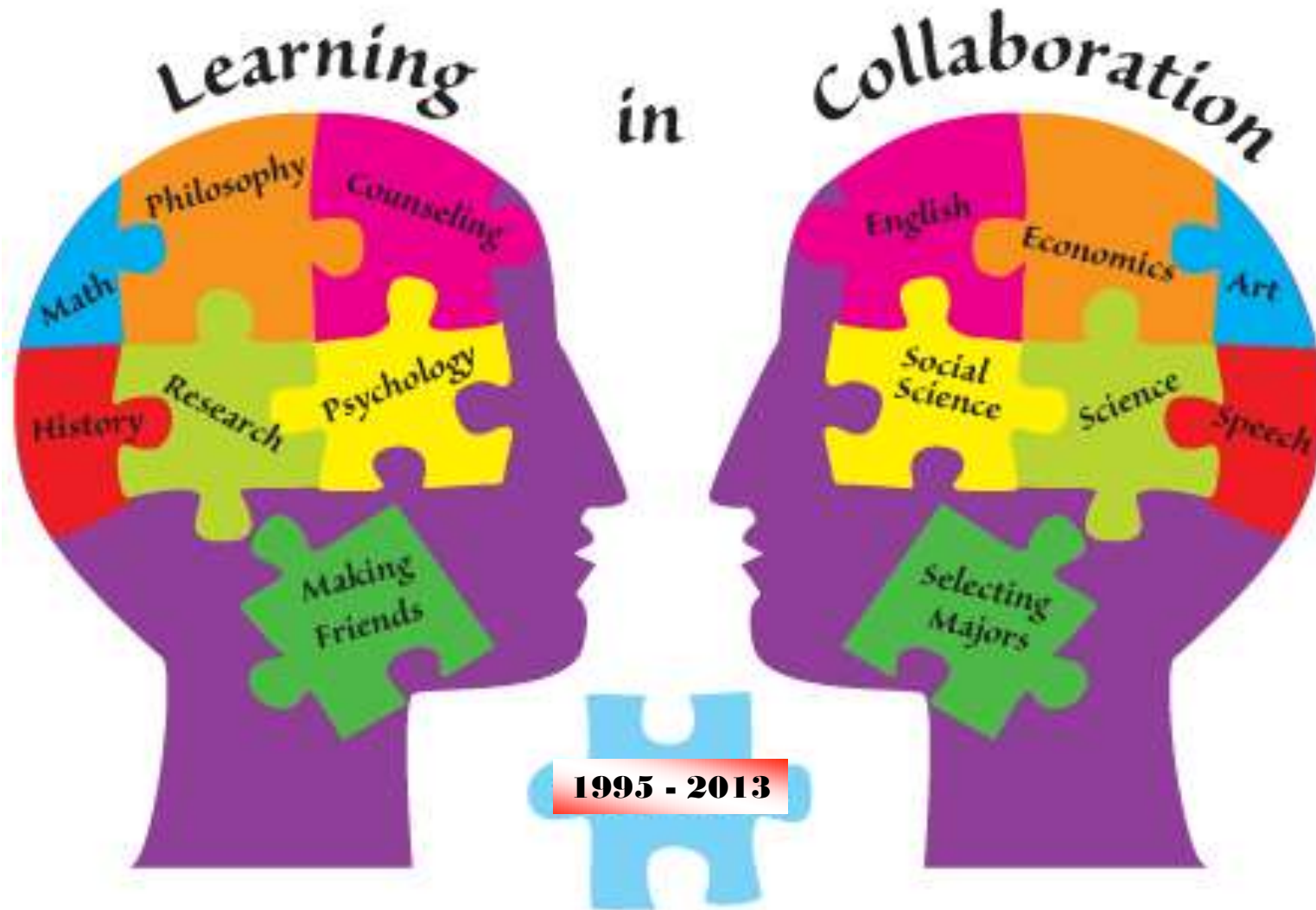
Emily Lardner and Gillies Malnarich. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning. 2008.

This article describes a significant shift in emphasis in learning community practice over the past decade: from a focus on models and organizational structures to a focus on intentionally designed integrative learning for students.

Evaluation

**Does this strategy fit the needs
of your students and institution?**

Dare to Learn!



Learning Communities Program

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Work Session

- **Introduction –**
- **What's Integrative Learning-**
- **Steps for Designing an Integrative Assignment**
- **Evaluation – Does this strategy fit the needs of your students and institution?**