Critical Connections: Empowering the TCU Community Through Integrative Learning

Quality Enhancement Plan
Innovation and Inquiry
Final Proposal

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Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situation within and beyond campus. (AAC&U Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric)

More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here—listening, reading, talking, writing, problem solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people’s eyes, leading, working in a community—is finally about connecting” (Cronon, 1999).

I. Executive Summary

Poised at national and international prominence, TCU has a unique opportunity, and indeed an obligation, to forge “positive and reinforcing connections” among disciplines, and as well among multiple modes of teaching and learning. TCU’s traditional Latin motto, “Disciplina est faculta,” is generally translated as “knowledge is power,” but a more accurate translation would be, “knowledge empowers.” Given the challenges, divisions, opportunities, and deep complexities of our 21st century world, we must ask, what kinds of knowledge will empower our students to embody TCU’s mission to “think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community?”

Fostering integrative learning—a learning process that not only connects all of a student’s diverse educational experiences but also transfers those experiences from campus to community—is one of the great challenges of higher education today. To succeed in a global world of complicated cultural contexts, students must be able to connect, adapt, and transfer all of their knowledge, skills, and competencies in order to decipher the constantly shifting circumstances of their environments. The challenge in higher education today is to help students move beyond traditional curricular boundaries, so that they develop a flexible, versatile, reflective, and collaborative habit of mind. To embrace their roles as ethical leaders and responsible citizens, TCU students must be able to apprehend and appreciate the vital connections that unite the disparate conditions of their lives.

In maintaining a curriculum built on the disciplinary silos of its majors and minors, TCU tends to inhibit students from perceiving the intrinsic connections that unite all of their learning experiences, which in turn inhibits the development of a campus-wide connective culture. To provide a more holistic educational experience, and to prepare TCU graduates for the global community of the 21st century, Critical Connections proposes to initiate an integrative approach to cultivating learning that is “life-wide and life-long.” Through the enhancement of current programs, the strengthening of connections between these programs, the nurturing of inquiry-based intentional learning, and the development of portfolio pedagogy, Critical Connections will emphasize a deliberative four-year educational journey that highlights common educational experiences, that encourages faculty to design creative and innovative interdisciplinary courses, that assists students in planning, experiencing, and reflecting on their education as it occurs, and that promotes greater campus collaborations and areas of cooperation, particularly in mentoring and advising. Ultimately, Critical Connections is intended to produce students who graduate with heightened levels of self-awareness, understanding, responsibility, and
engagement, and a campus community that is inherently connected by its shared sense of “vision, value, and voice” (Stallard, 2007).

Critical Connections will build on TCU’s student-centered culture and on the dedication of its outstanding faculty, staff, and administrators. Integrative learning has been discussed and researched for over a decade, and there are a number of best practices that have been identified, such as George Kuh’s list of high-impact educational activities. Among these are first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning, service learning and community engagement, internships, capstone experiences, and portfolio pedagogy. To some extent, these are already in place at TCU, but Critical Connections will incorporate them in a unified program intended to synthesize all learning experiences. Critical Connections will specifically develop five campus-wide initiatives: the first-year seminar, common intellectual experiences, interdisciplinary courses and projects involving international experience and community engagement, capstone experiences, and portfolio pedagogy.

Yet, with integrative learning, the sum is always greater than its parts. Critical Connections will not simply build five separate components; rather, it will create an intellectual scaffolding of these five components that will facilitate recurrent and reciprocal interaction and reflection.

II. Identification of the Topic

Too often today in higher education we encourage students to forget. Once immersed in their majors, students are basically allowed to forget what they learned in their general education core courses, and, more broadly, to view knowledge and critical skills as being discipline-specific content. Despite increased discussions on interdisciplinary studies and collaborative learning, we still maintain discipline-based curricula that encourage students to focus narrowly on their major requirements, and at no time do we require them to reflect critically on the many interconnections that unite their various learning experiences. In order to foster curricular integration rather than fragmentation, we need to encourage students to become more involved in evaluating their own individual progress as learners and to invite them to make connections between their many learning experiences. Integrative learning is a pedagogical strategy for developing students to become active, mindful, and deliberate learners.

Critical Connections seeks to facilitate and support a deeper level of knowing among students by developing two objectives: first, by closely aligning its five components, it will create an intellectual scaffolding that will promote frequent and reciprocal interchange in student learning and, second, by establishing a process of portfolio pedagogy, it will enhance student awareness of, and involvement in, their educational progress and ultimate goals. While disciplinary knowledge will remain essential, the capacity of students to integrate their learning experiences—across courses, over time, and between campus and community life—is an educational necessity in an increasingly connected and globalized world. By developing this capacity to “put the pieces together,” Critical Connections will initiate a trajectory of growth for students to become lifelong learners, allowing them to adapt their knowledge, skills, and competencies to a variety of contexts and situations. The capacity to perceive, and then benefit from, the unique exigencies of specific contexts is a requisite step in personal development, which enables individuals not only to achieve higher levels of self-understanding but also to become more thoughtful, conscientious, and responsible participants in the global community. Thus, Critical Connections will help to fulfill TCU’s intention to affect deep and lasting change in the human community. Rather than being yet another “value-added” component of current pedagogical fashion, Critical Connections—in nurturing lifelong integrative learners who are able to reflect, synthesize, and adapt—will embody TCU’s mission to be internationally recognized as a “World-Class, Values-Centered University.”
As a multifaceted program implementing an integrative learning approach, Critical Connections is developed from the extensive research and work of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). AAC&U defines integrative learning as: “an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus” (Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric). In its report Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College, AAC&U (2002) appealed for an education worthy of the demands of the 21st century. The report argues that schools, colleges, and universities need to alter their practices to more intentionally develop students as “integrative thinkers who can see the connections in seemingly disparate information and draw on a wide range of knowledge to make decisions.” Such integrative capacities are the result of learning that trains students not only to perceive interconnections but also to benefit from their perceptions. While an endorsement of integrative learning among educators is not new, there is far greater need for implementation today than ever before.

To prosper in a world of global connections, TCU students need to develop reflective and adaptive capacities so that they can readily synthesize and transfer what they have learned to real life situations, thus bridging the conventional gaps between knowledge and experience, course work and profession, and the intellectual and the practical. Academic disciplines need to become less rigid and more permeable, so that greater cross-disciplinary and co-curricular conversations can regularly occur. Such conversations would empower TCU students not only to integrate all of their learning experiences, from the Core to their majors and electives, and from classroom to campus and community, but also to develop a reactive dexterity of thought that can discern connectivity in diversity and apparent diffusion.

In many ways, our world is shrinking. We are in the midst of an immense technological and cultural revolution, global in scope, which is rapidly dissolving conventional boundaries. New scientific insights are emerging at the borders of old ones, drawing traditional academic areas and disciplines closer together, and fostering a lively exchange of ideas, concepts, methods, and even subject matter (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). With the dynamic expansion of the internet, and with the remarkable development of new media, the capacity to communicate, and thus to collaborate, has surged to groundbreaking levels. In many ways, our world is becoming integrative.

Increasingly, in the midst of a rapidly changing world, we must recognize that as educators and facilitators of learning we are educating TCU students for jobs, professions, and opportunities that do not yet exist. No matter the subject area, integrative learning will train our students to adjust, convert, and translate what they have learned. Rather than simply accepting the meanings and solutions assigned to them by others, students immersed in an integrative curriculum are involved making meaning—in assimilating resources, posing questions, identifying solutions, and reflecting on outcomes. Thus they become involved in identifying real world problems and seeking meaningful answers.

Such an integrative approach is consistent with the demands of today’s workforce. More and more, employers expect graduates to take initiative, network effectively, coordinate efforts, work toward shared goals, think analytically, evaluate alternatives, and create solutions (Gardner, 2007). In the context of integrative learning, employers “seek new hires with breadth as well as depth, and a demonstrated capacity for applying their knowledge to new challenges and contexts” (Schneider, 2011). Yet, according to recent studies, higher education is failing to meet these expectations. One survey found that less than 25% of human resource professionals report that the recent college graduates they employ are well prepared for the workforce (LEAP), and AAC&U research indicates that less than 10% of today’s graduates have the knowledge and experience to make them globally prepared. By training students to integrate their learning experiences, by helping them to connect, adapt, and translate knowledge in practical, versatile ways, TCU will give its graduates a competitive edge.
Critical Connections will train TCU students to become intentional learners, and thus to become lifelong learners. Being regularly encouraged to reflect on their experiences and goals, and as well to consider the relevance and implications of their experiences, TCU students will be better able to perceive learning as a goal rather than an incidental outcome. Consequently, as an educational process, integrative intentionality would prompt TCU students to focus more attention on knowledge, skills, and competencies than on grades and GPAs. Rather than constantly checking their grade averages on eCollege, TCU students would have to assume a proactive measure of responsibility for achieving their academic goals and, as a result, to become active participants in designing their degree pathways.

Moreover, Critical Connections will strengthen TCU’s sense of community. Long identified—and celebrated—for its connected community, TCU has always been careful to nurture the bonds that unite its campus culture, and in contrast to large state institutions it has always taken great pride in the personal attention given to students and in the accessibility of its faculty and staff. Yet the explosive growth of the recent past has strained these bonds and connections. Annual increases in enrollments have not only resulted in larger classes and faculty/staff workloads, but also in a larger and more dispersed physical campus. At the same time, the technology revolution has increasingly made electronic communication the norm at the cost of limiting face-to-face communication. Students, faculty, and staff alike encounter greater challenges to connect with each other than ever before, and thus TCU must meet these challenges in order to preserve its special sense of community. Critical Connections, however, would significantly extend and enhance TCU’s uniquely connected community.

As a comprehensive integrative program, Critical Connections will both strengthen current campus interconnections and build new ones by prioritizing collaborations on multiple levels. By its very nature, integrative learning seeks to connect and synthesize by bridging the conventional gulfs between disciplines, between core and major, and between curricular and co-curricular experiences. Critical Connections proposes to create bridges by developing its five linked components: first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, interdisciplinary courses and projects involving international experience and community engagement, capstone experiences, and portfolio pedagogy. Each one of these components is necessarily collaborative, reciprocal, and synergistic, involving regular cooperative interactions among students, faculty, and staff. The benefits of developing such a cooperative and interactive culture are manifold, but perhaps one of the most important would be a heightened level of mentoring. Rather than a dispersed and uneven system of once-a-semester advising, faculty and staff would have far greater opportunities to work more closely with students throughout their degree pathways; recurrent mentoring, in fact, would become a central facet of Critical Connections.

An integrative approach to learning is wholly consistent with TCU’s core values, strategic plans, and institutional goals. By implementing a deeper level of self-reflective learning in an inquiry-based curriculum, and by promoting higher levels of campus connectivity, Critical Connections would assist students in acknowledging their responsibilities as leaders and citizens in a full range of social and civil communities from the personal to the global. Certainly the acceptance of individual responsibility is not only a crucial step in leadership development but also reinforces TCU’s traditional values of personal freedom, integrity, dignity, and respect. TCU’s stated mission is to “educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.” In light of recent incidents in February 2012, we believe the time is right for TCU to focus more intentionally on issues of personal and social responsibility, and that this QEP represents an opportunity to do so.

Author and commentator David Brooks (2011) cites recent sociological research revealing that when asked to describe a moral dilemma they had faced, two-thirds of 18-to-23-year-olds either couldn’t answer the question or described problems that are not moral at all. Brooks notes that young Americans in the undergraduate demographic have not been given the
resources to cultivate their moral intuitions and imaginations, to think generally about moral obligations, and to question behaviors and attitudes that may be degrading to themselves and others.

As Lee Knefelkamp (2008) reminds us, the college years represent a key opportunity not only for the development of civic identity, but also for the development of moral identity:

Indeed, college can be a crucial shaping environment for both—if educational opportunities deliberately engage the student in accordance with his or her developmental readiness . . . We must be mindful of this need as we work to create more purposeful, deliberate and connected educational experiences for our students.

Integrated into this plan for institutional transformation are the dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility identified through a joint initiative of AAC&U and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. These dimensions include both Developing Competence in Moral & Ethical Reasoning and Contributing to a Larger Community (recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community, the local community, and the wider society. Emphasis is on striving to cultivate integrity, exercise good judgment and develop such traits as accountability, respect and self-discipline.

Furthermore, Critical Connections is also closely aligned with TCU’s Cardinal Principles. As an integrative program that strengthens campus connections, Critical Connections would help to “recruit and retain outstanding students, faculty, and staff who can thrive intellectually, personally, and professionally at TCU” (TCU Cardinal Principle #1). Motivational speakers and writers, such as Michael Lee Stallard and Jason Pankau (2007), have offered compelling evidence that, when people are closely connect to each other and to their institution, they are able achieve far greater levels of creativity and productivity. Clearly, there is unmistakable evidence that proves strong links between connection and retention. The more connections students establish with their campus culture, the less likely they are to transfer or drop out. Certainly, Critical Connections would help students establish strong connective framework. Moreover, panel findings at the recent AAC&U conference suggest that portfolio pedagogy, which requires students to comment on the relevance of their studies and to assess their progress at regular intervals, actually increases retention rates. According to one report, there was an improvement of 5% in retention rates between students in portfolio-intensive courses and non-portfolio courses (CUNY-LaGuardia ePortfolio Workshop).

Similarly, Critical Connections would promote “a vibrant, strong, and brave learning community” specifically because it would markedly “improve integration and communication between curricular and co-curricular programs and services” (TCU Cardinal Principle #2). Improving integration and communication is the essence of Critical Connections, especially between curricular and co-curricular experiences. Pedagogical studies have repeatedly affirmed the “long-tested principle that students learn best when they discover for themselves” (Taylor, 2011), and Critical Connections is expressly intended to enhance active student discovery. Also, there is equal agreement among educators that as many significant learning experiences take place outside of the classroom as inside the classroom, and Critical Connections is obviously designed to assimilate all learning experiences, from Frog Camp to capstone seminars. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of this QEP is the inextricable linking of the co-curricular with the curricular.

Because of the central role of eportfolios and portfolio pedagogy, Critical Connections is also closely related to the institutional goal of enhancing “TCU’s learning community by providing outstanding facilities and appropriate technology” (TCU Cardinal Principle #3). Using eportfolios to encourage student self-reflection is a highly innovative pedagogy based on cutting-edge technology. Recurrent use of eportfolios by students, beginning with their matriculation and concluding with their graduation, will allow them to become active, self-
directed learners and will foster significant learning experiences outside of the classroom. Eportfolio platforms, such as Digication, not only assist students in integrating and assessing different areas of knowledge, but also in constructing—and presenting—their own unique voices and perspectives. The international community is sustained by electronic communication, and participation in this community requires students to use new media technology to construct and present their voices and perspectives.

Because its primary purpose is to enhance and build connections, Critical Connections as well will unquestionably “accelerate TCU’s connections with the greater community: Fort Worth, Texas, the nation, and the world” (TCU Cardinal Principle #4). Not only will it encourage students to perceive numerous campus connections, but it will also encourage them to develop a disposition to build connections in all their areas of engagement and activity. More specifically, as it is designed, Critical Connections will advocate an integrative curriculum that will offer interdisciplinary, team-taught courses requiring both community-engagement and international experience, both of which are requisite components in realizing truly “responsible global citizenship.”

Critical Connections is equally aligned with the TCU Academic Master Plan, the TCU Promise, and the recent TCU Student Creed. To promote the “student-scholar model,” it will offer interdisciplinary experiences, both within and outside the classroom, that will foster innovative learning and discovery; that will respond to major social challenges facing the region, nation, and world; and that will nurture a culture of high expectations for active student engagement, integrating academic and student life (TCU Master Plan). At the same time, it will urge TCU students to commit to “intellectual curiosity and active learning,” to practice “high standards of personal behavior,” and to maintain “vigorously engaged with their community and the world around them” (The TCU Promise). By linking all arenas of student activity, and by promoting acknowledgment of responsibility in the larger regional, national, and international communities, Critical Connections will magnify TCU’s commitment to excellence through active discovery and achievement (The TCU Promise). Moreover, as the recent TCU Student Creed stipulates, students must commit to excellence by “serving with respect, learning with passion, and leading with integrity.” In its inherent framework, Critical Connections is intended to facilitate active and conscientious student participation in all three areas of service, learning, and leadership by encouraging a vigorous and continuous self-examination of all duties, obligations, and commitments.

All of the above demonstrates that Critical Connections is not merely a new program; it is a refinement and enlargement of what TCU already is about. Rather than simply adding something new, it is intended to distill and dramatically enhance the essence of what is truly TCU. Through the implementation of first-year experiences, campus conversations, interdisciplinary courses and projects involving international experience and community engagement, capstone experiences, and portfolio pedagogy, Critical Connections will heighten the best of what identifies TCU as “world class, value-centered university.” As an integrative program fostering relevant connections and active engagement, it seeks to amplify TCU’s most cherished ideals. This QEP is transformational not by adding another layer, but rather in assuring that students become the best possible versions of themselves.

### III. Statement of Desired Student Learning Outcomes

**Learning goals:**

As active participants in learning, students will integrate and synthesize curricular and co-curricular experiences generating meaning in new and enhanced ways. Students will develop habits of mind preparing them to conduct their personal, professional, and civic lives in an informed and ethical manner.

The student learning outcomes attendant to this QEP proposal are:
1. Students describe and explain their educational goals and begin developing a plan by which to reach these goals.

2. Students identify, describe, compare, and contrast commonalities found in two or more differing learning experiences.

3. Students design effective argument through the integration and synthesis of multiple perspectives.

4. Students use knowledge and skills acquired across the curriculum to construct solutions in an integrated manner.

5. Students illustrate how learning specific to an “integrated” academic environment might be transferred to “real-world” situations.

6. Students describe, analyze, and appraise the connections between various curricular and co-curricular experiences and demonstrate how elements learned might be synthesized to help achieve their educational goals.

7. Students illustrate how new knowledge, methodology, and understanding might be created as a result of integrative, synthetic learning.

8. Students reflect upon and modify attitudes and behaviors in response to their learning experiences and demonstrate commitment to leading lives of personal and social responsibility.

Program goals:

Program goals are most clearly understood in terms of the Student Learning Outcomes. As students’ performance relative to the outcomes improves, so will the attainment of the main goals associated with the program. There are, however, some specific program-wide outcomes which might provide generalized measures of success. These relate, primarily, to generating interest, providing access, increasing student involvement, and integrating program offerings with those of the campus at-large.

Program outcomes/measures:

1) Integrated/interdisciplinary course and co-curricular offerings will increase in number and topic-related breadth.

2) Integrated/interdisciplinary course and co-curricular offerings will be offered at an increasing variety of times both on campus and off (including study-abroad).

3) Integrated/interdisciplinary course and co-curricular offerings will be presented in an increasing variety of modalities including, but not limited to, lecture, laboratory, field study, internship, service-learning, and private study.

4) Course offerings will, when appropriate and approved, become integrated into the TCU Core Curriculum.

5) Course offerings will, when appropriate and approved, become integrated into academic degree programs, the Honors College, and other like campus entities.

6) Eportfolio use will increase amongst TCU students.
University goals:

The primary desired outcome is the engagement of the entire university community. Relative to students, the goal is to provide collaborative interdisciplinary opportunities that enrich student development and enhance the climate of student engagement. For the faculty and staff, the goal is to elevate the level and meaningfulness of discourse through increased exposure to and the resultant understanding of seemingly disparate fields; articulation of important elements and ideas common across the disciplines; and the creation of new ideas and modalities relative to teaching, learning, and the human experience through integrated, synthetic reasoning.

University outcomes/measures:

1) Staff and faculty will work collaboratively to generate new initiatives serving to further the QEP program and learning outcomes.
2) Staff and faculty will, as is appropriate, integrate the new understandings produced through this QEP initiative into the commission of their regular duties.
3) The institution will support, generate, and otherwise promote learning and creativity which embodies the ethos of integrative and synthetic learning.

IV. Literature Review

The intentional approach to integrative learning called for within this QEP is consistent with historic calls for deepening the connections students make in their learning. Expressed as early as the Student Personnel Point of View of 1937, development of the whole student—not just intellectual capacity or the ability to remember data—has been seen as the gateway to maximizing student growth and readiness to contribute to the world in meaningful ways. Content knowledge, skill development, and learning how to learn for a lifetime are the key, perhaps now more than ever, to being able to skilfully adapt to a rapidly changing world.

In the mid-1950’s Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives noted the importance of putting together “elements and parts so as to form a whole. This is a process of working with elements, parts, etc., and combining them in such a way as to constitute a pattern or structure not clearly there before” (1956). In the decades since Bloom, research has emerged from psycho-social development, cognitive psychology, learning theory, and social identity development that provides a theoretical framework for how students understand themselves and construct their knowledge of the world through the integration of knowledge and experience. Kolb’s model of experiential learning (1984) is one such example. Kolb’s (1984) work focuses on the preparation of students for lifelong learning, wherein the student encounters the world via four pedagogical activities: reflective observation, active experimentation, concrete experience, and abstract conceptualization.

The work of L. Dee Fink (2003) challenges educators to reconsider a reliance on Bloom’s taxonomy and provides a substitute, the ‘taxonomy of significant learning.’ This taxonomy, importantly, is not hierarchical but relational and interactive, with each of the six kinds of learning related to each other; when a course of learning is able to promote all six, it becomes synergistic, interrelated and significant.

Additional examples of integrative learning frameworks include the constructivist learning model of Lawson (1989), Linn’s scaffolded knowledge integration framework (1995), and Lev Vygotsky’s social-cognitive approach to developmental psychology (1962). Such research informs us about how students make meaning and how learning experiences are processed and approached. From it we also come to understand how knowledge is constructed and mediated by the student’s personal history. From the co-curricular perspective, Arthur Chickering’s model of developmental vectors (1969) has been particularly relevant in asserting that the college years are rich in cultivating cognitive and affective development.
provide a meta-analysis of research on how college affects students. They provide significant evidence that an intentional total college experience and environment designed to encourage involvement and engagement can have a profound effect on students’ development and the integration of their learning.

Flynn and Vredevoogd (2010) identified emerging trends in higher education through a series of leadership roundtables in 2005 and updated in 2009. Over the next ten years, colleges and universities are predicted to experience seven trends that are directly related to this QEP:

- A need for more varied and holistic approaches to inclusive learning;
- A demand for more experiential, outside learning opportunities;
- An increase in student interests in interdisciplinary learning;
- Increased interdependences of campus and community;
- Technology as a driver of change;
- The role of students in managing their own learning; and
- The significance of accountability and assessment in defining institutional effectiveness.

Finally, in a recent work produced for the Association of American Colleges & Universities, noted researcher George Kuh (2008) identified ten high-impact educational practices for affecting and effecting meaningful learning. These practices have clear implications for integrative learning and represent efforts at structural integration for those institutions undertaking them:

- First-year seminars and experiences
- Common intellectual experiences
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity/global training
- Service learning/community-based learning
- Internships, and
- Capstone courses and projects

This QEP claims the three practices in bold letters as central so its plan. Those in italics will also unquestionably be critical to its success, as outlined in the plan below.

V. Actions to be Implemented

Developed from George Kuh’s (2008) “High Impact Educational Practices,” Critical Connections has five interrelated initiatives: first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, interdisciplinary courses and projects involving international experience and community engagement, capstone experiences, and portfolio pedagogy. Together, these initiatives will provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to collaborate in an inquiry-based curriculum that promotes intentional learning, resulting in higher levels of active engagement than are currently evident. The more students become actively engaged in their studies, the more they will be able to discern critical connections in their curricular and co-curricular experiences. Being connected—as students and as citizens—will result in higher levels of retention, productivity, and responsibility.
A. Portfolio pedagogy

Rather than simply a technological innovation, portfolio pedagogy is a dynamic learning strategy. Implementing a program of student eportfolios not only would provide an integrative bridge connecting all student-learning experiences, and thus would serve as the integrative center of Critical Connections, but it also would have a profound impact on TCU’s campus culture. Although often disregarded, and sometimes dismissed, reflection is an essential part of learning. When students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned, both in and out of the classroom, they are better able to perceive relevance, assess self-performance, and integrate different areas of knowledge, all of which are crucial in achieving higher levels of student engagement. Reflection would help students become more self-aware and more self-directed, and thus they would develop as more intentional learners and as more responsible members of the TCU community. Moreover, as recent studies have indicated, portfolio pedagogy would also enhance such basic student skills as writing and critical thinking, since students would regularly be required to respond to a series of metacognitive prompts that would require them to write about their learning experiences. Written reflection—and consequently public presentation—would become an ingrained structural element in student academic work, fostering significant learning experiences outside of the classroom. Such constant composition would impel students to construct their own unique voices and perspectives. Overall, portfolio pedagogy would require students to take greater responsibility for their work than they are now encouraged to do, and in turn heightened levels of student engagement would also result in improved collaborations, in improved mentoring, in improved retention, and in improved academic performance.

Portfolio pedagogy would start before new students actually matriculate. At the same time they receive their Common Reading assignments during the summer before their first semester, they would receive information to set up their own individual eportfolio sites, and they would be then prompted to introduce themselves to the TCU community by responding to a “who am I?” type of question. Thus, from the outset, reflective portfolio practice would become a natural and integral part of the TCU experience, and throughout their years at TCU this practice would continue at regular intervals, particularly at the beginning and end of each semester when students would be prompted to articulate on their goals and progress. Working with eportfolio interns and their advisors, students would not only progressively develop their portfolios, but also their capacities to assess their learning experiences, as their prompts would gradually encourage deeper levels of synthesis and reflection.

During their senior year students would also be asked to create a more public and selective “showcase” portfolio, which would contain the best of their work and which would encapsulate the best of their experiences. Specifically designed for professional presentation, these showcase portfolios would add a final level of self-awareness, synthesis, engagement, and responsibility to the TCU student experience. Moreover, the showcase portfolio would remain available to students after graduation and would provide immeasurable support during their job searches. Not only would students control the content of their eportfolios, but they would own their sites, which they can continue to use, and indeed transfer, after graduation.

Student portfolios, even eportfolios, are not new to TCU. Several departments currently require senior portfolios, as several departments have already developed excellent capstone seminars. Yet, in addition to campus-wide involvement, portfolio pedagogy would add a crucial systemic element. To do well, and to do in such a way to create a reflective habit of mind, eportfolios must be developed continuously from matriculation to graduation. They cannot be left until the senior year, nor be seen as add-on work. Creating a showcase portfolio would be, and should be, the central undertaking in the TCU capstone experience, but the crucial metacognitive work must begin during their earliest TCU experiences.
For implementation, a program of portfolio pedagogy at TCU would need one full-time staff person and a minimum of five student eportfolio interns, who together would serve as the primary resource for questions concerning portfolio development. In addition to the physical resources of an office and computers, portfolio pedagogy would require careful faculty and staff development. In order to benefit the most from such curricular innovation, faculty and staff would need to understand how best to use the portfolios in their various classes and experiences, and also how to promote student reflective practice. During the initial phases of implementation, a series of demonstrations and workshops would be held for faculty and staff. More than simply allowing faculty and staff to become familiar with the technology, these presentations would help to initiate a new culture of reflective practice at TCU.

The greatest challenge to eportfolio pedagogy implementation would be creating a culture of acceptance. As feedback from advisors and mentors is imperative in portfolio pedagogy, faculty and staff buy-in is crucial, and thus faculty and staff development is equally crucial. If eportfolios are perceived as extra work, or a transient pedagogical fashion, faculty and staff would be hesitant to participate in the implementation of eportfolio pedagogy. Two changes are required. First, faculty and staff must clearly perceive the substantial implementation of such pedagogy, and this can be done through careful faculty and staff development. Second, they must be recognized and rewarded for their participation. As advisors and mentors, faculty and staff who spend considerable time helping students to construct their eportfolios, and thus to reflect on learning experiences, should allowed to adjust their workloads accordingly. Clearly, one of the most significant trends occurring in higher education is the recognition that notable learning experiences take place outside of the physical classroom, and it is crucial that faculty and staff workloads be adjusted to account for these experiences. Certainly, eportfolio pedagogy is one of the most principal and pivotal of non-classroom experiences, and to accept its importance would require a fundamental change in campus culture. A student’s education must be conceived as consisting of all learning experiences, and not simply as credits earned.

B. Common Intellectual Experiences

"Students need to live and study in environments that help them engage “the big questions” and explore their own purpose and identity. Students need to recognize how their course of study connects them to the civic and cultural life around them. Students need to see that we are all members of one community and that our individual work is interconnected with the work of others. And students need to witness the academy’s ongoing commitment to creating a more just society." (Knefelkamp, 2008)

Consistent with the research of George Kuh (2008) regarding high impact educational practices, Critical Connections proposes Common Intellectual Experiences as a means of fulfilling its objective to integrate student learning into a shared holistic experience. The following opportunities offer students substantive interaction with peers, faculty, and staff, leading to heightened self-awareness, understanding, responsibility, and engagement. These opportunities also work to create a greater sense of connection and community on campus by providing unique occasions for students, faculty, and staff to share insights and ideas in a common quest for growth.

1. **Launching the Theme Year**: Building on the success of three previous Theme Semesters (*Politics and Principles*, 2004; *Rights, Responsibilities, Respect*, 2007; *Think Purple, Live Green*, 2008), Critical Connections would implement a Theme Year program, with the selection and coordination of an annual theme rotating among the schools/colleges/divisions. Ideally, the theme would relate to areas of the core curriculum and would be reflected in speakers, programs,
research and community engagement projects, debates, performances, and—perhaps most importantly—in structured conversations or dialogues. To create shared intellectual experiences, Critical Connections would link a coordinated series of multiple interdisciplinary discussions throughout campus.

Examples of themes featured at other universities include *Art + Invention* and *The Human Condition: Time-Life-Mind* (Stanford University); *What Does It Mean to be Educated and On the Fringes: What Fades, What Flourishes* (Susquehanna University); and *Dollars & Sense: Personal Finance to World Poverty and Teaching & Learning for a New Era* (Western Illinois University). Like these institutions and many other institutions, TCU would make use of a common-theme experience to nurture a culture of intellectual engagement, support the development of communication skills, foster collaboration and creativity, and explore the nature of civil dialogue around challenging and contested issues.

2. **Building on the Common Reading:** Additionally, the Theme-Year program would also build on, and connect to, TCU’s Common Reading (begun as a part of New Student Orientation in 1998 and reframed to increase faculty involvement through a Vision in Action initiative in 2006). As a step towards integrating inquiry into all aspects of students’ lives, Critical Connections proposes that current programs such as the Common Reading and One Book/One TCU be expanded to include all members of the TCU community. Inviting participation broadly from students, faculty, and staff would increase the sense of connection among various demographics on campus and create a common path for conversation among those who might not otherwise engage one another. Enlarging the reach of the Common Reading program to include all members of the campus community would help to create a vital intellectual infrastructure. Student Affairs’ TCU Transitions program already assists with the Common Reading and coordinates One Book, One TCU and could enlarge both programs to those on campus interested in participating.

3. **Initiating Real Conversations:** As part of Common Intellectual Experiences, Critical Connections would inaugurate *Real Conversations*, a program in which members of the TCU and Fort Worth communities would be invited to discuss topics of interest related to the chosen theme for the year. We envision *Real Conversations* less as a lecture series and more as a recurrent engaged dialogue. Those in local communities who have a particular expertise or interest in the designated theme would be invited to participate in structured conversations on campus. Such a program would strengthen ties to the community and provides TCU students with the opportunity to hear from, and make connections with, leaders from the Fort Worth community.

In addition to increasing the level of intellectual engagement on campus, these conversations would help students to develop the critical responsibility to consider the perspectives of others, evaluate multiple viewpoints, and openly engage diverse and competing perspectives, using all of these dimensions and forums as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work (Dey & Associates, 2010).

Woven throughout these related activities are two key values: an abiding commitment to personal integrity ethical behavior, and an appreciation of diversity. Mathison & Freeman’s (1998) discussion of integrative learning lauds an approach starting with the ideas and concerns
of students and faculty, transcending the disciplines in a search for coherence and meaning and ‘built through daily negotiations and interactions.’ At TCU, our collective concern for tolerance is highlighted by our recent ranking as 15 on 2011’s “Little Race/Class Interaction” list (http://m.tcu360.com/campus/2011/08/13042.princeton-review-ranks-tcu-among-schools-least-raceclass-interaction), which indicates that daily negotiations and interactions often do not take place between students from different backgrounds and perspectives. Both students and faculty tend to gather with, and talk to, those who are most like them, thus robbing themselves of the growth afforded by being challenged. As Moore (2011) and others recently pointed out, this ranking may reflect the need for an increased cultural awareness and involvement among TCU students, faculty, and staff. Critical Connections is designed to contribute to the goal of increasing student knowledge and appreciation of the unique contributions, beliefs, values and experiences of diverse groups.

C. First-Year Seminar

TCU has long considered the possibility of a common first-year course but has been understandably deterred by issues of resources and competing ideas. Critical Connections proposes that now is the moment to institute this program. At a focus group with Chancellor’s Scholars in spring, 2011, students avidly embraced the idea of a common course. While they preferred some control over which course—based on a theme-- they might select, they were intrigued by the possibility of inquiry–based discussions exploring topics of interest. One of Critical Connections’ strong features is its “Cornerstone to Capstone” framework, creating opportunities for students to focus on exploration, transition, and perception beginning the day before classes start and extending through their final semester. Indeed, the First-Year Seminar—launched with the Common Reading—would serve as a complement to graduation, setting the tone for everything in between.

Beginning with an extended Common Reading discussion, the first-year seminar would ideally incorporate the following components: current information literacies, eportfolio instruction, TCU’s Mission/Vision/Values, the history and function of the university; the meaning of engagement and responsibility, the differences in learning styles, methods, and tools; and advising and mentoring. Woven throughout the semester will be the yearly theme or Big Idea. Students would be encouraged to practice deliberate reflection and intentional learning as they begin to anticipate their time at TCU and plan their educational goals.

First on the list of Kuh’s (2008) High-Impact Educational Practices, first-year seminars and Experiences are designed to help students develop intellectual and practical competencies and to foster a disposition of active engagement across the TCU curriculum. Like the other engaged activities Kuh recommends, first-year seminars have been shown to have a significant impact on student retention, particularly concerning the decision to return for the sophomore year. TCU has already benefitted from successful first-year experiences, including Orientation, Frog Camp, Chancellor’s Assembly, and a variety of developmental experiences offered through the TCU Transitions program.

In the pilot program during the Fall 2013 semester, outstanding teacher/scholars would be invited to create seminars, incorporating the key components listed above but also having substantial opportunity to utilize their own pedagogical philosophy, research interests, and favorite readings. Participating faculty would not only be paid a stipend but would also have priority access to the Critical Connections grants program in its early years.

The first cohort of students to participate in this program would constitute approximately ¼ of the Class of 2016 and would consist of incoming Honors College students, Community Scholars, and other invited participants; each year following, the course offerings would be expanded by approximately 450 additional students, so that by Year Four the entire class would be included.
The UNPR 1001 designation would be utilized during the four-year pilot phase of the program, after which a determination would be made regarding the permanent model for the seminar.

D. Interdisciplinary courses and projects

In order to foster a truly connected culture, Critical Connections would implement opportunities for team-taught interdisciplinary courses during the January and May “mini-terms.” Ideally, students would take two mini-term courses, and both would be based on experiential learning. One of the courses would be focused on international experience, whether abroad or here in the DFW metroplex, while the second would involve community-engaged service in local or national communities. Thus, both types of courses would encourage students to develop vital connections beyond the TCU campus and, by so doing, help them to achieve higher levels of responsible citizenship. Utilizing the mini-terms for study abroad will ideally provide opportunities for students who are simply unable to leave Fort Worth for an extended period of time.

As with eportfolios, the first challenge in implementation would be initiating a cultural shift on campus. Despite a great deal of discussion, and general approval of interdisciplinary work, there are certain institutional barriers that would need to be overcome. With current programmatic curricula, there is considerable pressure placed on students to focus primarily on their major requirements. Simply, degrees are closely tied to majors. Through careful faculty/staff development, Critical Connections would attempt to generate a campus-wide recognition that learning experiences outside of majors are as important as those within. Because some degree programs require so much from their students as to leave little room for non-major experiences, this is not a simple task. Gradually, Critical Connections would initiate an acceptance of integrative activities, such as the mini-term team-taught interdisciplinary courses, intended to establish a holistic culture of engagement and connectivity.

Similarly, a second challenge to implementation would be institutional acceptance of team-taught courses. Currently, given the exigencies of departmental budgets and teaching loads, there are actual impediments to team-teaching, which require either double enrollments in one course or one instructor teaching an unremunerated extra course. Ideally, Critical Connections would be able to offer both instructors in an interdisciplinary experiential team-taught course with appropriate stipends, and by making use of the January and May mini-terms such courses should not affect teaching loads. These courses would be a vital component in creating a genuinely integrative campus.

While TCU is on the right track, the NSSE and CIRP data show definite room for improvement. In particular, the 46% of students who engage in service-learning is low, given that 55.4% come to TCU expecting to engage in service learning and 71.2% did so in high school (indicating that we are actually serving them less well than their high school experiences). Additionally, while 45.4% of incoming students expect to study abroad, only 25% actually do. This data would seem to indicate that, while our students come to TCU enthusiastic about our mission of responsible citizenship in a global community, they are not always able to participate meaningfully in study abroad and/or service learning for financial reasons or, in some cases, due to restrictions associated with their academic schedules. The Critical Connections program will address this problem by providing experiential learning grant monies to students with financial need and also by expanding the number of experiential learning opportunities in the January and May terms.

Interestingly, Austin College – an institution of 1350 students just north of TCU - is among the top Fulbright Scholar producers in the nation (Chronicle of Higher Education, October 2011). With six Fulbright awards in 2011-12, AC—a bachelor’s-degree-granting college—surpassed all other Texas educational institutions with the exception of the University
of Texas at Austin (seven awards with a student population exceeding 50,000). This can be attributed, at least partly, to the fact that more than seventy percent of AC students study abroad, primarily through their “Jan Term” program. Indeed, the college is ranked #1 in the nation for study abroad based up on percentage of participation among baccalaureate institutions (2011 Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange). There is no reason why TCU cannot surpass Austin College in both the number of students studying abroad and the number of Fulbright Scholars - and there is no reason why we cannot have a robust January Term such as the one Johns Hopkins features, with opportunities not only for global study, but also for community-engaged learning, internships, independent study, and research with faculty members. In addition to providing support for students to participate in such programs, Critical Connections also has a grant program for faculty participation and for the enrichment of faculty innovation and talent.

E. Capstone Experiences

Capstone experiences are the culmination of a student’s four-year journey, and it is entirely appropriate for students to create a final integrative project that seeks synthesis and meaning in their learning experiences. In some ways, capstone experiences would be easier to implement and integrate than any of the previous four initiatives, since there are a number of departments currently requiring capstone seminars and/or capstone projects. Critical Connections would simply coordinate with these departments to make sure that their capstone experiences incorporated a final metacognitive project, particularly a “showcase” portfolio. Those departments without capstone experiences would be encouraged to develop some sort of linked opportunities for seniors not only to prepare for life after graduation but also to reflect on their learning experiences. These opportunities and discussions are essential environments for students to assess their progress and achievements. Ideally, students would be given the chance to consider how well their work and experiences matched their outcomes and goals throughout their degree pathways. This type of metacognition is a requisite final step in TCU’s mission to educate students to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.

Current examples of capstones at TCU include numerous departmental capstone courses; student legacy projects in the Chancellor’s Leadership Program and Neeley Fellows; Honors theses; and portfolios, performances, exhibits and undergraduate research projects across the academy. Future capstones might focus on the idea of a synthetic or integrating experience involving the perspective of two or more disciplines including either the student’s major or minor field of study. Through the capstone process, the student would be encouraged to see the connections between his/her area of interest and that of another; the resulting work product could be in the form of an oral presentation, a paper, a work of art, a service-learning project, a journal, an experiment with articulated results, or any other tangible, assessable end. A specific example of this Synthetic Experience (SE) approach to the capstone may be found in the Appendix.

The Appendix also includes 15 prospective course proposals by current TCU faculty; these courses range from one to three hours of credit, from first-year seminars to capstone experiences, and from regular semester courses to intensely experiential and study abroad courses taught during either the January of the May semester. As evidenced by the variety and creativity of the proposals, TCU faculty may be expected to welcome an opportunity to work in a new and distinctly interdisciplinary manner.
F. Supporting Student/Faculty/Staff Innovative Collaborations

With proper support and leadership, Critical Connections has the potential to create a campus culture in which innovation—broadly defined, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, collaborative, or individual—is encouraged and rewarded. To promote innovative pedagogy, the Faculty Senate should consider, at least for the duration of the Big Idea, the inclusion of “innovation” as a category in the Faculty Annual Report, along with research, service and teaching. Critical Connections proposes the creation of a revitalized undergraduate research journal, with emphasis on collaborative work. The possibility for students to publish their research is indeed a powerful motivator. We also recommend a “Chancellor’s Award for Critical Connections,” ideally given to a group of individuals who have excelled in a creative and collaborative interdisciplinary project.

G. Faculty & Staff Development

Empowerment, support, and recognition of outstanding faculty and staff will be essential to the success of Critical Connections. Training will be provided through campus workshops, the Koehler Center for Teaching Excellence, and outside consultants.

Structure:
Critical Connections requires that all parts of the university be involved in the implementation. If chosen as TCU’s Big Idea, a Critical Connections Committee would be constituted as soon as possible to advise and assist the Chancellor and Provost on implementation and oversight. This Committee would be headed by the Dean of the John V. Roach Honors College and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs/Dean of Student Development and would include, but not be limited to, the following members:

- Associate Provost/Executive Director, Office for Effectiveness & Quality Enhancement
- Director of the TCU Core Curriculum
- Three Academic Deans or their designees – representing colleges or schools in charge of the current, previous and upcoming Theme years
- Three Student Representatives – one graduate and two undergraduate, representing different schools or colleges from the Dean
- One Student Affairs representative appointed by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
- A Representative from the Faculty Senate
- A Representative from the Staff Assembly
- Director, Koehler Center for Teaching Excellence
- Director, Student Affairs Quality Enhancement
- Director, Center for International Studies
- Director, Center for Community Involvement and Service-Learning
- Director, TCU Press

Because its success rests on collaboration between various areas of the university, particularly Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, a faculty member and a Student Affairs staff person would each devote half of their time to co-direct the project. Reporting to the Provost, these Directors would be responsible for providing leadership and direction for the program. They would keep it aligned with the TCU’s strategic plan, collaborate with university departments and committees, and communicate with the campus and larger communities. Additionally, they would monitor the budget and work with the Office for Effectiveness and Quality Enhancement on assessment.
**VI. Timeline**

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<tr>
<td><strong>July</strong></td>
<td>AAC&amp;U Institute on Integrative Learning</td>
<td>June-Aug. Marketing</td>
<td>Jan. 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Intersession/Jan Term</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aug.- Oct.</strong></td>
<td>Create advisory committee Complete final plan Director and Co-Director selected Begin work on Theme Year Program Select first theme</td>
<td>June-Aug. Introduce program to new students &amp; parents at Orientation</td>
<td>June-Aug. Introduce program to new students &amp; parents at Orientation</td>
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<td><strong>Nov.</strong></td>
<td>Off-site review</td>
<td>Aug. Launch Theme Year &amp; Common Reading 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; FY Seminar (1/4 of Incoming class) Publicize grants program</td>
<td>Aug. Launch Theme Year &amp; Common Reading FY Seminar (1/2 of incoming class)</td>
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<td><strong>Feb.</strong></td>
<td>Focused report and QEP due to SACS</td>
<td>Oct. 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Student grants awarded (for Sp 14)</td>
<td>Oct. CC Grants awarded</td>
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<td><strong>March</strong></td>
<td>Conduct search for eportfolio coordinator</td>
<td>Dec. Reaffirmation final report</td>
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<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>Publicize grants program</td>
<td>Jan. 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Intersession/Jan Term</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May</strong></td>
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<td>May 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; 3-week term/ Maymester</td>
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| Faculty/Staff Development | Dec. Consultant for Advisory Committee (Dee Fink) | Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> Faculty/Staff grants awarded (for Sp 14) | Oct. CC Grants awarded |
|                          | May Faculty/staff/student introduction & training (George Kuh) | Ongoing training and support | Ongoing training and support |

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<tr>
<th>eportfolio &amp; Assessment</th>
<th>June-Oct. Establish assessment database Collect benchmark data Conduct faculty/staff needs assessment</th>
<th>March SACS site visit Conduct NSSEE survey</th>
<th>May Assess all programs &amp; revise accordingly</th>
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<td><strong>April</strong> Conduct PSRI <strong>Summer</strong> eportfolio distributed to all FY students <strong>Dec.</strong> Assess first semester and</td>
<td><strong>April</strong> Conduct PSRI</td>
<td><strong>May</strong> Assess all programs &amp; revise accordingly</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
<td>June 2015 – May 2016</td>
<td>June 2016 – May 2017</td>
<td>June 2017 – May 2018</td>
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<td><strong>May</strong></td>
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<td>Publicize grants program</td>
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<td><strong>June-Aug.</strong></td>
<td>Introduce program to new students &amp; parents at Orientation</td>
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<td><strong>Aug.</strong></td>
<td>Launch Theme Year &amp; Common Reading FY Seminar (3/4 of incoming class)</td>
<td>Launch Theme Year &amp; Common Reading FY Seminar (full class)</td>
<td>Launch Theme Year &amp; Common Reading FY Seminar (full class)</td>
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<td><strong>Oct.</strong></td>
<td>CC Grants awarded</td>
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<td>Faculty/Staff Development</td>
<td><strong>Oct.</strong></td>
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<td>Ongoing training and support</td>
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<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>Assess all programs &amp; revise accordingly</td>
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<td>May Assess all programs &amp; revise accordingly</td>
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### VII. Resources

In order to successfully achieve its objectives, this QEP makes substantial use of, and in some cases redirects, current human and financial resources, reserving new expenditures for investments in the development of faculty, staff and students.

A new Critical Connections grants program will provide funds to support faculty and staff in the development of innovative and engaged learning experiences and also to support students who need assistance to study abroad, take unpaid internships, participate in community-engaged projects, and/or do research. In this way, every faculty and staff member will have the opportunity to have his/her creativity and commitment recognized and nurtured.
And every student will be able to participate in at least one integrated experiential learning activity prior to graduation.

Faculty will also be paid stipends to facilitate the First Year Seminar. Current funding for Common Reading facilitators and for the co-curricular Connections FY program will be redirected to support this expense.

New staffing is limited to a coordinator for the eportfolio program and a part-time administrative assistant. The Director and Co-Director will be existing University employees who are compensated through a release-time plan.

The software program for the eportfolio program itself will be selected by the Advisory Committee with assistance from Technology Resources. There is also funding for two graduate assistants and three undergraduate student interns. They will be assisted by existing Leadership For Life (L4L) Coaches who are already budgeted to work with underclass students.

The Theme Year program will be supported through existing funds for speakers and Student Affairs programming.

Although most marketing will be done electronically, funds are allocated for more extensive educational/promotional efforts for the roll-out of Critical Connections – to include a print brochure and banners for the campus.

Funding is also requested for two consultants. Dr. Dee Fink will be asked to consult with the Chancellor/Provost and Advisory Committee during the development phase of the project. Dr. George Kuh will come to campus for the roll-out of the program and will deliver a major address to faculty, staff and students; he will also provide extensive training to faculty and staff to prepare them to participate fully in the Critical Connections program. Funding is also allocated for ongoing training, making use of the existing Koehler Center budget.

A detailed budget may be found in the Appendix.

VIII. Assessment

Fostering students’ abilities to integrate learning—across courses, over time, and between campus and community life—is one of the most important goals and challenges for higher education . . . Students face a rapidly changing and increasingly connected world where integrative learning becomes not just a benefit, but a necessity.

—“Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric,” AAC&U

Integrative learning curricula encourage students to make vital connections in their studies, which in turn allows them to perceive greater interdisciplinary relevance in, and to take greater responsibility for, their various learning experiences. In today’s global society of constantly shifting cultural contexts, such integrative capacity is essential for personal and professional development. Yet such capacity is not often evident in traditional academic work, such as end-of-term research papers and course projects, which is primarily produced within well-defined disciplinary boundaries. Consequently, students must be prompted to apprehend and appreciate connections in a variety of innovative self-reflective exercises. Thus Critical Connections has three levels of assessment, the individual, the institutional, and the national. At the individual level, students would be required to examine their learning experiences in light of their desired outcomes and goals.

By promoting pedagogical self-reflection, integrative learning curricula help students to become intentional learners, enabling them to become active participants in their studies. As opposed to passive lecture-based education, such active participation helps students get more out of their classroom experiences, as multiple studies have argued that students learn best when they are able to discover for themselves (Taylor, 2011 17). Thus, integrative assessment
not only becomes a means of monitoring student development, but also a meaningful learning experience.

There are several methods for promoting pedagogical self-reflection. Instructors can incorporate self-reflective assignments into their syllabi; mentors and advisors can require students to submit brief written evaluations of their experiences and degree progress; and capstone courses can be developed (or adapted) to nurture a greater sense of connectivity and relevance. Yet perhaps the best method for advancing—and assessing—integrative learning is portfolio pedagogy. For students, faculty, and administrators, educational portfolios, particularly eportfolios, offer a number of advantages in developing and evaluating integrative learning.

Reflection is a critical part of learning. In requiring students to critically reflect on their learning experiences, eportfolios promote greater levels of self-direction, self-awareness, and self-understanding. To realize such deliberate reflection, a number of prompts can be used at various stages, such as

--What are my educational goals, and what specific outcomes do I want to achieve?
--How do I perceive myself as a learner, and what are my primary strengths and interests as a student?
--How do I want to be perceived by others as a learner?
--What have I learned, and what is its relevance?
--What knowledge, skills, or capacities have I gained, or am able to demonstrate?
--How am I able to use this knowledge, or these skills and capacities, in other educational contexts and/or real-life experiences?
--How have my extra-curricular learning experiences enhanced my academic experiences?
--How does this learning experience relate to my own interests and goals?
--How will I be able to use this knowledge, or these skills and capacities, in the future?
--How does this learning experience contribute to my progress as a student, and as a responsible citizen? (adapted from Taylor, 2011, 17)

What is most important is developing the habit of reflection, and this must be done with regularity and consistency. Students should be encouraged to begin developing this habit of reflection before they matriculate and then to maintain this practice throughout their residency. To promote student reflection, one credit hour per year could be awarded students for maintaining and developing their eportfolios.

Obviously, such reflective writing not only benefits the students, but it also enables a variety of institutional assessments. In response to an annual series of self-evaluative prompts, and following discussions with their advisors, students will post work and metacognitive reflections that, in one or more ways, demonstrate the primary integrative learning outcomes.

1. In a required advising session during the fall semester, students will discuss their educational goals with their advisors, and collaboratively they will post a statement of educational goals in a specially designated section in the student’s eportfolio.
2. At the end of each year students will post a brief metacognitive assessment of their learning experiences in their eportfolios, commenting on the relevant commonalities they perceive among their curricular, co-curricular, and pre-professional experiences.
3. At least once a year students will post a brief metacognitive description explaining how new knowledge gained through the integration and synthesis of multiple perspectives allowed them to construct an effective argument, explanation, and/or justification.
4. At least once per year, students will post a brief metacognitive description explaining how they used new knowledge and skills acquired across the curriculum to propose and/or construct an integrative solution.

5. At least once a year, students will post an artifact, or descriptive analysis, demonstrating an interdisciplinary argument or solution.

6. At least once a year students will post a brief metacognitive description appraising the connections between various curricular and co-curricular experiences and demonstrating how these connections helped them progress towards their educational goals.

7. At least once a year students will post a brief metacognitive description, and/or artifact, illustrating how new knowledge, methodology, and/or understanding was created as a result of integrative, synthetic learning.

8. At least once a year students will reflect on how their attitudes and behaviors have changed in response to their integrative learning experiences and how such changes have heightened their commitment to leading lives of personal and social responsibility.

9. During the spring semester students will meet with their advisors to discuss their metacognitive self-assessments and perceptions of academic progress; when necessary, students and advisors will amend or adjust the student’s previously posted statement of educational goals.

By adapting the AAC&U "Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric," it will be possible to connect student outcomes with specific action steps according to first-year benchmarks, second- and third-year milestones, and fourth-year capstones (see Appendix).

For institutional assessment, a TCU Integrative Assessment Committee will be appointed to read a sampling of student eportfolios at the end of each academic year, evaluating student metacognitive self-assessments and artifacts against overall integrative programmatic objectives. Comprised of members from each college and selected staff members from Student Affairs, the TCU Integrative Assessment will report on the overall institutional progress to achieve both Program and University Goals. By collecting reflections and artifacts over a period of four years, Student eportfolios would offer an invaluable resource not only for Critical Connections assessment but also for multifaceted institutional assessment.

Additionally, Critical Connections would add an extra level of national assessment above individual and institutional levels. By making use of the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), The TCU Integrative Assessment would be able to explore how integrative learning was contributing to TCU’s mission to “educate students to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.”

The notion that we ought to educate undergraduates for ethical practice and socially responsible living is widely accepted in higher education. The recent attention to the moral and ethical dimension of contemporary undergraduate education is evident in the Core Commitments initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (Dey & Associates, 2010). AAC&U’s initiative examines ways to identify, document, and assess the effects of college on personal and social responsibility. The heart of Core Commitments lies in its articulation of five distinct but related dimensions of personal and social responsibility. The five dimensions are:

1. **Striving for excellence**: developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one’s very best in all aspects of college;

2. **Cultivating personal and academic integrity**: recognizing and acting on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honor code;

3. **Contributing to a larger community**: recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community and the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally;
4. **Taking seriously the perspectives of others**: recognizing and acting on the obligation to informs one’s own judgment and engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; and finally.

5. **Developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action**: developing ethical and moral reasoning in ways that incorporate the other four responsibilities, and using such reasoning in learning and in life.

AAC&U’s Core Commitments initiative has generated tools, research, and numerous resources to inform campus practices and to measure progress related to the five dimensions. Among these tools is the *Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory* (PSRI), a campus climate survey used by institutions to take the pulse of their campus with respect to the five dimensions of personal and social responsibility. Based on responses from students, faculty, staff, and administrators, PSRI measures the gap between “what should be” and “what actually is” when it comes to the importance of educating for personal and social responsibility. The 2007 survey of more 24,000 students and 9,000 campus professionals at twenty-three institutions demonstrated that educating for personal and social responsibility remains far more of an aspiration than a reality.

TCU’s participation in the PSRI would represent a positive, campus-wide movement in enhancing student commitment to significant areas of personal and social responsibility. Administered by the Research Institute for Studies in Education at Iowa State, the PSRI survey would be administered in Spring 2013 to all students, faculty, and student affairs staff. The assessment would measure our campus climate relative to promoting the five Core Commitment dimensions. The data (received in July 2013) would allow students, faculty, and staff alike to better understand how TCU’s connective culture is developing relative to promoting moral and ethical reasoning and decision-making among students, and the survey’s information could then inform decisions and plans about how TCU might better address its aspirations at the curricular and co-curricular levels.

Several existing instruments such as the Fraternity/Sorority Life Impact Survey and the Diverse Learning Environments Survey, in addition to CIRP and NSSE, will provide multiple measures through which to determine the impact of Critical Connections components, individually and in toto. Ongoing assessment, reflection, adaptation and improvement will certainly be key to making this program the best it can be. And, at its best, we believe that it can be transformational.

### References


Critical Connections:
Empowering the TCU Community Through Integrative Learning

Appendices

1. Budget

2. List of Contributors

3. Syllabi of Prospective Courses

4. AAC&U Integrated Learning Value Rubric

5. TCU Mission/Vision/Values Statements
### Appendix 1 – Budget

**Preliminary QEP Budget**

<table>
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| Faculty/Staff Development               | 20,000    |            |           |           |           |           |
| Consultants                             | 20,000    |            |           |           |           |           |
| Critical Connections Fac/Staff Grants   | 25,000    | 30,000     | 35,000    | 40,000    | 50,000    | 180,000   |
| Ongoing Training and Support            | 5,000     | 5,000      | 5,000     | 5,000     | 5,000     | 25,000    |
| Total Faculty/Staff Support             | 30,000    | 35,000     | 40,000    | 45,000    | 55,000    | 225,000   |

<p>| eportfolio &amp; Assessment                 | 21,000    | 38,000     | 64,000    | 64,000    | 64,000    | 251,000   |
| eportfolio Technology                   | 49,000    | 50,470     | 51,984    | 53,544    | 55,150    | 260,148   |
| eportfolio Coordinator                  | 24,000    | 24,000     | 24,000    | 24,000    | 24,000    | 120,000   |</p>
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1. $1,500 Stipends per faculty for FY Seminar
2. 49% release time with benefits, 3% increase each year
3. 1/4 Time with benefits, 3% increase each year
4. $2,000 per student
5. Dee Fink & George Kuh
6. ePortfolio Service Fees
7. Two graduate students
8. $9/hr for 30hrs/week for 27 weeks a year
9. Existing Funds
Appendix 2 – List of Contributors

AddRan College of Liberal Arts:
F. Komla Aggor*
Eric W. Cox
Linda K. Hughes
Daniel E. Williams*

College of Communication:
Jacqueline Lambiase*
David E. Whillock*

College of Education:
Cecilia Silva*
Cornell Thomas

College of Fine Arts:
Blaise J. Ferrandino*
Till Macivor Meyn

College of Science & Engineering:
David R. Cross
Eric E. Simanek
R. Stephen Weis*

Division of Student Affairs:
John Mark Day*
Barbara Brown Herman*
Matthew L. Riordan
Angela D. Taylor
Daniel Terry*

Harris College of Nursing & Health Sciences:
Lynn K. Flahive*
David A. Jenkins*
Linda S. Moore

John V. Roach Honors College:
Ron Pitcock*
Peggy W. Watson*

Mary Couts Burnett Library:
Ammie M. Harrison
June Koelker*
Robyn Reid
**Neeley School of Business:**
Beata Jones*
Joseph B. Lipscomb

**Students:**
Kyle Arnold (‘10, ‘13) M.Ed in progress, Educational Administration
Katie Fearer (‘10, ‘13) M.S. in progress, Communication Studies
Will Hopper (‘13) Entrepreneurial Management/Pre-Med
Wyatt Kanyer (‘12) Journalism
Vanessa Norris* (‘13) Biology/Spanish for Pre-Health Professions
Adriana Paret (‘12) Communication Sciences and Disorders
Laura M. Shaw* (‘12), M.Ed in progress, Educational Administration

* Steering Committee
Appendix 3 – Syllabi of Prospective Courses Emphasizing Integrative Learning

Learning About Learning (First Year, 1 hour)

Submitted by R. Stephen Weis, Department of Engineering

Course Description/Overview

We learn throughout our lives. Most of the time we concentrate on what we are learning rather than how we are learning it. In this course, we will investigate learning theories, learning strategies and tools, and learning styles to enrich our own learning.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Basic understanding of learning theories and brain science
- How do you learn best?
- Learning tools and structures (maps, writing, etc.)
- Learning in the disciplines (brief lectures / class exercises)
- Integrative learning (opportunities for e-portfolio development)

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Learning concepts may be (and should be) taught anywhere and everywhere
- Course is intended for first-semester of the first-year on campus
- Course meetings may be held at various sites throughout the semester (e.g., theatre, art gallery, laboratory, campus chiller plant)
Learning from Screens and Peers: Understanding Social and Cultural Knowledge Acquisition (First Year, 3 hours, ethical leadership emphasis)

Submitted by Jacqueline Lambiase, Schieffer School of Journalism and Dan Williams, Department of English

Course Description/Overview [Fits in core: Cultural Awareness, Literary Traditions, Citizenship & Social Values]

Students certainly learn in classrooms, but most of their learning occurs in nonacademic settings. This course introduces social, cognitive, and behavioral learning theories and challenges students to discover the ways they learn from the world around them.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience**: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline**: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer**: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication**: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment**: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Social learning/cognitive learning theories and models from social science
- Survey of research about learning from peers and in classrooms
- Media literacy history and theory
- Learning from the canon and from popular culture
- Reflective assignments about student’s own learning patterns through ePortfolio

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Lectures and activities related to Common Reading
- Qualitative research involving depth interviewing, journal keeping, and text analysis
Common Reading/Information Literacy Colloquium (First Year, 1 hour)

Submitted By Ammie Harrison, Mary Couts Burnett Library

Course Description/Overview

This course is a first year colloquium based on the Common Reading, officially taught by faculty. Faculty and research librarians would work closely to produce desired pedagogical outcomes, using methodology chosen by faculty.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Where do you find reliable information about the Common Reading, and why do you look there?
- What is meant by authority, scholarly, and/or peer-review?
- Selection and Analysis: how to read articles, choose articles, develop search terms to find works, and learning to analyze abstracts and articles for better inquiry

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Selected activities could involve time in the classroom, time in the library, and/or communication through course shells.
Viral Philanthropy: how flashmobs, social media, and Reddit can change the world (Intersession, 3 hours, ethical leadership emphasis)

Submitted by John Mark Day, Student Development Services

Course Description/Overview

Sure, flashmobs are obnoxious and played out – but, as Caine’s Arcade has proven, they can still be a creative outlet for ethical leadership. This course will analyze the sociological underpinnings of flashmobs and the marketing behind viral videos to create the ultimate viral philanthropy.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience:** Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline:** Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer:** Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication:** Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- The sociology of flashmobs
- Using creative problem solving techniques to solve philanthropic questions
- Marketing an idea and making it viral
- Project selection and execution
- Telling the story of what you’ve accomplished

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

Off-campus locations in the Fort Worth community will be determined by the project created by the class. Course activities will focus on finding a community need, creatively solving it, and causing the solution and the story to go viral through various social media tools.
Mind, Nature, and New Zealand Rugby: What if Gregory Bateson coached the All Blacks? (Intersession, 3 hours, globalization emphasis)

Submitted by David Cross, Department of Psychology

Course Description/Overview [Fits in core: Cultural Awareness]

This course takes seriously Gregory Bateson's trans-disciplinary view of mind and nature and applies it to New Zealand rugby as a cultural phenomenon. New Zealand is the premiere rugby nation, and rugby exists at the core of New Zealand culture; although this national obsession transcends gender and ethnicity, it also defines them. This course is an ethnography of New Zealand culture, as seen through the lens of the All Blacks, the Black Ferns, their fans, and their aspirants.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Topic 1: Culture and Ecology
- Topic 2: Culture, Gender, and Work
- Topic 3: Culture, Ethnicity, and Sport
- Topic 4: Ethnicity, Gender, and Development
- Topic 5: Ontogeny and Phylogeny

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Course takes place in New Zealand
Nature of Leadership: Deans’ Perspectives (Intersession, 3 hours, ethical leadership emphasis)

Submitted by  David Jenkins, Department of Social Work

Course Description/Overview

The course is built on the principle that leadership is a process. With that in mind, students will create a tentative definition of leadership as they analyze existing theories and approaches to leadership. Through the course, student will read research and case examples, hear the personal experiences of academic administrators, and strive to understand the process of leadership. Students will synthesize their learning into a coherent philosophy of leadership to serve as a foundation upon which to build and improve their personal leadership style.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted inboldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
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- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Leadership as a multifaceted process
- Various theories of leadership
- Personal strengths and limitations as a leader
- The personal, moral, and ethical responsibilities and privileges of leadership, including the use of authority and power in positions of leadership
- Application of the foundational areas of leadership to practical and real-life situations within an academic environment

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Interactions with University Deans and Administrators on their personal views of leadership
Engaged Intercultural Learning – Cultural Pathways through Eastern Europe (Intersession, 3 hours, globalization emphasis)

Submitted by Beata Jones, Neeley School of Business

Course Description/Overview

Cultural Pathways through Eastern Europe hopes to enhance the participants’ understanding of Eastern European cultures, specifically those of Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland, through study of history, politics, religion, arts, and their people.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience:** Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline:** Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer:** Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication:** Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- The roles of history, politics, religion, and art in shaping the culture of Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland.
- Communicate cross-cultural perspective with accurate descriptions of Eastern European cultures’ mores, values, and sensitivities.
- Apply knowledge of Eastern European cultures and cross-cultural perspective to a new situation in ways that minimize potential impact of cultural bias.
- Compare and contrast the cultures of Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland with that of the United States.
- Understand the interconnectedness of individuals, society and cultures within each country’s setting.

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Travel in Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland
**Latino Children’s Literature** *(Intersession, 3 hours, ethical leadership emphasis)*

Submitted by Cecilia Silva, College of Education

Course Description/Overview

A survey of Latino children’s literature to explore the historical and sociocultural experiences of Latinos in the United States. Course includes a field experience component.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline:** Sees (makes) connections across literature and pedagogy, examine Latino experiences from different theoretical and ideological perspectives.
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Use Latino children’s literature to explore historical and sociocultural experiences of Latinos in the United States, including issues of race, social class, gender and privilege
- Engage Latino families in the education of their children through the use of children’s literature
- Use e-Potfolio to collect and reflect on course assignments and experiences

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

On and Off Campus Instruction

Sample Activities

- Children’s Literature Analysis: Conduct a critical analysis of Latino children’s books
- Family Book Project: Engage Latino children and families in creating a family book
- Lessons: Conduct lessons using Latino children’s literature
Integrated Learning/Information Literacy (General Course Component)

Submitted By Robyn Reid, Mary Couts Burnett Library

Course Description/Overview

Integrated Learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations. Incorporating Information Literacy Standards in to selected upper division courses serves as a construct for an integrated learning experience.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience**: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline**: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer**: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication**: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment**: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

This proposal is not a new course but an integration of Information Literacy Standards into existing courses with an optimal outcome that one course per major incorporates the Standards. Faculty would use existing course assignments, working with librarians to complete selected Information Literacy Standards in the course.

Students would be expected to apply Information Literacy Standards to their life pursuits after graduation/to their developing job skills/to their career path using their academic major by completing a project approved by faculty. The project would be added to student's ePortfolio. Students would transfer learning from the course and make connections among ideas to their own situations as they plan their lives beyond the TCU campus.

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Existing course activities continue to be the basis for the course supplemented by the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education
Darwin: The Student, The Writer, The Man (Intersession, 3 hours, globalization emphasis)

Submitted By Linda K. Hughes, Department of English

Course Description/Overview

Students will visit Cambridge University, the Natural History Museum (London), and Down House (Darwin’s Home) to understand the interactive relationship of university education, writing communities, and domestic life in a premier global scientific writer and thinker.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Darwin at Cambridge University: (texts: Darwin: Norton Critical Edition; Memoir of Professor Henslow available at darwin-online.org.uk; Darwin’s student bills (also darwin-onling.org.uk), visit to Christ’s College, where Darwin lived

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

Off-Campus: site visits to Cambridge University, London, Down House (Downe, Kent)
Leaving on a Jet Plane: How DFW International Builds Cultural Relationships and Trade Partners (Intersession, .5 hours, globalization and ethical leadership)

Submitted By Jacqueline Lambiase, Schieffer School of Journalism

Course Description/Overview

Planes and nonstop routes carry both people and culture. This study-abroad course explores connections needed for international partnerships, with students creating cultural similarity maps using sociological, communication, business & other models for successful relationships.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience:** Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline:** Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer:** Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication:** Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Lessons from cultural convergence vs. Western cultural imperialism models
- Ethical leadership for relationship building and cultural exploration
- The Circuit of Culture model, and cultural exchange & learning within digital culture
- Reexamining and updating Hofstede’s national cultural dimensions
- Cultural mapping in ePortfolio assignments for DFW/Texas culture & destination culture

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Off-campus travel to a nonstop destination from DFW Int’l Airport for two weeks.
- Dialogue with the North Texas Commission (confirmed partner: Kimberly Walton), and other potential partners: World Affairs Council, Sister Cities groups, DFW Int’l Airport.
- Tours and discussion with international business/cultural/trading organizations, in Fort Worth and in destination cities.
Understanding West Africa: Ghana (Intersession, 3 hours, globalization)

Submitted By F. Komla Aggor, Department of Spanish and Hispanic Studies

Course Description/Overview

This course is aimed at introducing you to the cultural and socio-political development of Ghana. The program is designed to make you arrive at some level of understanding of African life and the socio-economic, religious, and historical development of post-colonial Ghana. It is expected that, as you immerse yourself in Ghanaian rural settings, you will also come to appreciate the difference between life in a pre-industrial culture and life in a contemporary urban setting. In short, it is expected that you will come away with a sense of the vast differences manifest in the way human societies work but, at the same time, develop a sincere respect for these differences.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Slavery in Ghana and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
- Pan-Africanism and the African Diaspora
- The Changing Social Structure of Ghana
- Human and Cultural Ecology in West Africa
- Women in Development
- The Role of Technology in Development
- Politics and the Institution of Chieftaincy
- The Role of Religion in West African Life
- Ghana, Model of Peace-building

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Travel and instruction throughout Ghana
Model United Nations (Intersession, 3 hours, globalization and ethical leadership)

Submitted By Eric Cox, Department of Political Science

Course Description/Overview

This class is designed to guide in their preparation for participation in an international Model United Nations conference through guided research and student presentations on their assigned country, committee, and committee topics. Students will engage in independent research on their country's policy regarding the topics before their committee. In addition, students will make oral presentations on their topics, complete a position paper for their committee, and complete an in-depth research paper on one of their topics.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in boldface are particularly emphasized in this course.

- Connections to Experience: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline: Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives**
- Transfer: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- Integrated Communication: Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- Reflection and Self-Assessment: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Day One: Review of MUN rules of procedure, speeches, discussion of conference themes
- Day Two: Rules of procedure quiz, resolution writing simulation, discussion of important historical and cultural attributes of country/area we will visit
- Day Three: Interactive speeches. Group discussion of topics
- Day Four: Final speeches, committee simulation, setting committee priorities.
- Day Five: Final logistics, discussion of current importance of country/area we will visit
- Day Six-Day14: Participation in conference
- Day 15: Debriefing – discussion of the conference including both procedural and logistic lessons learned

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- On campus instruction and travel to MUN conference
The Interdisciplinary Nature and Application of Composition (Intersession, 3 hours)

Submitted by Blaise Ferrandino, School of Music

Course Description/Overview

Composition refers to the manner in which ideas, objects, words, etc. are put together for the purpose of yielding a sensible, useful, and often aesthetically pleasing result. This course will explore composition in many disciplines including language, music, art, and in the context of the scientific method.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience:** Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline:** Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives
- **Transfer:** Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication:** Fulfills assignments through written or creative products appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment:** Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

Sample Topics & Course Materials

- Syntactical norms in music and language
- Meaning in Music, Art, and Mathematics. Symbolic Language
- Edgar Allan Poe “The Philosophy of Composition” Graham’s American Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art. April, 1846

On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities

- Review and codification of syntactical/compositional norms. Application to music and language.
- Listening to music, articulating impressions in the context of a uniform template, relating meaningfulness to meaning.
- Reading a newspaper article and understanding its structure in “musical” terms.
- Watching sections of *The Unanswered Question* and reflecting upon Bernstein's ideas of the application of transformational grammar to music.
- Group project relating composition in the context of photography or other visual art to that found in another discipline.
Serving and Learning: Disciplines Working Together *(Capstone, 3-6 hours, globalization and ethical leadership)*

Submitted by Lynn Flahive, COSD and Steve Weis, ENGR

**Course Description/Overview**
This intersession and capstone course will allow students from what appear to be very diverse fields to come together to improve the lives of others. Students may travel to countries like Haiti and work to improve the communications of those who need so much, as communication is the human connection.

**Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**
Integrated Learning courses use the following outcomes so that students may move from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new complex situations within and beyond the campus. The learning outcomes highlighted in **boldface** are particularly emphasized in this course.

- **Connections to Experience**: Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge
- **Connections to Discipline**: Sees (makes) **connections across disciplines**, perspectives
- **Transfer**: Adapts skills, abilities, theories, or methods gained in one situation to new situations
- **Integrated Communication**: Fulfills assignments through written or **creative products** appropriate in content, form, and meaning
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment**: Demonstrates a sense of self as a learner

**Sample Topics & Course Materials**

- How do humans communicate?
- How do we use technology to improve communication? To aid those who are communicatively impaired?
- How do diverse disciplines come together to solve this problem?
- On campus discussions about these topics will be used to develop a plan of action to improve communications for those in underdeveloped countries
- After the intersession experience, the class will come back together to reflect on the experience and discuss future needed activities
- Refurbishment of equipment that US companies no longer use

**On- or Off-Campus Instruction Location & Course Activities**

- An on campus course in fall to discuss the above topics and establish a plan of action
- 2 week intersession work experience in underdeveloped country, possibly Haiti or South Africa
- An on campus course in spring to reflect on the experience, to expand the needs to the Fort Worth community, to share perspectives with those in other disciplines on campus that may be able to contribute in the future, such as Nutrition, Education, and Psychology
Appendix 4 – AAC&U Integrated Learning Value Rubric

Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric
For more information, please contact value@aacu.org

**Definition**
Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection or work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Capstone 4</th>
<th>Milestones 3</th>
<th>Benchmark 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections to experience</strong></td>
<td>Meaningfully synthesizes connections among experiences outside of the formal classroom (including life experiences and academic experiences such as internships and travel abroad) to deepen understanding of fields of study and to broaden own points of view.</td>
<td>Effectively selects and develops examples of life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts (e.g. family life, artistic participation, civic involvement, work experience), to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks of fields of study.</td>
<td>Compares life experiences and academic knowledge to infer differences, as well as similarities, and acknowledge perspectives other than own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections to discipline</strong></td>
<td>Independently creates wholes out of multiple parts (synthesizes) or draws conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.</td>
<td>Independently connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.</td>
<td>When prompted, connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer</strong></td>
<td>When prompted, presents examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.</td>
<td>Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations to solve problems or explore issues.</td>
<td>Uses skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation in a new situation to contribute to understanding of problems or issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated Communication</strong></td>
<td>Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) in ways that enhance meaning, making clear the interdependence of language and meaning, thought and expression.</td>
<td>Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) to explicitly connect content and form, demonstrating awareness of purpose and audience.</td>
<td>Fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language or graph (or other visual representation) that connects in a basic way what is being communicated (content) with how it is said (form).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection and Self Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Envisions a future self (and possibly makes plans that build on past experiences) that have occurred across multiple and diverse contexts.</td>
<td>Evaluates changes in own learning over time, recognizing complex contextual factors (e.g., works with ambiguity and risk, deals with frustration, considers ethical frameworks).</td>
<td>Articulates strengths and challenges (within specific performances or events) to increase effectiveness in different contexts (through increased self awareness).</td>
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<td>Describes own performances with general descriptors of success and failure.</td>
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</tbody>
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Appendix 5 – TCU Statements

**Vision**
TCU is becoming an internationally recognized private University committed to an academic experience that fosters both relevant and significant scholarship and an inspiring education.

**Mission**
To educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.

**TCU's Core Values**
TCU values academic achievement, personal freedom and integrity, the dignity of and respect for the individual, and a deep heritage that includes inclusiveness and service.

**Guiding Values and Principles**
1. TCU is committed to nurturing and developing its reputation as a leading University committed to excellence in residential-based undergraduate education and excellence in graduate education in targeted areas.

2. TCU is committed to embracing the Teacher-Scholar Model in an environment that sustains and encourages creative activity and scholarship.

3. TCU is committed to providing a safe campus environment that assures a culture of inclusiveness and respect, where faculty, staff and students are empowered to develop personally and contribute positively to the academic mission.

4. TCU is committed to an environment which encourages innovation and risk-taking, and a willingness to fund a rich academic discovery process.

**Cardinal Principles**
There are five cardinal principles derived from *Vision in Action*. In spirit, these principles (called *cardinal goals* in the first planning process) have remained constant during both rounds of strategic planning, though minor modifications were made in the second phase. The five cardinal principles will determine the shape of the total TCU experience for at least a decade to come. What follows is a list of strategic priorities that support these principles. They are subject to further assessment and the availability of resources.

1. Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff who can achieve their full potential at TCU.
2. Design a vibrant learning community characterized by distinctive curricular, co-curricular, and residential programs.
3. Sustain an environment in which rich personal interaction is enhanced by outstanding facilities and appropriate technology.
4. Accelerate our connection with the greater community: Fort Worth, Texas, the nation, and the world.
5. Couple wise financial stewardship with a well-planned entrepreneurial approach to academic opportunities.