



HCC Teaching News



From the Fletcher Faculty Development Center

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High standards plus support: using the LSC

It's not easy to maintain or improve academic standards while educating an increasing proportion of underprepared students. According to research by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), students are most likely to succeed when student support is integrated into learning experiences, rather than being optional or as-needed. A 2012 report by the CCCSE found that 80 percent of faculty "often" or "always" refer students to tutoring, but 76 percent of students "never" use it. Students delay or avoid seeking help for many reasons, including miscalculating the difficulty of college work, a belief that only failing students need help, and a worldview that sees help-seeking as a sign of weakness. By working with Learning Support Center (LSC) staff, HCC faculty members can make support part

of the course—while making their own jobs more enjoyable.

During the fall 2014 semester, 62 percent of full-time faculty and 19 percent of adjunct faculty used the LSC. Learning Support Specialists Marti Grahl and Liz Hadley and Testing Center Coordinator Jen Adams urge faculty members to help communicate the value of the LSC to their students.

For instructors, the approach offers many benefits. Learning support produces better student outcomes: outsourcing in-depth how-to sessions, on citation for example, creates more class time for content; high-quality work is more pleasant to grade and respond to; and better student understanding of assignment requirements decreases grade friction.

The **LSC Instruction Request Form** is the key to making it happen. Instructors can use the form to:

- Reserve space to hold student hours (office hours).
- Verify that the textbook or software is on reserve for student use at the LSC. (If it is not, contact your division chair/director.) The LSC also lends calculators, DVDs, and other course resources.
- Coordinate plans to require that students work with, or get their work checked by, an LSC tutor or specialist—for a subject area or a writing assignment (in person or using the Online Writing Center).
- Alert the LSC to a requirement that an entire class attend a College 101 document design or study skills workshop.
- Request a special session—a tour, workshop, writing assistance—either in class or as an out-of-class activity.
- Explain a non-routine assignment or software/app to LSC staff, or ask someone to contact you about it.



The following prep activities make course-LSC integration smoother for students and instructors:

- Add the syllabus/course guide, assignments, rubrics, and how-to guides to your Moodle course site, so that students can access these in the LSC where a tutor can help them. (These documents cannot be stored physically in the LSC.)
- Plan ahead to use existing workshops when possible.
- Take a tour to learn what the LSC offers.
- Communicate your plans, and ask for assistance, with the LSC Instruction Request Form.

To learn more, go to www.hagerstowncc.edu/lsc. The Instruction Request Form is located in Faculty Resources. (If an “Access Denied” screen appears, log in using your email username and password.)

Faculty members talk about honors teaching

The HCC Honors Program has moved from planning to reality. Community college honors programs have become increasingly common. In 2012, two-year colleges represented 20 percent of National Collegiate Honors Council membership. On HCC’s campus, three faculty members who have taught an honors section report that the experience is “fun,” “stimulating,” and “a very good thing.”

When an honors section does not

attract full enrollment, it is taught using an honors contract. Tim Jenness, instructor of U.S. and world history, created contracts for two students in History I, Colonialism to the End of Reconstruction, in the fall of 2014. Teaching the section was “fun, the best part of the week,” he says.

For the honors students, Jenness added elements to the course—a weekly meeting to discuss a scholarly article and a visit to the Washington County Historical Society to view 19th-century manumission records—and substituted a 10-page research paper using primary and secondary sources for a shorter, simpler essay. In designing the course, Jenness “envisioned a graduate-level seminar, making adjustments for a sophomore course. We talked about bigger issues, in greater depth.” Advance preparation took about 10 hours, and weekly work amounted to two to three hours per week. Jenness says that the honors section “allowed me to do what I love to do—work one on one with students—and to push

them in ways that I couldn’t in a traditional class.”

Stephanie Curran, an adjunct instructor in the humanities, currently teaches an online world religions course with one honors student. The contract consists of regular work for the course plus an online discussion of each main topic, 10 for the semester. Curran starts with an in-depth question; the student replies with a lengthy analytical post. Curran responds and suggests sources for the student to use in a follow-up post, and lastly provides further feedback.

Curran estimates contract preparation required five hours, including syllabus and instructional design, Moodle training, and a telephone conversation with the student. During the semester, the honors section adds one to two hours of work per week.

“Do it! It’s fun,” Curran encourages other faculty members. “If you like to have a new challenge and something stimulating, it’s a great thing to do.”





It gives you a chance to have that intellectual conversation with a student who's really engaged." Because she also likes "working with students for whom things don't come easily," she enjoys the blend of teaching that the contract model creates.

Chris Lewis, associate professor of mathematics, worked this spring with Joseph Heavner, a biology/mathematics major in STEMM Technical Middle College, to develop an honors contract for two calculus courses. The contract "assumes considerable background," according to Lewis, making it a good fit for Heavner, who has been studying mathematics independently since age seven. To fulfill the contract, Heavner works through most of a textbook for a junior-level course in complex analysis. Assignments are 10 formal proofs, and research essays of about 20 pages in which Heavner explains his solution to a mathematical problem. Lewis responds to the work on the basis of its thoroughness, clarity, and form. Because the honors experience "promotes self-exploration" and emphasizes instructor feedback, Heavner says, the balance is "optimal.

I can go further into calculus and have fun messing around with proofs."

On average, Lewis spends four hours a week on the honors contract for the two courses.

"I had a good textbook; that gave me structure," he says.

He sees the honors program as "a very good thing. Our purpose is to help others," including high-performing students who need more challenge. The honors program "gives me a chance to look at topics that I wouldn't ordinarily teach."

Currently, the HCC Honors Program is in start-up mode as an "individually tailored" experience, according to Amanda Miller, associate professor of English and honors program co-coordinator with English instructor Kate Benchoff. The program began with general education courses, where many current students have already met their requirements. Miller expects the program to grow as it is marketed to high school students. For more information about the program, go to www.hagerstowncc.edu/honors.

Nine tips for multiple choice quizzes:

- Begin with learning outcomes (what content, what proportion of students should know it).
- Choose multiple choice for factual or clear-cut critical-thinking knowledge—not when creativity is required or a variety of interpretations are defensible.
- Research on cognition and memory shows that frequent assessment is a key to learning.
- To build skills broadly, design courses with a mix of multiple choice, problems or scenarios, and writing assignments.
- To enhance test validity, include four substantive choices and edit until the test measures content knowledge only—not test-taking skill.
- To avoid embedding wrong answers in students' memory, reveal answers as soon as possible after test period has ended.
- Use Moodle to save paper, create formative assessments (learning



Faculty watch as Learning Technology Specialist Brenda Huffman demonstrates Moodle quiz options. From left: Lore Kuehnert, Tim Jenness, Veronica Stein, and Vennece Fowlkes.

by retaking quiz), give students detailed answer explanations, and easily reuse questions.

- To decrease cheating, use more than one version (in Moodle, pools and groups), add to pools continually, limit testing window (24 or 48 hours), limit test time (one to two minutes/question), reveal answers only after window closes, and use the Testing Center.
- Get to know Respondus – a testing tool that aids in creating tests, changing Word documents to test formats, moving tests from Moodle to other LMS (Blackboard, Canvas), and sharing tests between Moodle courses (e.g., for lead faculty who must share a SLOA test with colleagues).

For more information about Moodle and Respondus, contact Brenda Huffman, Learning Technology, at bk Huffman@hagerstowncc.edu.

For ideas, feedback, or resources on test design, contact Linda Cornwell, Fletcher Center, at ljcornwell@hagerstowncc.edu.

Fast Facts: Middle States Visit April 12-15

- Two-part process: The visit complements the self study of HCC's successes and challenges in meeting accreditation-standards.
- Peer process: Team members are fellow faculty and administrators at community colleges.
- Why it matters: Accreditation gives colleges evidence of educational quality, allows students to be eligible for federal loans, and supports credits that transfer and hold value
- Faculty roles: Team members will not observe classes, but might ask to meet with full-time or part-time faculty members.
- Teaching-related self-study themes:
 - The faculty role is changing; it is more demanding than it was 20 years ago.
 - HCC faculty rate highly in credentials, learning outcomes, student ratings, and service.
 - Assessment (SLOA) is an area of progress.
 - FLPTC made teaching load, promotion, and tenure recommendations.
 - Faculty support will continue to be important from the Learning Support Center, Testing Center, and the Fletcher Faculty Development Center.
 - Guides for curriculum design, instructional design, and standards should be developed to make these areas more transparent and efficient.
 - Academic standards and academic honesty are complex areas requiring campus-wide conversation.

Suggestions or ideas about teaching topics? Contact Fletcher Faculty Development Center coordinator Linda Cornwell at ljcornwell@hagerstowncc.edu

The Fletcher Faculty Development Center at Hagerstown Community College supports excellence in teaching and learning in the areas of curriculum, instruction, standards, and assessment. The center was established in 2010 with the support of the Alice Virginia and David W. Fletcher Foundation.