

Innovation Exchange: February 7, 2014

At the Innovation Exchange this month, most of our discussion focused on plans for highlighting student innovation. We also discussed how to encourage a culture of innovation among both faculty and students, and a number of faculty members shared specific methods, tools and approaches that they had used in their teaching. Twenty people attended the session.

Student Innovation Showcase:

At the January Innovation Exchange, the group had suggested that we explore ways to celebrate student innovation. How best to do so was the focus of much of February's meeting.

The group decided that we should hold a **Student Innovation Showcase**. We tentatively set the date for April 23-24, which coordinates with Eco-Scholars Day (<http://www.lcc.edu/techcareers/ecoscholars/>). The idea would be to highlight the innovative work of students through a variety of student presentations, from poster sessions to readings to recitals. While there was a sense that many of these presentations might be connected to courses, any demonstration of student innovation would be welcomed. There would be room for digital presentations as well, in order to encourage the participation of students in online courses.

Suggestions for the best means to do this included:

- Poster sessions
- Share capstones or honor's options projects
- Using multimedia and 3-D rooms to share electronic presentations
- Student readings
- Student performances and recitals
- Lightning rounds: similar to the Innovation Exchange but with students sharing tools and ideas
- Online poster sessions and digital publication to enable online students to participate

Susan Halick suggested sharing ideas with faculty about ways they could encourage students to innovate and participate in this event. In particular, we could share ideas about how to develop student work that might fit into one of these presentation formats.

Because we are operating on a relatively short time frame, it was understood that this effort might be fairly small and informal. However, the general sense of the group was that it was important enough to celebrate student innovation that we should proceed with plans to hold an event this semester. While the long term goal would be for this showcase to grow into a more substantial program, for now the key is to start the process. Pairing this event with the already established Eco-Scholars Day seemed to offer the potential for future growth.

Anyone interested in serving on a Steering Committee for this event should contact Jeff Janowick (janowij@lcc.edu) as soon as possible. Given the time constraints, it is important to share this with both faculty and students quite soon.

Encouraging Innovation

While much of our conversation has tended to focus on faculty innovation, it is also important to encourage student innovation. Suggestions for doing both included:

- Developing projects across disciplines. This would establish the value of the principle of innovation as a means to solve problems using a range of thinking beyond that required in a particular course. For example, students in a humanities class and those in a science class might be given a problem to solve together. This would involve using what they have learned in their individual classes, but also in finding ways to apply that knowledge to a broader set of problems. This also reflects a more “real world” environment in which teams have to work together across areas of expertise to find solutions. These teams might also share their work at the Student Innovation Showcase.
- Allowing experimentation and failure. One suggestion was to devote a session to things that we had tried that *didn't* work, and finding ways to share that.
- Focusing on the fun aspects of innovation: using creative means to solve problems is fun.
- Using the Innovation Exchange to solve particular problems. That is, each meeting might start with one or two problems brought to the group that we can work on together so that we are actually innovating, not just talking about it.

Innovation Exchange

Several individuals shared brief summaries of some of the innovative tools or approaches they have used in the classroom. Others brought questions for the group to consider.

Sean Huberty mentioned that the ELTE program had some exceptionally innovative classes. He noted that the classes were well designed, highly organized, with assignments connected to outcomes in a way that ensured that you could not complete the course without learning the material. **Jim Swain** stated that this was in part due to the nature of the subject matter, but also reflected the reality that the program had to constantly update to reflect the standards in the discipline.

Arthur Wohlwill raised a question about a good graphics program that could easily create images for use in teaching tools. Suggestions included Adobe Illustrator (<http://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator.html>) Gimp (<http://www.gimp.org/>) (which is open source) and also Pixlr (<http://pixlr.com/>) (which is a free online editor). [It was later noted that this would have been a good opportunity to look at and demonstrate the use of these tools to solve specific teaching problems].

Jim Luke mentioned that he is considering developing an app that would allow his student blogs to be more responsive to mobile navigation. This led to a more general discussion of using blogging as a teaching tool. In particular, it was noted that this gave students an audience beyond just the professor, and also encouraged a different level of interaction with the material and with other students.

Meg Elias noted that Padlet (<http://padlet.com/>) was a good resource for teams to use to share ideas, particularly in online classes. It allows students to collaborate, but also allows for that collaborative work to be arranged (and re-arranged) in ways that effectively display the direction of the discussion or conversation.

Jeff Janowick had his students to write a haiku about the Great Depression. This served as a break from the routine of class and allowed for creative expression, but also forced students to engage with the material in a different way. This led to a more general discussion of what encourages innovation. In the case of a haiku, it was a constraint: the students had to settle on 17 syllables to discuss a complex historical event. This forced them to understand the event at a very basic level. The idea that limits can drive innovation or creativity seems to be one way that faculty can encourage student innovation: by encouraging them to think about ideas or course materials in new ways. (this also played into the discussion of working across disciplines to solve problems)