Chapter 3
Advancing a New General Education Curriculum Through a Faculty Community of Practice:
A Model for Intentional Design

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ABSTRACT

Many institutions of higher education are reimagining their general education curriculum or adding new, innovative programs to their course offerings. Faculty driving such innovation, while experts in their disciplines, often lack experience with instructional design and the benefits it subsequently brings to these types of programs. At the same time, process-driven, traditional approaches to instructional design may not feel relevant to some faculty. In this chapter, the authors describe the Learning Design Collaborative, a new model for instructional design built on the principles of intentional learning, authentic learning, and student engagement. Placed within the context of a faculty learning community, this experience has been used with faculty developing courses for the first-year signature experience of a new general education curriculum. Implications of this initiative suggest the importance of continually evaluating instructional design models, opportunities for implementing the model in other programs, and a relationship with other emerging instructional design models.

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of a few decades, the theory, methods, and approaches to instructional design in higher education have changed significantly. Broadly defined as the process of identifying a learning goal or objective, identifying instructional approaches to meet that goal, and developing media and other materials to support the instruction (Gustafson & Branch, 2007), instructional design integrates theory and methods from areas such as educational psychology, cognitive psychology, instructional technology, media, and communications (Brown & Green, 2006). The evolution of instructional design follows two parallel strands of progress: the rise of instructional media throughout the 20th Century and research into learning theories and how they might be applied to training situations. The two strands came together with the military's need to quickly train large numbers of personnel during World War II (Dick, 1987). During this time, psychologists and educators used both their knowledge of learning, along with media in the form of filmstrips, in order to develop training materials and procedures for the military services (Reiser, 2001). Implementing a number of approaches and forms of evaluation, psychologists were able to "significantly increase the percentage of personnel who successfully completed the program" (Reiser, 2007).

In higher education, instructional design first became relevant in support of the rise in distance learning. The ADDIE (analyze, develop, design, implement, and evaluate) model (Dick, 1978) quickly became the standard on which numerous models for instructional design in both the corporate world and higher education were built. Hannafin (1992) states, "Despite the proliferation of models and perspectives in systems approaches . . . the differences among models often are related to level of detail, terminology, and emphasis that clearly differentiated foundations, assumptions, and learning paradigms." While ADDIE and similar models worked well with behaviorist and cognitivist pedagogies, by the 1990's researchers began to focus on constructivism as a basis for new models of instructional design. One such model, authentic learning (Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver, 2007), contributed heavily to the study described here.

Today, instructional design is understood as both a discipline that has a body of research and a process through which instructional materials and learning experiences are developed. The success of any instructional design model must be investigated with an understanding of the context in which it is being applied. While research and the experiences of practitioners provide evidence of the effectiveness of extant instructional design models, in their work at a liberal arts college that is part of an R1 university, the authors struggled to anchor any of these approaches. Faculty did not see the process as relevant to or integrated with their disciplines. They had some skepticism about research from a field they were not familiar with. Perhaps

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