Common Course Project

Goal

In her March 2004, *State of the College: Fulfilling the Promise,* remarks, Dr. Nunley noted, "Our classes, particularly high-demand courses like English and Math, fill quickly, sometimes shutting out students for lack of room." She suggested, among other things, "Turning to distance learning and other space-saving ways to deliver education." In identifying ways in which distance learning can effectively ameliorate some of Montgomery College's space difficulties, it's useful to note that, in the Fall 2002 semester, 80 percent of enrollment hours were realized in fewer than 20 percent of the courses offered. This is a consistent and ongoing pattern in enrollment. It would be sensible, therefore, to create additional sections of those few courses using a distance learning format. Student access to high-demand courses would be enhanced, and enrollment would increase without the constraints imposed by a need for physical facilities.

Increasing the number of available distance learning sections of high-demand courses is dependent on availability of trained faculty. Currently, faculty training to establish competency using CMS, the course management software used at MC, is lengthy and demanding because it is directed to those faculty who will develop new online courses. Faculty, both full-time and adjunct, are sometimes unwilling or unable to devote the requisite time to participating in a lengthy training process.

Given these factors, it is reasonable to:

- create common courses that are distance learning versions of high enrollment courses, courses whose population lends themselves to an online format, courses that a discipline agrees would be good common courses, or general education foundation courses, fully developed and customizable to be used by multiple instructors
- expand the pool of online instructors, including adjuncts, by offering condensed, course-specific training to prepare faculty to teach using the fully developed common courses
- Limit the amount of on-line course development ESH that is available for any one course.

For courses that already have online sections, a discipline should strongly consider creating a common course when online enrollment is high, multiple sections are offered, and more than two faculty members are interested in teaching the course online, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

The creation of a common course does not preclude faculty members from developing and or teaching their own online sections; however, course development ESH will not be available to individual faculty for the creation of additional sections of existing courses after two faculty members have developed and are currently offering or intend to offer the courses online within one academic year. In special situations, the Dean and the Director of Distance Learning can work with the faculty and discipline to determine if an exception is warranted.

Definition of Common Course

A common course is a generic course, which can be replicated for use by multiple instructors with minimal training. It

- Uses-the Course Management System selected by the college
- Reflects accepted discipline, departmental, and College standards

- Reflects the Montgomery College Standards for Online Teaching and the standards in the Online Course Observation Form
- Is ideally designed and developed collaboratively by discipline faculty representing Montgomery College's campuses
- Is complete and usable, with only minimal editing, by any trained discipline instructor; is sufficiently detailed that no additional online course materials are required
- Requires a coordinator to upload and maintain more than three sections taught by multiple instructors.

Participants in Common Course Development

The process of creating common course sites will be collaborative, optimally including discipline representatives from all three campuses. For each common course, the development team will include:

- Discipline faculty members from each campus that offers the course who want to participate. The faculty will function as
  - lead faculty member (an experienced CMS instructor), or
  - support faculty members
- CMS Trainer / Instructional Designer
- One campus Instructional Technologist

Common Course Development Process

The development process is anticipated to span one to two semesters. During the first semester, faculty will either collaborate to adapt an already designed online course or participate in a structured course design process. As part of that process, the proposed common course will be either fully revised and complete or planned and one prototypical week or unit will be created, depending upon the method of development selected. During the second semester, faculty will be ready to offer the developed course (development method 3) or will complete development of the common course site (development methods 1 or 2). Multiple sections of the common course will be included in the schedule for the semester following the completion of the development site.

There are three suggested models for the development process, including suggested maximum ESH distribution (see **DE Side Letter**), which delineate the level and duration of participation of the lead faculty and the supporting faculty. The discipline and participating faculty will determine which model they prefer to use. They may also decide on an alternative model. The amount of ongoing maintenance ESH is to be determined by the faculty, dean, and Director of Distance Learning.

Model 1
Team Co-Developers
(2 semester process)

ESH distribution:

In this model, lead and developers share responsibility for developing new material and course design; the lead integrates the material into a coherent package and provides ongoing maintenance to the course. ESH amounts are per semester.

Semester 1: Training and Beginning Course Creation

Participate in a structured course design process guided by CMS Trainer and instructional designer to begin course planning and development.

Training:

- define essential elements of the common course
- develop project plan
  - o schedule regular meetings
  - o create writing development schedule

Course Design

All faculty share one development site. Lead faculty has designer access. Support faculty have student access.

- team faculty develop a weekly course materials "template" to structure the course
- team faculty share responsibility for materials creation, using the course materials template
- lead faculty imports files and creates course site

At the end of training/initial development, the common course is planned and a course prototype consisting of syllabus, orientation, course information page, all assignments and activities and supporting materials for a minimum of one week/unit.

Semester 2: Course completion, review, and pedagogical materials developed

- Course site creation continues into the second semester with all team faculty participating in materials creation and review.
- The lead faculty continues with file importation and course site creation.
  - o CMS course, fully developed
  - o Instructor guide written to facilitate training new faculty, including a competency demonstration that requires newly trained faculty to demonstrate the skills they will need to teach the course online.
  - o All supporting documents contained in CMS course site

All team faculty members will be expected to deliver a course using the common course site a minimum of one time.

Model 2
Team Developers-Primary lead with Reviewers
(2 semester process)

ESH distribution:

In this model, the lead is the primary developer of new materials and course design and provides ongoing maintenance for the course, while support faculty provide feedback, revise, and edit what the lead has developed. ESH amounts are per semester.

Semester 1: Training and Beginning Course Creation

Participate in a structured course design process guided by CMS Trainer and instructional designer to begin course planning and development.

Training:

- define essential elements of the common course
- develop project plan
    - create review schedule

Course Design

Course design is completed by the team; materials are only developed by lead faculty member.

All faculty share one development site. Lead faculty has designer access. Support faculty have student access.

- team faculty develop a weekly course materials "template" to structure the course
- lead faculty has responsibility for materials creation, using the course materials template
- lead faculty imports files and creates course site
- support faculty review course materials

At the end of training/initial development, the common course is planned and a course prototype consisting of syllabus, orientation, course information page, all assignments and activities and supporting materials for a minimum of one week/unit.

Semester 2: Course completion, review, and pedagogical materials developed

- Course site creation continues into the second semester with all team faculty participating in materials creation and review.
- The lead faculty continues with file importation and course site creation.
    - CMS course, fully developed
    - Instructor guide written to facilitate training new faculty, including a competency demonstration that requires newly trained faculty to demonstrate the skills they will need to teach the course online.
    - All supporting documents contained in CMS course site

All team faculty members will be expected to deliver a course using the common course site a minimum of one time.

Model 3 **Existing Course modified as common course** (1 semester process)

ESH distribution:

In this model, an existing course is reviewed by supporting faculty to ensure that it will work as a common course. The lead faculty member makes revisions and provides ongoing maintenance to the course. ESH amounts are per semester.

Semester 1: Training, course review, and pedagogical materials developed.

Lead instructor participates in a structured course design process guided by CMS Trainer and instructional designer to modify the existing course to fit a common course format.

Training/Review:

- Course is already developed: discipline suggests support reviewers to look at original course
- If discipline is unable to provide support faculty, the course can be submitted for a Quality Matters review.
- Create review schedule

Course & Pedagogy Materials Design

- Lead faculty member provides student access to support faculty for already developed course site.
- Support faculty review both course materials and design, with an eye to the ability of a wide spectrum of teachers being able to use the material on an ongoing basis.
- Lead instructor makes modification to site based on trainer/reviewer comments. Course is complete.
- Lead instructor develops Instructor guide written to facilitate training new faculty, including a competency demonstration that requires newly trained faculty to demonstrate the skills they will need to teach the course online.
- All supporting documents contained in CMS course site.

Lead faculty member will be expected to continue to deliver the course; support faculty are not required to do so.

Course Coordinator Role and Responsibilities

After a common course site is developed, the lead faculty member of the development team typically becomes the Course Coordinator, and in that position will have a series of ongoing responsibilities, which may include some or all of the following, as appropriate to the size and scope of the discipline offerings:
- preparing the CMS course sites each semester by restoring the pre-built common course to each of the delivery sites
- updating and revising the content– this includes updating the syllabus, setting course due dates, changing/updating course content and redeveloping the course when new textbooks are implemented
- using feedback from teaching faculty and students to direct revisions to the course
- responding to inquiries from prospective and registered students

- serving as the first point of contact for managing course technology issues, including those reported by students (the coordinator would be the liaison with the helpdesk rather than the instructor since the instructor won't necessarily be able to fix the problems)
- acting as a resource for assigned instructors
- providing the course specific pedagogical portion of training for common course instructors
- developing and offering a Common course orientation for students
- promoting and maintaining a qualified core of faculty to recommend to Department Chairs and helping department chairs coordinate sections staffing
- ordering books for all campuses
- discussing course learning outcomes with instructors and implementing outcomes assessment assignments into the Common Course
- maintaining course site throughout the semester, including troubleshooting problems
- serving as a contact for Advising about the common course
- monitoring enrollment to assist Chairs and Deans in determining when to add or delete sections
- recommending scheduling options (late start, etc) and creating a variety of versions of the course if appropriate (for example12 week, 7 week, 5 week, or 3 week)
- assisting with observation of common course instructors as assigned by department chair and/or dean
- assisting with implementation of student evaluations

The Lead Discipline Dean is also the Lead Dean for the Common Course.

Common Course Site Structure
Common course sites will be built on the standard Montgomery College course template and will include, at minimum, the following elements and tools:

- Start Here / Orientation
- Announcements
- Syllabus
- Private email
- Discussions
- Online assignments
- Course content
- Instructor's guide for faculty teaching the online common course

Common Course Delivery

- It is expected that all faculty team members using models 1 or 2 will deliver a course using the common course CMS site a minimum of one time.
- In order for the common course sites to be utilized fully and appropriately, faculty assigned to use them must participate in the common course customized training.
- Instructors must independently complete the competency demonstration tasks to be eligible to teach the common course.
- Faculty need to receive their teaching assignments early enough to accommodate training and preparation to use a common course site.

Training for Instructors

Training for common courses will have two components: pedagogy and technology. Therefore, training sessions will be conducted under the leadership of co-trainers. The pedagogical component will be conducted by the lead faculty member. The CMS Trainer/instructional designer will provide technical training.

Additional Guidelines
An integral part of the development of common course sites will be meetings attended by all common course developers to share experiences, make suggestions, discuss best practices, and assist in identifying and solving problems unique to this type of offering. In addition, team faculty members can share information about common course sites with their colleagues and solicit feedback from them.

Common Course coordinators will be expected to solicit feedback from those teaching the course and make revisions as part of the maintenance of the site. If it becomes necessary to make major revisions to the course, the team can apply for additional ESH to make the modifications.

Common Course coordinators, of necessity, will have designer access to all of the common course sites for the discipline. However, coordinators will respect the privacy of both students and instructors by not routinely accessing private e-mails or course discussion boards without the express consent of the course instructor. The coordinator should notify instructors of planned or emergency visits to individual course sites.

Common Course Coordinators*

Previous Common Courses that no longer have lead instructors (CA120 & DS107)

- Anna Deadrick (ENGL 102)

- Kateema Lee (ENGL 101)

- Shinta Hernandez (SOCY 100)

- Elizabeth Ridings (HLTH 121)

- Susan Milstein (HLTH 105 and HLTH 131)

- Marge Turnbow (HLTH 113)

- Lila Fleming (HLTH 100)

* Coordinators as of September 2, 2015