



*Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice*  
Part I

A. Learning Community (LC) Title

Enhancing the First Year Experience

B. Community Curator(s). Who has prepared Part I of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Suzanne Walker, April 15, 2008

C. Abstract (75 Words or less) *if it has changed*

Same: **Enhancing the First Year Experience (FYE)** learning community is designed to assist faculty in the integration of WebCT technology into the newly formed student learning communities linking First Year Seminar (FYSE 101) courses and First Year College Life and Leadership Labs (FYSE 102). The goal is to increase student engagement and satisfaction in the courses through deeper integration of content. A secondary goal is increased freshman retention.

**D. Learning Community Members, units, roles.** List your community members, their units or disciplines and roles, *if they have changed*. Who has been added, deleted?

Core members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Suzanne Walker	Assistant Dean FYSE Associate Prof. Communication	Facilitator Teaching FYSE 101 & 102 LC expertise
Dawn Carusi	Assistant Prof. Communication	Teaching FYSE 101 & 102 LC expertise
David Freeman	Associate Prof. Petroleum	Teaching FYSE 101 & 102
Bruce Peterson	Director of Residence Life	Teaching FSYE 102 Student Life Liaison Residential LC expertise
Dennis Kuhl	Associate Prof. Physics	Teaching FYSE 101 Technical expertise
Kevin Pate	Assistant Prof. Chemistry	Teaching Honors FYSE 101 Assessment expertise
David Brown (added-replaced Scott Lewandowski)	Assistant Prof. Biology	Teaching FYSE 101 LC expertise
Tara Kurilchick (added - replaced Lynne Miller)	Residence Life Residence Director	Teaching FYSE 102
Liane Gray-Starner (added - replaced Taran McZee)	Associate Prof. Communication	Teaches COMM 101 as part of FYSE 101/102 LC Assessment expertise
Janet Bland (added - replaced Debra Higgins)	Assistant Prof. English	Teaches WRIT 101 as part of FYSE 101/102 LC LC expertise

Associate Members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Laura Little	Instructional Technologist	Technical Assistance

**E. Background & Context.** Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. What do you intend to achieve? What technologies are you using and how? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have? What types of support would you like?

The project pilots the development of learning communities created from two existing courses at Marietta College, FYSE 101 and FYSE 102 (in two cases a third class COMM 101 or WRIT 101 was an additional part of the learning community). These Learning Communities will change a face to face course to technology enhanced. The integration of WebCT was used to help faculty in the FYE learning community deepen the content connections between the two courses and enrich their pedagogical approach, with the goal of increasing student engagement and success. WebCT was

used by faculty during the fall semester to create discussion opportunities to enhance student engagement with required co-curricular assignments and Success Seminar assignments. The goal was greater student satisfaction with the courses, higher quality co-curricular reflections, higher student success and persistence. The desired ending is that the faculty will be more confident and comfortable using WebCT to enhance pedagogy for FYE Learning Community courses and they will learned ways to better integrate course content; students will report higher course satisfaction, greater success and persistence.

We are fortunate to have substantial institutional support. The Dean of Student Life who oversees FYSE 102 staffing and curriculum has been very supportive of piloting the technologically enhanced sections of FYSE 102 in the learning communities. The Provost has provided financial support to match travel funds and workshop costs. The Pedagogy Committee is funding a second workshop facilitator for early May to provide another opportunity for faculty development in integrated assignment development. The Faculty Forum Chair has promised to provide an opportunity for public reporting to the campus on our successes and findings at the beginning of the next school year.

**F. Description of your early work, planning and preparations.** Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Region's Learning Institute (April 13). What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impacts have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

We had a WebCT Training to prepare us to for piloting WebCT components for Fall 2008 FYSE 102 course. We had bimonthly meetings to share ideas for using WebCT in the course. We also explored Atomic Learning together and shared favorites from the site that we thought might be beneficial to the group.

One of the key issues for us was how to enhance the integration of assignments between courses in the Learning Communities. We had a great starting point with the use of WebCT for discussions, but need more faculty development in terms of content. We brought in an expert from Evergreen State Learning Communities faculty to assist us with this issue.

A key success was higher student engagement self-report for FYSE 102 courses piloting the use of WebCT in the courses. For faculty a key success was less time spent handling paper assignments and more engagement with students via WebCT discussion boards.

G. **Community building and project development.** Describe early phases of building your community and developing your collaborative project. What key challenges and problems do you face and how do you handle them? What did they - or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? What resources are you using to support community building and how are they making a difference?

Most of the faculty in the LC have prior history as part of the FYSE 102 faculty group. We enjoy collaborating with each other. The key was finding time to do so. We found that a late afternoon meeting with snacks to help pick up energy was very helpful. We had an end of semester party to relax with one another and to celebrate the successes of first semester. Two of our LC members missed several of our meetings due to a variety of conflicts. The consequences were obvious. They were less connected to the group and they were less committed to the work of the LC.

One of the ways we are using resources for community building is to help pay for hotel rooms and meals for learning institute. This gave us an opportunity to travel together, spend a day and a half together with no other commitments than the LC. It made a significant impact on our cohesiveness of purpose and enjoyment of the project.

H. **Planning Your Assessment Strategies.** How will you evaluate your work/successes? How will you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project? Both formative (this Case Study is part of this) and summative methods should be used.

We will meet at the end of the year with an outside facilitator in a focus group to debrief what we have learned and our thoughts on the successes and failures of the LC. In terms of terms of student learning objectives we are using course evaluation questions to assess engagement. We are using an on-line survey to assess student feedback on elements of the course effected by the use of WebCT. The survey will be given to a control group as well as to those students in the pilot courses.

**THIS IS THE END OF**  
*Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice*  
**Part I**

[Submit Part I to [eburns@shawnee.edu](mailto:eburns@shawnee.edu) as a MS Word attachment by **April 13.**]

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*Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice*  
**Part II**

**To be worked on after your Learning Institute  
and finalized before the June 15<sup>th</sup> EXPO.)**

I. **Community Curator(s).** Who has prepared Part II of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Suzanne Walker, July 15, 2008

J. **Key Resources.** Who and what are the beneficial people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you have utilized? What help/support did you get from instructional designers, IT staff and other tech support personnel? *What types of support did you receive from departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential and why were they essential?*

- IT staff was instrumental in helping the LC members increase in their comfort and knowledge of using WebCT.
- Jillian Kinzie, Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research & NSSE Institute gave a workshop on Assessing the impact of programs and practices designed to support student success and Best Practices
- Artee Young, Ph.D. National Summer Institute on Learning Communities at The Evergreen State College - Olympia, WA gave a workshop on Developing Integrated Assignments and Best practices in Learning Communities
- Atomic Learning Website
- Lon Vickers, Dean of Students

Our two outside speakers were essential to our learning because they both invigorated

members of our LC on content issues we were struggling with and they provided a way for us to share the exciting work of our LC with the broader college community. Our IT staff was especially helpful in enabling us to better understand and use WebCT in ways we had not explored as faculty before. Dr. Lon Vickers, the Dean of Students was instrumental in the support he gave us to pilot sections of FYSE 102 using the ideas generated by our LC. Without his support we would not have had the opportunity to put into practice what we created in the LC.

**K. Your Assessment Strategies.** How did you evaluate your work/successes? How did you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project?

What have you observed or concluded at this point with respect to member learning, your community's growth, and student learning?

**Assessment Results:**

**Quantitative - Student Learning/Change:  
FYSE 102 - College Life & Leadership Lab  
Student Course Evaluations**

Course Satisfaction:

3.66 (Traditional)  
.48\*\*

4.14 (WebCT)

This course introduced me to a variety of  
Marietta College

4.09 (WebCT)  
4.08 (Traditional)  
.01

co-curricular programs at

\*\*Significant at .01 level

**FYSE 102 - College Life & Leadership Lab  
On-Line Survey Results**

199/412 Respondents

69/89 students in Tech Enhanced 78%

130/323 40% Face to Face

I was satisfied with the connection between 101 and 102.

3.38 (WebCT)  
3.12 (Traditional)  
.26\*

The method of reporting stimulated my interest in event attendance.:

3.41 (WebCT)  
3.03 (Traditional)  
.38\*

I was satisfied in our method of reporting co-curricular event attendance.

3.88 (WebCT)  
3.43 (Traditional)  
.45\*\*

\*Significant at .05 level

\*\*Significant at .01 level

I invited others to attend events.

3.22 (WebCT)  
3.30 (Traditional)  
-.18

I felt comfortable raising issues of concern (or "burning issues") through technology.

3.70 (WebCT)      \*\*NOTE: Although students reported  
3.35 (Traditional)      comfort in using technology to report  
.35\*\*      burning issues, only two "burning  
issues" anonymous discussion postings      were made within all six  
sections of 89      students.

\*\*Significant at .01 level

\*\*NOTE: E-mail use was not tabulated

If you were to use WEBCT in future courses, how comfortable would you be with the following?

Discussion  
4.19 (WebCT)  
3.75 (Traditional)  
.44\*\*

Calendar  
4.03 (WebCT)  
3.96 (Traditional)  
.07

E-mail  
4.13 (WebCT)  
4.04 (Traditional)  
.09

\*\*Significant at .01 level

Qualitative Results:

Faculty reported a high level of satisfaction with using WebCT to enhance the quality of the FYSE 102 course. They felt they had more meaningful interactions with students concerning co-curricular assignments. They found it lessened the grading burden and enhanced their ability to have deeper conversations with students concerning assignments. Faculty all felt they learned how to use WebCT in a more meaningful way. Most importantly all of the faculty involved have discovered new ways in which they can enhance their teaching. We left the Expo with so many

ideas that we want to explore in our classrooms.

It terms of what we piloted the results were so significant and our experiences were so positive that Dr. Vickers has asked us to train the incoming FYSE 102 faculty so that more sections can be enhanced using WebCT and the assignments we developed in our LC.

**L. What others know about what you've done.** Beyond your community members, who else is vested in what you're doing? How did you communicate and update these stakeholders on your efforts and successes? What questions do your colleagues have? What have you told your students about your learning community?

As stated above, Dr. Vickers, Dean of Students has asked to train the incoming FYSE 102 instructors (25 faculty) to use what we learned in our LC. We invited the entire faculty community to both of our workshops and share with them what we were doing in the LC. As part of our Fall Welcome Back convocation we will be sharing a PowerPoint of what we accomplished in the LC with our entire college community. Students who participated in the Survey were sent a summary of the results. The entire freshmen class (392) who will be enrolled in FYSE 102 in the fall will have the key ideas of the LC shared with them as part of involving them in the changes in the course design.

**M. Dissemination.** What visible bridgework -- structural elements, findings, lessons, ideas, beauties, legacies, processes, relationships, etc -- is your learning community leaving, that inspires others to *build their own bridges as they walk on them*? What digital resources have you developed that you will place into the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio? What might members offer, such as informal "brown bag" lunches, research, write articles, give presentations about your work? What is important to tell others "not to do"?

As mentioned above as part of our Fall Welcome Back convocation we will be sharing a PowerPoint of what we accomplished in the LC with our entire college community. One of the purposes of this sharing is to encourage other faculty members to develop FLCs to provide support networks to try new approaches with technology in their own classrooms. Four members of our FLC have already agreed to create a new LC for the Fall in order to explore the use of Podcasting in the Basic Public Speaking course at MC.

We have a new Center for Teaching Excellence opening in January of 2008. Our LC is preparing a more extensive PowerPoint and Bibliography that will be made available to faculty in the future who are interested in what happens in a faculty learning community and how to start their own.

We are presenting results of the impact of WebCT on the FYSE 102 course at the National Communication Associating Annual Convention in San Diego in November.

We are planning to submit a copy of our electronic survey to the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio. We got excellent returns on the survey and based on feedback from the Regional meeting we thought it might be helpful to share with others how we went about doing the survey.

**N. 20/20 Hindsight.** If you were to start over again, what would you do differently and why? What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, would you handle differently? To what degree would you change your goals? What additional successes would you enjoy? *What worked - or didn't work -- and why?*

If we had it all to do again we would have spent a full year developing course assignments and exploring WebCT rather than trying to integrate it in the course at the same time. We often felt rushed and it would have been beneficial to be able to leisurely explore and develop ideas. We tried to do too much too soon. The benefit is that unlike so much of what happens in committee work is that we did not get caught in the plan but never implement cycle. By doing it while teaching the course we were forced to create and implement in a timely manner.

**O. What's next?** Will your community continue? Formally? Informally? What could be next in another cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be totally predictable and yet, they would take you in another fruitful direction that builds upon your community's growth and knowledge.

Our community is going to continue. As we are going to be using the LC's ideas in all FYSE 102 sections in the fall, we will take part of each weekly FYSE faculty meeting to continue to explore the issues of the LC. We hope to find ways to use technology to further enhance the course so that students find the course meaningful. It also provides an opportunity for our faculty to continue to explore how we can connect with the digital

natives” who make up our classrooms.

This is the end of Part II  
*Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice*

Please bring a Final Copy of PORTRAIT OF PRACTICE - Parts I and II to the Ohio Learning Network’s June 15, 2007 EXPO at the Reese Center, Central Ohio Technical College/OSU-Newark, and send a copy to your Southeast Regional Center.

Thank You!