CREATING A BASE FOR CHANGE

Lessons from the Department of Communication Studies and The School of Design

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Quick Background of Curriculum Revision Projects

**Communication Studies Department**
- Department Vision Retreat in Fall 2014 – begin major redesign
- Apply for Teagle mini-grant in Spring 2015
- Build on Major Redesign from 2015-2016
- Submit Final Major Changes in Fall 2016
- New Major Implemented in Fall 2017!!

**School of Design**
- Development of Mission and Core Learning Outcomes Spring 2016
- Apply for Teagle mini-grant in Spring 2016
- Through Teagle FLC, focus on integration of portfolio course to BSVCD major
- Begin programmatic change conversations in January 2017 retreat
- Ongoing program work continues . . .
Shared Challenges in Communication Studies and Design

- “Ownership” of curriculum and/or courses
- Desire for Historical Consistency
- Disagreement on appropriate learning outcomes in shared courses
- Inconsistent application of program learning outcomes throughout programs of study or sub-discipline areas
- “Defensive” reaction to any proposed changes in courses (that they teach)
“the necessary first step in rethinking our approach . . . Was to reconsider not just what we teach, but why we teach it . . .”

-- (Summit, 2010)

- Start at the beginning!
  - What do our students need to know when they graduate from our program?
  - What do we do that we believe helps them the most?

- Leave the courses aside for at least the first few discussions
  - Focus on the Mission and/or Program Learning Outcomes
  - Keep it BROAD in early discussion
Using a Systemic Approach to Understanding the Major

- Acknowledge that this is “personal” for faculty

- Use the “Toddler Technique” (i.e. ask WHY? And ask it many times)

- Respect that some discussions will be based on personal experience even when evidence is presented
What does Systemic Questioning Get Us?

**Communication Studies Department**
- Shared understanding of program learning outcomes
- Move from faculty-focused to student-focused
- Appreciation of different approaches

**School of Design**
- Renewal of focus on the Design Process
- Move from faculty-focused to student-focused
- Thoughtful preparation and consideration of the importance of sequencing.
Example of Retreat with Systemic Questioning

- **Retreat Purposes**
- Assess the current strengths of the department
- Brainstorm and prioritize long-term visions and opportunities for the department
- Develop strategies and actions for messaging department programs
Example Continued . . .

- **Current Assessment of Communication Studies**
- *Guest Facilitator, Shawn Spano, SJSU Communication Studies Dept.*

- The Communication Studies Field
  - What are the key themes and salient points from the “wall of meaning”?
  - What, if anything, is missing? What, if anything, would you add?

- Communication Studies at SFSU
  - What are our current strengths as a faculty?
  - What do we do that makes us proud?
  - What do our students come away with from a Communication Studies major?
Long-Term Visions for Communication Studies at SFSU

Based on the current assessment of Communication Studies, we will brainstorm future visions and opportunities for the department.

Scenario: It is fall semester 2020 and the Communication Studies Department at SFSU is thriving, having achieved a level of success that exceeded everyone’s most optimistic expectations (faculty, administrators, students, and staff).

Question: What is happening in the department that is contributing to the success? What is not happening in the department? Be specific.
References
