

# **INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING & LEARNING: TEAM TEACHING, SEPARATE COURSES**

## **FORMAT**

- Several instructors, each from a different discipline, create a cluster of courses taken by a single cohort of students.
- Typically, 3-4 courses are clustered together.
- Rather than focus on crossing discipline lines, the cluster is constructed around a common feature of the students --- they may all be majors or pre-majors in a particular field. The clustering addresses requirements rather than thematic issues.
- Sometimes a coordinated schedule is attempted --- the separate courses are clustered consecutively so that students can fit them easily into their schedules.

## **ADVANTAGES**

- It is convenient for students.
- Its social structure --- a group of students enrolled together in a set of courses --- helps acclimate students to college learning and to the institution, thereby reducing student dropout rates, especially in the freshman and sophomore levels.
- Depending on the disciplines involved, a cluster can provide some practical instructional linkage. For instance, an English Composition course can include assignments that focus on the subject matter in other courses in the cluster.
- Very little negotiation is required of faculty in terms of scheduling, course content, teaching style, etc.

## **CHALLENGES**

- Relatively little interdisciplinarity actually takes place.
- Instructors may or may not communicate with each other even though they share the same group of students.
- Issues of conflicting or overwhelming assignment schedules may result from lack of communication and/or coordination among instructors.

## **WAYS TO MINIMIZE CHALLENGES**

- Instructors meet prior to the start of the term to 'negotiate' student workloads;
- Instructors look into the possibility of coordinating some joint activities such as field trips or service learning projects;
- Instructors establish a communication method so that during the course of the term they can exchange information about students in order to promote learning.

