

## Discipline-Specific Professional Development for Continuing Instructors

### BACKGROUND

Discipline-specific professional development for instructors—both new and continuing—is critical to the quality, rigor, and sustainability of the concurrent enrollment partnership.

The purpose of this brief is to share best practices and examples for engaging concurrent enrollment instructors and their college faculty counterparts in the discipline in effective and meaningful professional development.

Approaches to concurrent enrollment instructor professional development vary according to need, logistics, and tradition. Likewise, those creating and participating in concurrent enrollment professional development approach the work from a variety of disciplines, backgrounds, and experiences. One constant among concurrent enrollment professional development best practices is the notion that the professional development should include content-knowledge as well as pedagogical components. Research in professional development across secondary/post-secondary boundaries also suggests that the best professional development is grounded in mutual respect and is on-going, collaborative, and reciprocal in nature. Our hope is that this brief serves as a source for ideas and experimentation.

### NACEP STANDARDS REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT INSTRUCTORS

To elevate the stature of concurrent enrollment, the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) maintains a set of National Concurrent Enrollment Partnership Standards. Meaningful faculty collaboration across the secondary/post-secondary boundary is a defining feature of programs that implement NACEP's Standards. NACEP's Faculty Standard 3 states that concurrent enrollment partnerships should provide "annual discipline-specific professional development activities and on-going collegial interaction to address course content, course delivery, assessment, evaluation, and/or research and development in the field."

Annual professional development is one tool for programs to ensure that courses taught in the high school mirror those same courses taught on the college campus. The Standard reflects NACEP's concern for consistent course content and rigor regardless of who delivers instruction for the college or university. Broken down, Faculty Standard 3 maps out guidelines for strong professional development in concurrent enrollment partnerships: First, professional development should be on-going and should happen at least annually. Second, it should be discipline-specific and should focus on content, pedagogy, assessment, and advancements in the field. Third, it should be collegial.

“ I have increased rigor, not only in my upper level classes, but in those preparing students to reach the college courses as seniors. The professional development offered to teachers keeps me on the cusp of best practices in the field. It has made me a better teacher in all of the levels I teach. ”

*Kay Edberg, concurrent enrollment teacher  
partnering with the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities*

NACEP defines concurrent enrollment as college-credit bearing courses taught to high school students by college-approved high school teachers.



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*advancing quality college courses in high school*

## THE ON-GOING NATURE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to author Patricia Sehulster (2012), instructors must “consciously work to inform one another’s teaching and ultimately our students’ learning and readiness.” For concurrent enrollment, on-going professional development provides a means for instructors to engage in that information sharing. In some cases, this means that participating instructors travel to the college or university’s campus for workshops or meetings where they engage in discussions regarding new research in their particular field, learn and share pedagogical practices, discuss assessment data from the courses in their discipline, learn from guest speakers and experts in the field, or help propose and plan changes to their particular concurrent enrollment courses. Calibration of grading also can occur at these on-campus sessions, as can presentations from concurrent enrollment instructors who have innovative teaching and research practices that might benefit others in the program. For programs or disciplines that have only a few instructors in a particular discipline, professional development often happens one-on-one and might happen in a variety of locations rather than on-campus. The challenge of individualized professional development is in providing a meaningful opportunity to expand an instructor’s knowledge in the field of study in which s/he teaches.

Technology affords many ways for on-going professional development to occur between high school concurrent enrollment instructors and their post-secondary counterparts. In cases where annual face-to-face meetings are prohibitive because of travel, videoconference or pre-recorded professional development modules can help elevate concurrent enrollment instructors’ content-knowledge. The calibration of grading and assessment of student work can be done via email or a Course or Content Management System. Videos from experts in the discipline can be posted online in a similar fashion and shared through a variety of formats. And college faculty can make “virtual visits” to speak and chat with concurrent enrollment students and instructors in the high schools in real-time via technology. Increasingly programs are utilizing technology tools to supplement in-person professional development. To fully replace in-person professional development, programs will need to carefully plan activities that are ongoing and interactive to ensure that concurrent enrollment instructors participate and benefit from the activities.

Since high school instructors are often isolated from professional colleagues in their discipline, particularly when from small or rural schools, this connection with college faculty and their peers who are teaching the same courses through concurrent enrollment represents one of the strongest benefits to concurrent enrollment instructors. It sometimes leads to collaboration on conference presentations or papers within the field, elevating the status of high school teachers who often have few opportunities to advance their careers.

Work such as this can only happen when partnerships are built among the instructors, faculty in the sponsoring department, and the concurrent enrollment program staff. Faculty, in particular, are often the key drivers of these trainings, whether through facilitating discussions and information exchange or building bridges between the high school instructors and the academic department and larger academic field.

## DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What follows are six discipline-specific professional development ideas from several NACEP-accredited concurrent enrollment programs. These ideas represent professional development opportunities across a wide range of institutions, high school partnerships, and academic disciplines:

### ● Discussion of current research

For professional development of continuing instructors of oceanography, a graduate student in the School of Oceanography presented her research on ocean acidification, a key environmental issue in the Pacific Northwest. She then led instructors through a classroom activity on ocean acidification in which they analyzed data using Excel. The instructors then discussed how they could adapt and use this content and lesson in their classrooms. (University of Washington)

### ● Author Visits

As part of the effort for continued development of content knowledge for veteran instructors in English Composition, visiting professors and authors of the course-required textbook led a day-long workshop on “Helping Students to Read and Write in Depth,” focusing on transitioning students to college reading, what faculty across the curriculum want from student writing, common problems in student writing, and shifting students from the culture of argument to the culture of understanding, all with a heavy focus on the ethos of the course textbook. Instructors were tasked with completing course-relevant prompts designed to further their understanding of the functions of evidence in student writing assignments and group grading. (Indiana University)

### ● On-campus Observation

Concurrent enrollment chemistry instructors had an opportunity to observe an on-campus section of the course they teach for concurrent enrollment. This was followed by a graduate student presentation on her research in the development of chemotherapeutic drug compounds as well as a presentation from a library specialist discussing how information literacy can be used to teach evidence-based innovation to chemistry students. Finally, examples were provided that showed how complex chemistry ideas can be illustrated through the lens of food and cooking. (Indiana University)



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### ● Collaborative course content development

To enhance collaboration between college faculty and concurrent enrollment instructors, a college instructor developed a professional development workshop for new and seasoned instructors that took the form of a college course in the subject matter assigned. Concurrent enrollment instructors collaborated with college instructors to develop interchangeable units, lessons and assignments that fulfilled course competencies, and learning objectives. The resulting work was compiled in a common online system with shared access for all instructors teaching the course, on- and off-campus. (Laramie County Community College)

### ● Online, interactive discussion board

As part of a grant, faculty in the English department conducted a two-week online discussion for concurrent enrollment instructors. Topics included assessment, best practices for engaging students, curriculum changes for the upcoming year, and readings in the field of study. (NorthWest Arkansas Community College)

### ● Online videos

For public speaking instructors unable to attend an on-campus professional development day, an online video was created, covering the same agenda as the face-to-face seminar. In the video, a public-speaking faculty liaison discusses the role of video recorded feedback in the instruction of public speaking. The liaison also presented the results of a meta-analytic study that examined twelve published studies about the use of video recording to provide feedback to students in public speaking courses, indicating that this approach results in better content of student speeches, greater acquisition of public speaking skills, better performance on objective tests, and a more positive attitude toward the course in general. Instructors were provided with a how-to guide to establish their own public speaking video database for the course. (Pennsylvania Highlands Community College)

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLEGIALLY IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to EDUCAUSE editor Jonathan Huer (2015), “. . . it’s unfortunate that high school teachers and college professors do not collaborate more often. Strong collaborations would enhance instruction for both parties, would increase the understanding of what types of teaching and learning are happening in each setting, and would assist students in their transition from high school to college.” An application of Huer’s words suggests that both high school teachers and college instructors have much to gain from one another via collaborations through concurrent enrollment professional development. Here are a few considerations for programs aiming to build strong, collegial partnerships.

- **Give the teachers a say.** Encourage the high school teachers to contribute their expertise and opinions. Find out what the instructors would be interested in learning more about and how they could contribute to the professional development effort. Make the professional development reciprocal in nature.
- **Build faculty buy-in.** Concurrent enrollment instructors should feel supported and appreciated by the college or university for which they teach. Faculty liaisons at the college are providing a valuable service and need recognition of their time and commitment from the college and their own academic departments.
- **Offer a spectrum of opportunities.** Offer multiple opportunities throughout the year in a variety of formats that are accessible, relevant, and robust. A single professional development session of one or two hours once a year is unlikely to lead to significant expansion of an instructor’s knowledge in the field of study.
- **Plan for busy people and busy schedules.** Consider appropriate durations and times of the day and school year to offer face-to-face and on-going professional development activities.
- **Provide adequate resources and commitment.** Both high schools and colleges entering into concurrent enrollment partnerships should commit to ensuring instructor participation in professional development. Both partners should set an expectation for participation and monitor to identify non-participation. Funding may be needed for the costs of substitutes, travel expenses, teacher stipends (if professional development occurs outside of the regular contract), and for time spent by college faculty planning and conducting professional development.

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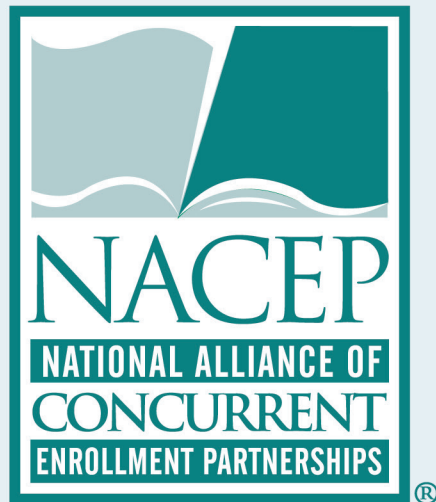
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