

How to spark a cross-disciplinary collaboration and improve engineering students' communication skills

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WORKSHOP MODE

This workshop will be facilitated in-person.

OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP

Cross-disciplinary teaching collaborations between an engineering lecturer and a language and literacies expert are rare. However, research has demonstrated that such partnerships can be fruitful and of great benefit to students as they develop the academic literacies needed for engineering studies. In this workshop, attendees will act as the catalyst for new collaborative projects of this nature, and I will guide them through the initial brainstorming and planning phase.

ACTIVITIES

The workshop will include a series of brainstorming exercises to determine current needs at the participants' institutions and how to find an appropriate partner for a collaboration. Next, I will review the four key ideas presented as findings in the related autoethnographic article, using these themes to guide participants through notetaking and group discussion exercises that can help them draft initial plans for their own interventions. These activities will require the use of worksheets and a slideshow presentation, which I will provide. During the workshop, we will also make use of the following equipment:

- a computer connected to a projector (or the ability to link my laptop to the projector)
- Wi-Fi internet access so participants can complete an online exercise using their own devices
- chairs around small tables (or adjustable seating arrangements) for easy notetaking and so small-group discussion circles can be formed.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for the workshop is anyone currently working within engineering education, ideally as a subject lecturer or in a similar role. Such individuals would already possess knowledge of the communication skills students need for engineering studies; this knowledge is the only prerequisite for participation. Other attendees curious about cross-disciplinary collaboration are also welcome.

OUTCOMES

Workshop participants will be able to return to their respective educational institutions with the means to seek out appropriate collaborators and start the process of embedding new interventions in existing engineering curricula. In doing so, the teaching and learning of academic literacies for the engineering discipline can improve and better satisfy the requirements of the Washington Accord and the relevant national engineering associations.

KEYWORDS

cross-disciplinary teaching collaboration; engineering education; academic literacies

PRESENTER'S BACKGROUND

Sheila Busteed is an experienced English language and literacies educator, researcher, and published author. For the last several years, she has worked with engineering students at the tertiary level. Sheila is currently analysing data for her PhD research, which is examining engineering students' development of critical reading skills for academic writing. The project involved a successful collaboration with engineering lecturer Dr. Channele Gavin to embed a teaching intervention in an existing course.