



## Invitation to Develop Online Learning Communities (OLCs)

**Interested groups of faculty are invited** to propose plans for the development of online learning communities. In higher education, curricular learning communities are classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and enroll a common cohort of students.

**Learning communities present many advantages for students and faculty.** Learning communities have been shown to increase student retention and academic achievement, increase student involvement and motivation, improve students' time to degree completion, and enhance student intellectual development. Furthermore, students involved in learning communities become more intellectually mature and responsible for their own learning and develop the capacity to care about the learning of their peers. Faculty members involved in learning communities that facilitate cross-faculty collaboration are expanding their repertoire of teaching approaches, continually revising their course content, and acquiring new scholarly interests. Learning community faculty members are also building mentoring relationships with each other and are more frequently engaging with beginning students and general education offerings. ([Learning Community Commons](#))

Currently with distance learning at Bergen Community College, we typically use one WebCT course shell for one class. The online environment is a ripe arena for building learning communities because classes can be combined easily and scheduling problems are minimal.

**CIT is looking to support efforts of faculty interested in building communities across class lines.** Projects could range from a single instructor who brings together several sections of a single course into one course shell or a single faculty member who brings together different, but complementary courses together into one WebCT course shell. Pairs or groups of faculty are invited to combine courses into a single WebCT course shell within disciplines or across disciplines. Students in the OLC should share some activities and interact so that the members of the community find more benefits than they would find in the singular online course environment. An OLC could also be created for face-to-face classes and for hybrid courses.

**CIT will offer the following support** to faculty interested in developing OLC's

1. Purchase of specialized software, if needed
2. Instructional designer to consult with faculty and support faculty in their work
3. Release time(overload) will be available depending on the complexity of the project

**We look for project proposals that will:**

1. involve two or more sections of students
2. create learning activities that will cause students to interact in a larger online community
3. learning communities that enrich existing courses
4. projects that expand the use of the WebCT course shell in ways to build more diverse learning environments for students

**Writing Your Proposal**

In no more than two-typed pages, include the following information:

1. Faculty, courses, and sections to be involved.
2. A brief description and rationale of the online learning community.
3. A brief description for the ways in which the students will use the OLC.
4. A brief statement of how this OLC might benefit students.
5. An explanation of what disciplines might use these materials?
6. A supporting statement from your Department Head/Dean indicating their interest in the project and the value of the OLC to departmental goals.

For further information and research about learning communities at the FAQ section of [Learning Community Commons](#), the web site of the National Learning Communities Project.

**Project Timeline**

<b>Proposal Due</b>	<b>Decision of Awards</b>	<b>Project Completion</b>	<b>Project Implementation</b>	<b>Evaluation &amp; Final Report</b>
Feb. 15th	March. 30th	Nov. 30th	Spring	May 30th
Oct. 15th	Nov. 30th	May 1st	Fall	Dec. 15th

\* Project timeline may change based on the complexity of the project.

Please submit proposals as electronic file by email attachment to [cit@bergen.edu](mailto:cit@bergen.edu). Materials to be housed in a special section of the library and CIT Website.