



Manual for Community Colleges Developing Programs in Peace and Conflict Studies

Overview of Core Course and Elective Selection

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Conflict management and peace studies are rapidly being integrated into the curricula of community colleges across the United States. To date, very little information or research has been compiled on the history of this emergent field in the community college setting. How is such a course of study established and nourished within the larger community college infrastructure? How is conflict management and peace studies institutional knowledge passed on from one generation of teachers and administrators to the next? What makes for a successful group of courses? Finally, how are core courses and electives chosen in programs of study? This chapter broaches the latter question. Presented below is a brief overview of the factors influencing the choice of core courses and electives in conflict management and peace studies programs operative in community colleges across the United States.

For this segment, nine telephone interviews with founding members of conflict management, peace studies and global studies programs in community colleges were conducted and public information associated with twenty-five programs was reviewed. While the present report represents a narrow sampling, the intention of the project is to update the text annually by gathering relevant information at related conferences, continuing the interview process and collecting data through the feedback form on this Web site.

While the decision-making processes involved in the selection process are complex, there are discernible patterns in how these programs choose their core courses and electives. Five broad and overlapping factors influence the process: [1] acceptance and interest level on the part of the wider community college infrastructure; [2] size of the community college; [3] mission guidelines and philosophical orientation of the emergent program leadership; [4] the existence of articulation agreements, partnerships, and other types of working arrangements between the program and other institutions; and [5] the contemporary political, economic and social climate.

In many of the conflict management and peace studies programs, one or two dynamic persons were responsible for much of the labor of setting up the program and providing the motivating energy. The existence of such figures has positive and negative associations. A central figure can often keep track of program business and provide a focus and order that is sometimes missing in large institutions. However, a potential challenge often arises when the energetic figure retires or otherwise leaves the position: who will take over and how will the institutional knowledge be passed on? The departures of Charles Tracy from Howard Community College and Don Lathrop from Berkshire Community College are examples of institutions in transition where, fortunately, a plan is in place to continue the programming once these key leaders are gone.

A further important feature of working within the larger community college environment is the existence of other interested faculty and administrators. In virtually each of the interviews we conducted, program leaders recognized one or two faculty members and administrators within their college that helped support the program's development. At Cuyahoga Community College, Dr. Susan Lohwater, assistant professor, helped recruit and encourage faculty to participate in everything from meetings, to trainings, to curriculum development. Similarly, Barbara Thorngren, Peace and Justice Coordinator at Nashua Community College, mentioned a faculty member at her institution who is cooperating with their program in building curricula. Peter Haslund, a political science professor from Santa Barbara City College in California also recruited interested faculty. Administrative support (see the chapter on Administrative Support) is also a critical component in program formation. Consider the support offered at Cuyahoga Community College by Associate Dean Carol Franklin and Dean of Academic Affairs Michael Thomson. Both administrators acted as advocates of the program's development, attending meetings, encouraging faculty participation, promoting the work with other administrators, offering advice, and smoothing the administrative path.

The integration of a nascent conflict management and peace studies program within the worldview of the larger community college's mission, goals, and strategic plans is also critical. What are the foci of the acting deans? Is there a larger ideological framework within the institution? Colman McCarthy and his wife May, founders of the Washington D.C.-based Center for Teaching Peace and influential forces in the lives of peace educators across the country, argued that all peace studies programs should spend the first year teaching students the "values of peace", only later introducing conflict management skills. Other programs are based on the opposite view, considering the more analytic conflict management course of study to be more in line with the goals of their college. The course selection at Howard Community College is an example of the latter.

The second factor influencing curriculum design is the size of the community college. At a very basic level, the size of the institution can help determine if the course of study can be framed as a program, a concentration, certificate, associates of arts degree or a set of courses. Nashua, a small community college

located in New Hampshire, settled on a Peace and Justice Studies concentration as its most feasible option. Similarly, Don Lathrop, now a retired professor, noted that Berkshire Community College, also small in terms of enrollment, opted for a concentration as a matter of “survival”. When Peter Haslund established the Global and International Studies Program at Santa Barbara City College in California, he had a wide range of options for the curriculum building process. First, this content was rooted in the program’s mission statement which involves preparing students for a globalized world. Peter considered a range of broad perspectives (by academic field) which fit the program objectives. Having narrowed the list down to a set of six or seven perspectives (business, economics, anthropology, etc.), he then sought courses and faculty within those disciplines who were willing to work with the emergent program in crafting an appropriate course outline. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with smaller programs (a small program being defined here as having five or less committed majors). On the positive side, the leaders at Nashua, Golden West and Howard Community Colleges stressed their ability to work flexibly with the few students they have, guiding the students toward electives that dovetail with their strengths and career goals. Barbara Thorngren at Nashua Community College made the argument that through a concentration framework, students gain liberal arts courses that enable them a broader range of career choices and transfer options upon graduation. The most formidable challenge with a smaller program, however, is keeping students enrolled in the course of study. Kathy Rockefeller Director of the Community Mediation and Restorative Dialogue Programs for the Mediation & Conflict Resolution Center at Howard Community College lamented that Howard is currently struggling to keep peace and conflict management courses running due to low retention. Students exhibit great interest in the introductory courses, but many do not complete the program course work.

Cuyahoga Community College, a large urban college with approximately 55,000 students, was required to design their core courses and select electives based on a review of similar core courses at undergraduate institutions, conducting a community outcomes session, the completion of a program mapping session with faculty, and review by the curriculum review committee. This was one of the most formalized approaches of all the community colleges in terms of development requirements. Students from Kent State University’s Center for Applied Conflict Management, Jessica Szabla and Amanda Parker, worked as interns at the Global Issues Resource Center at the college to conduct the basic research in the United States, collecting core course syllabi at undergraduate institutions, reviewing the most common course objectives and texts. Core courses were then developed based on this information and in collaboration with faculty on campus and at Kent State University. These core courses were then reviewed and approved through the official curriculum review committee by faculty who are in those fields under which the core courses are listed. For the development of any certificate or degree program at the college, a community outcomes session must occur. Community members from across

disciplines which the students taking the certificate might enter, are invited to come and work collaborative on writing the curriculum outcomes. From these outcomes, the core courses and electives are then evaluated using a formal matrix reviewing whether the courses identify the outcomes, reinforce, or if students must demonstrate the content of the designated objectives during a program mapping session with faculty and deans.

Community college program architects generally craft the program structure around a particular set of mission directives and goals. Such orienting frameworks have a profound effect on curriculum design. For example, Nashua Community College's Peace and Justice Studies Program in New Hampshire seeks to "prepare graduates to function as community advocates". Richland College's Institute for Peace in Texas lists, as one of its goals, to "advocate action and conduct programs and activities to enhance public awareness of peacemaking". Santa Barbara City College's Global Studies Program mission statement notes how technology and globalization are changing today's job market and they outline their mission to be one of enabling "students to understand how this global system continues to evolve and to provide the academic background which we believe will prepare them most effectively to cope with and be a part of a very different future. This is an interdisciplinary major". At Golden West College in California, the Peace Studies program is "interdisciplinary...created with the conviction that education, awareness, and activism are essential to those interested in becoming the custodians of our futures. Through education we can empower students to lead with knowledge and passion, building bridges between daily reality and new possibility". Finally, the Peace and Social Justice Studies Program at Greenfield Community College in Massachusetts is focused on "civic engagement, social action and non-violence".

Golden West's Peace Studies Coordinator Fran Faraz stresses the relations between students trained to be critical thinkers and the importance of imagining "possibilities" to conflict situations. Faraz points to a process whereby unexamined belief systems are broken down and "creative leaders" are built anew. Abbie Jenks, advisor of the Peace and Social Justice Studies option at Greenfield Community College also discussed the importance of teaching students to build "different lenses" oriented to social justice. At Golden West, peace studies students are being introduced to such course material as critical studies, women's studies, leadership and character building. Colman and May McCarthy's Center for Teaching Peace is a non-profit institution which promotes the establishment of peace studies organizations. Colman argues that from the goal of his Center emerges their first priority: to teach the values of peace. Peace values help prevent fires from occurring (Colman's metaphor), while conflict management is "throwing water on the fire". McCarthy suggests three ideal electives for any peace studies program: literature of peace, Gandhi and King, and women and peace.

The fourth factor influencing the selection of core courses and electives in nascent community college conflict studies and peace programs is the existence (or lack of existence) of bridges to other institutions.

Articulation agreements are particularly important in this regard. In designing the curriculum for Cuyahoga Community College's newly established program, Jennifer Batton and Susan Lohwater of Cuyahoga College worked closely with Professor Landon Hancock at Kent State University. Fran Faraz, for her part, tirelessly works with an array of counselors to "pipeline" her students to programs at the University of California-Irvine, Kaplan University and California State University-Dominguez Hills (the latter offers a masters degree in peace studies). Howard Community College in Maryland has an articulation agreement with Salisbury State University and a new partnership with the Howard County Police Department in training officers in security. Finally, Nashua Community College is currently forging a number of articulation arrangements with area colleges and Greenfield Community College maintains links to a variety of flexible programs at the University of Massachusetts. Such articulations with advanced degree departments in other institutions influence the types of electives built into the program. In the smaller colleges, conflict studies leaders are better positioned to help students choose courses that best fit the careers being sought. Resource centers, college-based peace clubs and an assortment of alliances also represent bridges that have the effect of influencing college conflict studies curricula. Cuyahoga Community College's (CCC) dynamic relationship with the Global Issues Resource Center (located on the CCC campus and headed by Jennifer Batton) is an excellent example. The Resource Center's related programming across campuses with faculty, administrators, and students, and in the community, helped set the groundwork for the development of the program. The Center's programming, international conferences, training, and events provide a venue to increase awareness of the field and its many applications across disciplines. The curriculum of the new program at CCC is very much a part of this process of mutual influence. Much the same might be said for the Mediation and Conflict Center at Howard Community College, the Global Issues Resource Organization founded by Don Lathrop's wife Merry and the relationship between Greenfield Community College's program and the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice in downtown Greenfield, Massachusetts. Clubs at Golden West, Greenfield and Nashua are also a source of intellectual inspiration and activist energy for the conflict programs in these schools. At Greenfield Community College, for example, Abbie Jenks understands their Peace and Social Justice Club to be a source of activist energies. The Club's film series also spurs innovative thought and action.

The final factor to consider in this review of emergent conflict studies programs at community colleges is the larger political, economic and social environment from which these programs grow. Dan Lathrop, for example, recently replaced his course on the cold war with one on the global problems in a nuclear age. Abbie Jenks at Greenfield Community College is working hard to develop an emphasis in her peace studies program on human ecology. She believes that the links between security and the environment are among the most important issues of the day. Mention should also be made of both Colman McCarthy, Barbara Thorngren and

Abbie Jenks' firm conviction that program students have much to gain from going out into the community to experience various forms of what Colman McCarthy calls "cold violence" – poverty, racism, sexism and all forms of discriminatory practices. Many of these experiences can be gained from participation in the service learning capstone classes constituting the terminal point of many community college conflict programs as well as the type of "social action project assignments" employed by Jenks in her pedagogical practice.

One of the most "progressive" features of the present on-line manual is the ability authors have to continually update the data and conclusions. Over the course of the next year, the authors of this chapter hope that community colleges will contact them and provide updates. Additional interviews with other peace studies program founders will be completed by the authors and web sites reviewed, adding to the list of core courses and electives employed by various programs in the United States.

Please visit the web site www.CREducation.org for additional chapters of the *Manual for Community Colleges Developing Programs in Peace and Conflict Studies*.