LSU

Executive Summary – QEP 2024 Concept Proposal

THEME

Elevating undergraduate teaching and learning by scaling up LSU's Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) program

RATIONALE

Communication is often referred to as an *essential skill* in all disciplines and fields, yet college faculty, employers, and students themselves continue to cite communication abilities as the area in which most college graduates need improvement. Launched in 2004 as part of LSU's inaugural QEP, CxC has been recognized as a national leader in academic innovation excellence, and its evidenced-based framework is primed for deeper scalability across our campus.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

LSU will advance undergraduate students' learning and multimodal communication skills by:

A. Embedding at least 1 Certified Communication-Intensive (C-I) Course within every undergraduate degree pathway (core/required course) to increase all students' access to C-I Course experiences

B. Intentionally scaffolding C-I learning experiences across students' educational journey in degree pathways where 3 or more C-I courses currently exist (core/required courses) to elevate learning, increase eligibility for the LSU Communicator Certificate and the LSU Distinguished Communicator Medal, and foster interdepartmental faculty collaboration

C. Expanding and developing new models of co-curricular resources and services across the campus to support faculty teaching C-I courses and students taking C-I courses (cxc.lsu.edu/studios)

KEY STUDENT LEARNING & SUCCESS METRICS

☐ Through C-I Course activities, students demonstrate x-level of multimodal communication skills as measured by common rubrics used within C-I courses (current CxC rubrics will need to be revised for this use; would be used by the C-I instructor for individual assignment grading, then reported in the aggregate for institutional assessment purposes)

☐ Through pre- and post-semester self-perception surveys within C-I Courses, students demonstrate x-level of confidence in their multimodal communication abilities (current CxC surveys will need to be revised for this use)

☐ Through written reflections submitted by students seeking the LSU Communicator Certificate, students demonstrate x-level of ability to articulate the relevance of their multimodal communication competencies within the context of their specific post-graduation goals (Certificate eligibility requires students first complete a mix of C-I courses, then a culminating reflective essay; reflection assessment rubric is currently in development and will be based on AAC&U VALUE competencies)

☐ Increased retention and persistence of LSU students who experience multiple C-I courses versus those who experience fewer C-I courses as tracked through existing institutional data

QEP 2024 Concept Proposal

CONSIDERATIONS & ASSUMPTIONS

This proposal was developed with the following considerations and assumptions:

- ★ outcomes must **directly impact student learning and success**
- ★ focus must be **relevant**, **specific**, and **measurable**
- ★ initiatives should **benefit as many students as possible**
- ★ strategies should push current boundaries yet be **realistically executable**
- ★ **maximize existing resources** and **allocate new resources** to ensure success
- ★ programming should be **sustainable** well beyond the five-year plan

THEME

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RATIONALE

The ability to effectively communicate knowledge and ideas through written, spoken, visual, and technological modes is a vital component of the learning process, and multimodal communication skills are essential to post-graduation success in all pathways and fields. Communication skills are intertwined with critical thinking and information literacy—skills that lead to better learners, better citizens, and ultimately, a better society.[1] As a result, effective communication is often referred to as an *essential skill*, yet college faculty, employers, and students themselves continue to cite communication skills as the area in which most college graduates need improvement.[2]

In 2004, LSU faculty from across the campus collaborated to launch Communication across the Curriculum (CxC), a multifaceted program focused on simultaneously deepening students' classroom learning and elevating their writing, oral, visual, and technological communication skills within the disciplines. The potential for CxC to significantly reshape undergraduate learning at LSU, while also advancing national models of Writing across the Curriculum/Writing in the Discipline programs (WAC/WID), prompted campus leaders to include CxC in LSU's inaugural QEP (2004). Today, CxC remains LSU's most successful QEP initiative and has been recognized as a national leader in academic innovation excellence.[3]

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[1] Critical thinking involves the ability to identify important issues and reasons, consider multiple perspectives and judge the quality of their argument, ask clarifying questions, approach, and support conclusions and reasons, and reconsider a viewpoint in light of new information (Ennis, 1993). When reviewing these elements of critical thinking, communication skills are central to each attribute.

[2] Extentsive research from the National Survey of Student Engagement, National Association of Colleges and Employers, Quality Assurance Commons, Association of American Colleges and Universities, Hart Research Associates, and others.

[3] LSU CxC was the sole recipient of the 2010 Program of Excellence Award by the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and was cited by the award committee as a program that "set the bar of innovation for learning and teaching." In 2020, the USC Pullias Center for Higher Education, in collaboration with the American Association of Colleges & Universities, recognized CxC with the Delphi Award for its progressive work in transforming faculty support and LSU's institutional culture surrounding teaching excellence.

At the crux of CxC's holistic framework is [Communication-Intensive (C-I) Courses](), a high-impact teaching and learning practice (HIP)[4] that contributes to advanced student learning, persistence, and post-graduation success, while also maximizing students' current credit hours, and our institutional resources. LSU's design and implementation of C-I courses are one of the few High-Impact Practices (HIPs) that has the ability to transcend common equity issues associated with students' socioeconomic status.[5] Each academic year, an average of 650+ C-I course sections are taught as C-I by 200+ faculty impacting 14,000+ students, and the quantity of C-I courses has consistently trended upwards (see Appendix A). Still, many C-I courses are concentrated in select degree pathways, leaving some majors without access and opportunities to experience C-I courses.

The efficacy of C-I Courses is highly dependent on CxC's core wrap-around faculty and student support services that enable them, including (a) faculty development and teacher training, (b) in- and out-of-class student learning support, and (c) university-wide student and faculty recognition opportunities.

In today's global society, effective multimodal communication skills are more relevant than ever. LSU's CxC model has demonstrated success in efficiently and effectively elevating learning across the disciplines[6], and its evidenced-based framework is primed for deeper scalability. For these reasons, LSU's 2024 QEP seeks to advance teaching and learning by expanding and enhancing LSU's CxC program.

> *Communication—in all of its forms—is both a vehicle for advancing learning as well as a critical learning outcome in itself.*

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C. Expanding and developing new models of co-curricular resources and services across the campus to support faculty teaching C-I courses and students taking C-I courses ([cxc.lsu.edu/studios]())

KEY STUDENT LEARNING & SUCCESS METRICS

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[4] High Impact Practices (HIPs) engage deep learning approaches that effectively advance students' understanding, retention, integration, and transfer of knowledge, and increase their likelihood of persisting to graduation ([Kuh, 2008]()).

[5] Kuh, G., O'Donnell, K., & Schneider, C. G. (2017). HIPs at Ten. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 49(5), 8-16.

[6] See CxC Annual Reports 2005-2022.

☐ Through pre- and post-semester self-perception surveys within C-I Courses, students demonstrate x-level of confidence in their multimodal communication abilities (current CxC surveys will need to be revised for this use)

☐ Through written reflections submitted by students seeking the [LSU Communicator Certificate](#), students demonstrate x-level of ability to articulate the relevance of their multimodal communication competencies within the context of their specific post-graduation goals (Certificate eligibility requires students first complete a mix of C-I courses, then a culminating reflective essay; reflection assessment rubric is currently in development and will be based on AAC&U VALUE competencies)

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ANTICIPATED RESOURCES

- Additional CxC staff lines
- Faculty stipends
- Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching Assistant salaries
- Student support spaces
- Data and technology upgrades

DATA ANALYSES CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS

➢ Examine and document where C-I courses do and don't currently exist within undergraduate degree pathways (Existing data systems track C-I courses from the institutional perspective by College/Department, but not through the student lens of required courses and degree/major pathways; Currently working to extract and evaluate this data, findings expected August 2022)

➢ Analyze past data to identify the ideal number of C-I courses an undergraduate should experience to maximize learning and persistence (While 1 course in each pathway is realistic, what should we be striving for long-term?; Currently running this study, findings expected August 2022)

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

➢ Prioritize C-I teaching and learning within LSU's new strategic plan and within college- and departmental-level strategic plans

➢ Review existing cost-sharing structures, and create additional models to enable OAA/CxC and all 10 undergraduate Colleges to sustain discipline-specific CxC programming long-term

➢ Customize CxC programmatic efforts within colleges and departments to align with their respective specialized accreditation standards related to students' multimodal communication competencies

➢ Establish faculty collaboratives within departments to integrate multimodal C-I teaching and learning intentionally within the degree pathways

➢ Diversify, expand, and create new models of C-I faculty development and teacher support to meet the needs of today's faculty, including leveraging complementary external resources such as [ACUE's micro-credentialing and open enrollment programs](#)

- ➤ Develop new—and improve existing—structures for recognizing and rewarding C-I teachers (tenure and non-tenure track)
- ➤ Collaborate with Department Chairs to explore ways to minimize overload burnout for faculty teaching multiple C-I courses
- ➤ Create environments that encourage, incentivize, and support interdepartmental collaboration surrounding multimodal C-I teaching & learning
- ➤ Support faculty-led research that broadens the publicly available scholarship on multimodal C-I teaching and learning, including evidence-based links among C-I pedagogy and career readiness, graduate school success, leadership, creativity, cultural competencies, global skills, etc.
- ➤ Create mechanisms to train and fund undergraduate and graduate Teaching Assistants for larger C-I classrooms
- ➤ Expand institutional capacity for in-person, live remote, and asynchronous student communication coaching services outside the classroom for all types of projects (writing, oral communication, presentation design, etc.)
- ➤ Increase visibility of physical spaces where students access co-curricular multimodal C-I learning support through campus collaborations with Colleges and units such as LSU Libraries
- ➤ More closely align the written and oral criteria of [LSU's Integrative Learning Core](#) with LSU's C-I course criteria and rubrics (both adapted from AAC&U VALUE rubrics)
- ➤ Develop teaching and learning tools to enable stronger student-teacher communication within all undergraduate classrooms (foundational skills building)
- ➤ Promote UDL approaches within C-I pedagogy to increase inclusive learning environments across campus
- ➤ Document and promote models on how multimodal C-I teaching and learning could integrate with other pedagogies such as project-based learning, service-learning, study abroad, internships, and undergraduate research
- ➤ Construct and promote resources to help students identify and articulate their communication-skills building experiences outside of the classroom (student organizations, sports, student jobs, volunteer roles, etc.)
- ➤ Increase overall awareness of CxC resources and services among faculty, undergraduates, and external stakeholders (prospective and incoming students, employers, donors, etc.)
- ➤ Leverage LSU's new Student Information System to improve institutional course certification systems, student data tracking, and stakeholder reporting

LSU CXC FAST FACTS
- ➔ Case studies comparing LSU courses of identical content in which some sections were taught as C-I and others were not taught as C-I showed students in the C-I sections scored higher on standardized content knowledge tests and on writing assignments.

➔ LSU students report feeling they have learned more, had deeper connections with their teacher, and see more value in C-I courses compared to non-C-I courses.[7]

➔ Longitudinal studies indicate participation in LSU C-I courses positively affects undergraduate degree completion and that C-I course experiences were a stronger predictor of graduation above personal demographics and pre-college academic characteristics. Preliminary findings suggest LSU students who take three or more C-I courses are twice as likely to graduate as those who do not take any C-I courses.[8]

➔ Through financial partnerships with four undergraduate colleges[9] and Student Technology Fee (STF), CxC provides all LSU students free communication coaching on writing, presentation design and delivery, research poster development, portfolio creation, and other multimedia projects via the CxC Studios. The 4 CxC Studios employ 1 full-time instructor, 2 part-time instructors, 3 GTAs, and 40 UGTA's who collectively support 9,500+ student visits each academic year. On average, students who visit a CxC Studio spend one hour per visit learning and working.

➔ Despite minimal resources, the number of undergraduates experiencing C-I Courses across the disciplines has nearly tripled in the past 10 years (405 C-I Courses in 2012; 1,078 C-I Courses in 2022).

➔ Since its launch in Fall 2018, 710 LSU undergraduates have earned the [LSU Communicator Certificate (non-degree)](), and 2,776 students are actively working toward the Certificate.

➔ The [LSU Distinguished Communicator Medal Program]() launched in Spring 2007. Since then, 817 students have earned the esteemed Medal, and 237 students are actively working alongside 48 volunteer faculty advisors to complete the program.

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[7] Annual data is collected through end-of-semester course evaluations, surveys, and student focus groups.

[8] Ongoing program assessment research being conducted by institutional researchers.

[9] The Colleges of Art & Design, Engineering, Humanities & Social Science, and Science allocate college-level funding to support CxC programming.

Appendix A: C-I Course Trends at LSU

LSU | Communication across the Curriculum

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	AY 2012-22 (10 yr) Average and % change	AY 2017-22 (5 yr) Average and % change
C-I COURSE SECTIONS TAUGHT	390	449	506	503	484	497	553	602	728	736	1,078	614	739
% CHANGE OF C-I SECTIONS		15%	13%	-1%	-4%	3%	11%	9%	21%	1%	46%	140%	95%
STUDENTS TAUGHT IN C-I COURSES	7,741	8,688	9,894	9,571	9,651	9,932	11,509	12,988	16,139	15,568	24,366	12,831	16,114
% CHANGE OF C-I STUDENTS		12%	14%	-3%	1%	3%	16%	13%	24%	-4%	57%	180%	112%

LSU Communication-Intensive Instruction across the Disciplines

— C-I COURSE SECTIONS TAUGHT
— STUDENTS TAUGHT IN C-I COURSES

C-I COURSE SECTIONS TAUGHT values: 390, 449, 506, 503, 484, 497, 553, 602, 728, 736, 1,078

STUDENTS TAUGHT IN C-I COURSES values: 7,741, 8,688, 9,894, 9,571, 9,651, 9,932, 11,509, 12,988, 16,139, 15,568, 24,366

Updated 3/22/2022
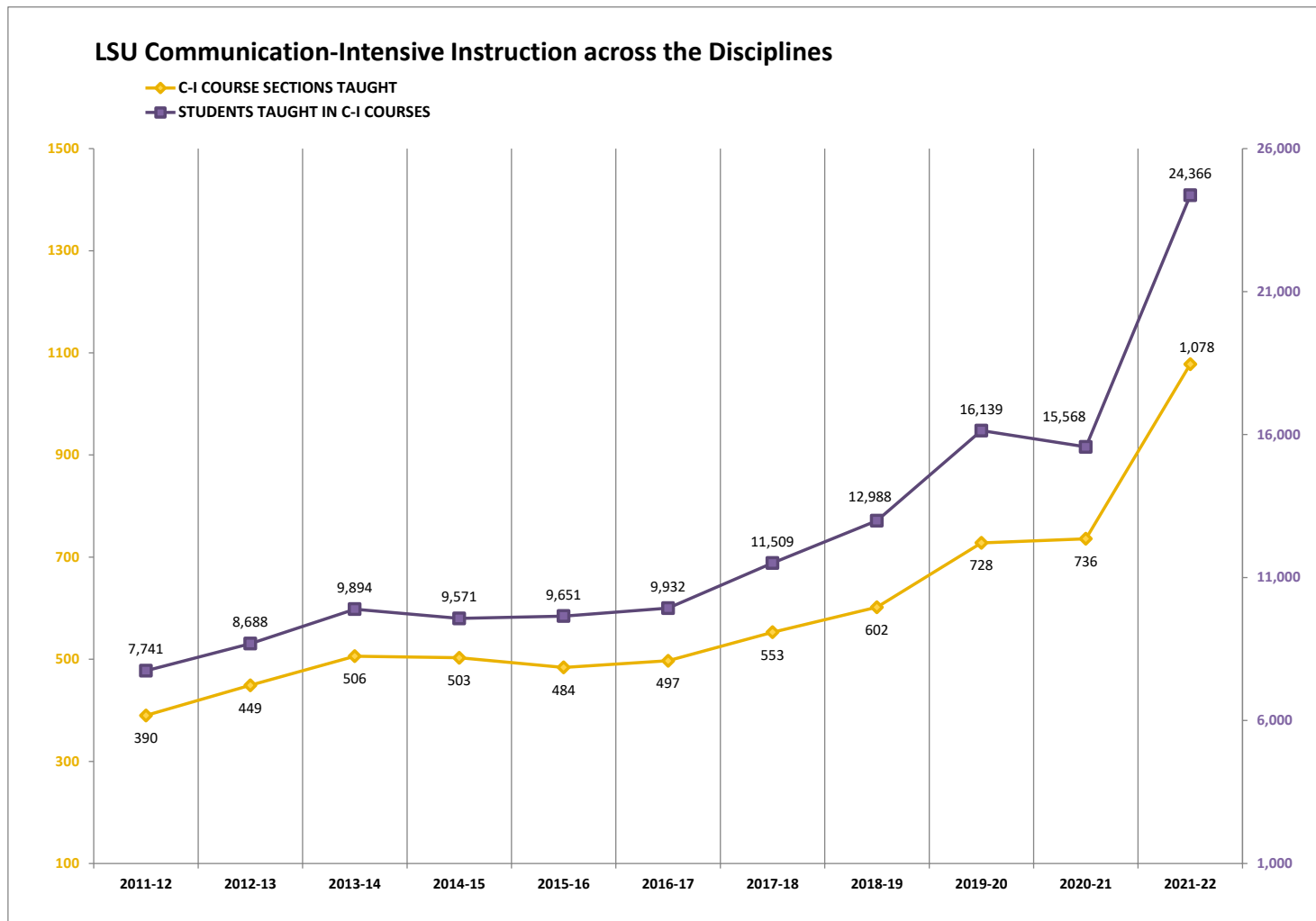
Appendix B: Spring 2022 Concept Development Team

Jackie Bach	QEP Co-Chair / Acting Vice Provost / Professor of Education	OAA Academic Programs & Support Services / College of Human Sciences & Education
Rebecca Burdette	QEP Co-Chair / Director	Communication Across the Curriculum (CxC)
Jennifer Baumgartner	Faculty Chair / Associate Professor of Education	LSU Teaching & Learning Collaborative / CxC / College of Human Sciences & Education
Aly Mousaad Aly	Associate Professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering	College of Engineering
Jahanna Bailey	Assistant Professor of Social Work	College of Human Sciences & Education
Mike Kaller	Professor of Renewable Natural Resources	College of Agriculture
Kristin Kelsch	Associate Dean of Academic Affairs / Associate Professor of Architecture	College of Art & Design
Laura Wiley	Senior Instructor of Accounting	Ourso College of Business
Malinda Sutor	Assistant Professor of of Oceanography & Coastal Sciences	College of the Coast & Environment
Jason Wolfe	Instructor of History / Dual Enrollment Coordinator	College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Tina Harris	Professor of Mass Communication	Manship School of Mass Communication
Anne Marie Stanley	Associate Professor of Music	College of Music & Dramatic Arts
Fern Galvez	Associate Professor of Biological Sciences	College of Science
Drew Lamonica Arms	Associate Dean	Ogden Honors College
Pete Trentacoste	Director	Student Affairs / Residential Life
Bernie Braun	Director	Institutional Research
Kevin DiBenedetto	Data & Systems Manager	Communication Across the Curriculum (CxC)
Sandi Gillilan	Associate Vice Provost	Institutional Effectiveness
Claire Sassic Young	Project Coordinator	Institutional Effectiveness
Lailah Williams	Undergraduate Student	Student Government / Political Science
Hamood Qureshi	Undergraduate Student	Student Government / Chemical Engineering