

The facts: bridging the college-career divide

Career Technical Education (CTE) is a high school curriculum aimed at equipping students with the training and job skills to go directly into industry and the workforce.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis within CTE to pair job training with academic content that can improve both college- and career-readiness.

The movement seeks to bridge a long-standing divide between a curriculum that prepares students for college and one that often has tracked students into work-only prospects after graduation. It also seeks to give students the more advanced knowledge necessary to compete with today's highly skilled workforce.

Resulting courses can serve not only to expand opportunities for CTE students, but to offer students of all academic abilities a more hands-on way to learn abstract concepts.

UC'S ROLE IN PROMOTING INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The University of California has been a leader in this movement.

Over the last several years, UC has helped facilitate the development of courses that advance CTE knowledge while meeting the academic requirements for admission to California's public universities.

To be eligible for admission to California's public universities, high school students must take a minimum of 15 academic courses, commonly called the "a-g" subject requirements. UC is the entity charged with qualifying courses as meeting "a-g" requirements. It does not mandate curriculum, but reviews the courses for meeting

appropriate standards for rigor and subject content.

Creating a breadth of CTE courses across all a-g categories is central to bridging the college-career divide.

Since 2000, the number of courses designated as Career Technical Education by the California Department of Education which also meet a-g requirements has grown from 258 to more than 11,000.

However, our CTE mission is far from accomplished.

UC has approved many existing CTE courses in lab sciences, the arts and electives. However, developing integrated courses in disciplines such as English, history, social sciences and mathematics has proven more challenging.

FAST-TRACKING THE CREATION OF NEW COURSES

In 2010, UC launched the UC Curriculum Integration (UCCI) Institutes to fast-track the development of new courses in these under-represented subject areas.

A program of the Admissions department at the UC Office of the President, the institutes bring teachers of academic subjects and CTE together with college educators for four-day workshops to craft courses that integrate core academic subjects with CTE content.

The resulting courses are then submitted to the University of California for “a-g” approval. Once approved, UCCI courses are given “program status”: They can be added to the course lists of any high school in California in the same manner as AP or ROP courses.

Recent UCCI workshops have produced such courses as:

- French 3 with Marketing, which pairs language instruction with marketing communication
- Constructing Algebra 2, which allows students to further their mathematics skills by constructing a scale model of actual home
- Biological Connections to Energy and Environment, which helps students develop an understanding of how the various forms of energy (natural and manmade) affect our environment

In less than three years, 23 UCCI courses have been approved and 46 schools have adopted them.

SHARING IDEAS ACROSS DISCIPLINES

UCCI workshops have hosted more than 400 educators from all over California.

Though the institutes' primary mission is to facilitate the creation of challenging, relevant integrated courses, other goals include offering professional development to California's high school teachers.

At the UCCI workshops, teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with fellow educators, learn new approaches to teaching in their content area and gain a better understanding of UC's “a-g” approval process.

For more information on UCCI and UCCI courses, visit <http://ucci.ucop.edu>.