INNOVATION OF THE YEAR 2008-2009 NOMINATION

(submitted by Holly McKinzie Beene)

Project Name: GCC/NAU Communiversity: Seamless Bachelor of Science in Speech Communication

Division: GCC/Department of Communication and World Languages

Project Team:
Jim W. Reed, GCC, COM Department Chair   (623-845-3631)
Pam Joraanstad, GCC, COM Assistant Department Chair (623-845-3773)
Marie Baker-Ohler, GCC/NAU Faculty & Program Advisor (623-845-4781)
Norma Peru-Ray, Program Coordinator (623-845-4784)
Brandt Short, NAU, Professor of Speech Communication (928-523-4701)
Doug Small, NAU, Assistant Dean Distance Learning (602-776-4618)
Jean Ann Abel, GCC, VP for Academic Affairs (623-845-3155)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Coordinated GCC/NAU Bachelor of Science in Speech Communication program offers students a seamless Community College–University degree path on the GCC Campus. Unlike a 2+2 model with discrete cohorts, Communiversity students maintain social and academic advantages of traditional programs that are frequently absent from nontraditional degree programs.

DESCRIPTION: This coordinated GCC/NAU Bachelor of Science in Speech Communication provides students a seamless degree program without leaving the GCC Campus. This is accomplished through offering freshman and sophomore level courses taught by credentialed faculty rather than graduate teaching assistants and having an NAU communication professor (who also teaches the gateway class) located in GCC's department of Communication and World Languages.

- Articulated Program of Study that ensures disciplinary focus and transferability, key features of timely graduation and student success.
- Seamless Transition that allows students the benefit of simultaneous enrollment in both lower and upper-division classes, as long as they meet prerequisites;

(3) Internships and Capstone Projects during which students participate in directed study on communication effectiveness in their chosen career area.

RELATIONSHIP TO MARICOPA VISION AND MISSION

This program addresses the Maricopa Vision of a "learning organization" dedicated to providing "effective, innovative, student-centered, flexible and lifelong educational opportunities" through

- a degree model that allows community college students to participate in a sequenced program of study, including concurrent study in lower-division courses when their disciplinary interests may diverge from their original intent; and
- an instructional model that provides community college faculty professional renewal through the opportunity to revisit their own academic interests as they prepare and teach 300 & 400

level courses.

This program addresses the Maricopa Mission to "create and continuously improve affordable, accessible, and effective learning environments for the lifelong educational needs of the diverse communities we serve" through

- a degree model that supports well-qualified students who may have been unable to pursue a traditional bachelor's degree path because of geographic limitations or family obligations; and
- an instructional model with an organizational communication emphasis that addresses documented employer demand for communication competence (National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Job Outlook 2006; Marquette University, 2004)

INNOVATION OF THE YEAR CRITERIA

1. Quality Of Teaching And Learning. The primary goal of this project is to enhance the quality of undergraduate teaching and learning through collaborative efforts between community college and university faculty and institutions.   Senior capstone projects (selected from the first two graduating class presentations) illustrate the range of individual student learning and career interests:

- Organizational Communication: How Technology Has Redefined The Ethic Of Caring
- Organizational Theory: A Practical Application Or Just Classroom Jargon
- Communicative Leadership Qualities Needed In This Historical Moment
- Investing In The Narrative Of One's Community
- Goffman's Sincerity And Concealment: Authenticity On The Path To Getting Clean
- Intercultural Communication: A Call For Dialogic Civility

Student panel presentations at Arizona Communication Association conferences 2007 & 2008 illustrate the range of cooperative student learning:

- The Life-Giving Gift of Acknowledgment (6 students)
- Having Fun With Goffman: What's Happening Backstage in Our American Culture (7 students)
- Ethical Health Communication: Living in a Democratic Moment of Choice (5 students)

2. Efficiency/Effectiveness. This project is based on (a) the premise of effective teaching being the most cost-effective and efficient approach to the District's core value of student learning; (b) the fiscal benefits of concurrent enrollment; (c) the intrinsic value of a cooperative initiative developed at the departmental level that clearly benefits the scholarly aspirations of nontraditional students; and (d) "in-house" professional development and renewal for community college faculty.

3. Learning
Student Learning: In addition to examples and descriptions of the range of student learning noted above under Quality, student assessment of learning is apparent in comments from 2007 and 2008 program assessments:
 "The main thing that differs from then [when I began] and now is the interactivity that I experience with the students and teachers. Added to this is the material I have been able to learn … I receive real world experience of the material being taught, and that is truly effective."

"I feel that the program is preparing me for the real-life situations I encounter because ideas that I have been taught are always with me, and I am always finding a way to relate my experiences in life to the concepts that

I am taught in class. This is the first time I have truly been so involved with college classes and I am greatly benefitted thereby."

"The reason for the class being so effective in real life is also the most important part of the program: adaptability. Courses are designed to 'train' not 'mechanically engineer' students; simply put, we are exposed to such a broad range of topics and issues that we can apply such knowledge to … regardless of circumstances. That in itself is powerful; we are powerful communicators because we know how to adapt our skills to the present situation."

Faculty Learning: This program increases faculty learning in an environment that stresses students' internalizing subtle distinctions between initial and advanced study of a discipline. Normative and summative program evaluations indicate that faculty learning is an integral component of the program:

"Being recruited to teach this course provided a wonderful opportunity to become once again a learner myself, specifically to focus my own past learning on the current understanding and demands of nontraditional students who have committed to a rigorous time-constrained degree path. The eight-week class offered an experience I do not encounter in my normal full schedule. Accepting this occasional appointment has enriched my broader professional life."

4.   Creativity. This project demonstrates creativity through the project managers' adapting the established model of 2+2 cohort education into a seamless degree experience that provides students the opportunity to gain a four-year degree outside of a "distance learning" environment.

5.   Timeliness. This project is established and maturing as we enter the third year. In Fall 2006, three full-time GCC faculty team-taught the gateway research class (COM207) to launch the program with 16 students. We had only a commitment of institutional support and confidence that we could engage students in the study of human communication as a flexible and varied career path. In 2008, at the end of our first two-year cycle, 7 students graduated. This year, 11 students will present their capstone projects in a public forum at GCC and will graduate in Flagstaff. This year, enrollment in the major has grown to 52. The demographic of this group has now extended beyond employed evening-only students to our day population: for Fall 2009, we have 40 students committed and have added an afternoon section of the introductory course in response to student demand.

6.   Collaboration. The project implementation is in itself collaboration between GCC and NAU's faculty and deans who were committed to (a) go beyond existing 2+2 cohort program design to create something new and (b) articulate courses to guarantee success. A collateral benefit has been the development of a student/faculty academic discourse community: students collaborate both internally and also externally through ongoing connections fostered by the program. This is an experience familiar to students in traditional degree programs and residential institutions, but sadly absent in distance learning and large nonresident populations common to community colleges.

7.   Replication. This program could easily be replicated at individual colleges or multi-college districts, since the project structure is clearly defined, scalable and fully documented. The only variable is faculty commitment to recruiting and promoting the degree in survey classes.