Curriculum Repository Proposal
Prepared by Dr. Gary L. Ackerman
gary.hackscience.net@gmail.com

What is a Curriculum Repository?

A curriculum repository is an online space where a group of educators create a shared collection of materials, links, discussion prompts, and other resources for their courses.

The college will create a curriculum repository to support face-to-face, hybrid and online learning courses. The best curriculum repositories include digital files that are easily editable; so they can be updated, remixed, and reused. The best curriculum repositories also provide metadata to facilitate searching, and the metadata include annotations provided by the faculty. Further, the best curriculum repositories are created for appropriate audiences. Separate repositories to support math instructors and English instructors (for example) are typically more useful than single repositories for all instructors.

All of these characteristics will inform the design and development decisions that we make as our curriculum repository emerges. Those decisions will be made to realize a vision of how students and instructors will benefit from the repository. Because faculty will play an important role in creating and cultivating the digital files that comprise the repository, the details in this proposal will be adapted to their needs and patterns of use.

The curriculum repository will:

- Be focused by the vision of supporting faculty and students;
- Comprise Moodle classrooms, each filled with both resources needed by faculty who teach all disciplines and resources needed by faculty in specific disciplines;
- Be designed for ease-of-use (especially for faculty) and effectiveness (especially for students);
- Be built within existing IT systems and procedures;
- Be supported by new academic systems and procedures.

Why Create a Curriculum Repository?

A well-developed curriculum repository affords several advantages for instructors and students. For faculty, the curriculum repository will become a source of locally relevant materials. New adjuncts will be gain access to the same resources used in all classes, thus different sections will be more consistently taught and assessed. Faculty will also benefit by accessing the strengths of their colleagues. For example, all faculty will be able to use the best resources available in the college for teaching how to cite references.

Eventually, the curriculum repository will facilitate the adoption of open education resources by faculty. OER will save students money, and there is evidence that the use of OER does increase enrollment and retention, so the repository will benefit students.

How Will We Develop Our Curriculum Repository?

A successful curriculum repository does reflect a new way of creating and curating curriculum. We replace faculty working in isolation to build courses largely using their individual expertise and the guidance of textbook publishers with faculty working together to build courses largely using their collective expertise. This work does depend on a vision of the innovation, robust and usable technology infrastructure, and on-going support for users. As the primary creators of and users of the curriculum repository, faculty must understand the vision and believe it to be rationale and valuable. The infrastructure must be reliable and robust, faculty must perceive it to be easy-to-use, effective, and used by others. Further, they must find the support to be effective and timely.

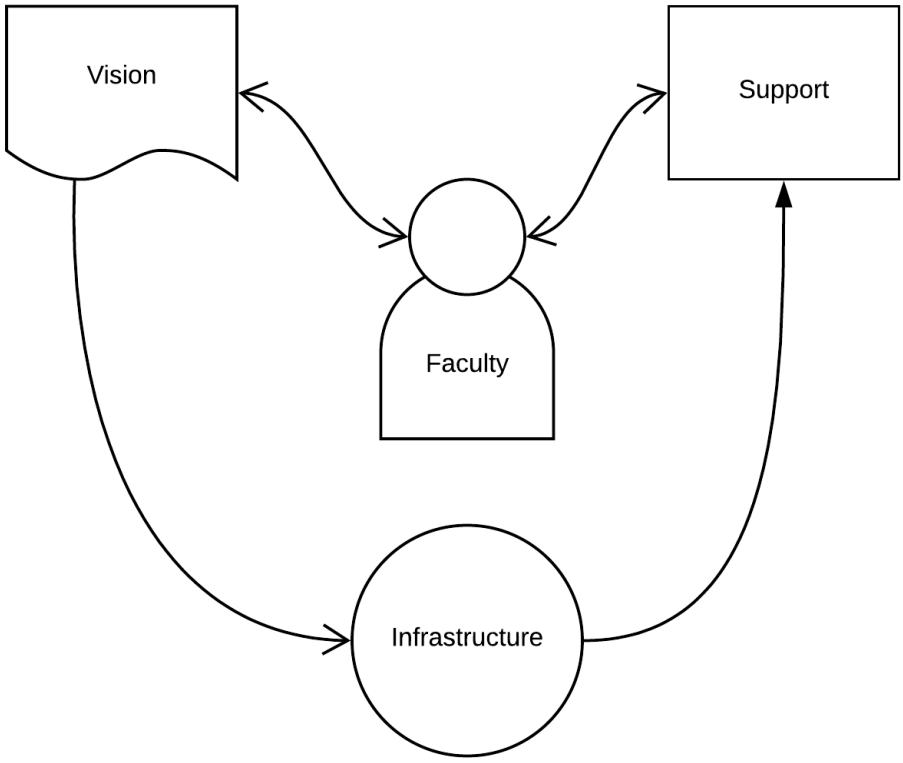

Figure 1. Curriculum repositories result from vision, infrastructure, and support

Vision

The vision will be grounded in administrators' and faculty leaders' belief that the curriculum repository will be a valuable resource for instructors. The value results from greater efficiency and effectiveness that benefits users of curriculum repositories. Greater efficiency arises from faculty

being able to quickly find information and interaction that is closely aligned with institutional goals, program needs, professional expectations, and faculty values. Greater effectiveness arises from the shared work of identifying, adapting, and (especially) improving resources that are aligned with local needs.

Leaders of the initiative will also promote the curriculum repository as a system that will promote the use of open education resources. Many institutions are realizing the benefits of OER as a method of retaining students. By reducing the cost of textbooks, schools reduce the burden of students' attendance and increase the likelihood they will continue to complete their programs.

The essential first steps in creating the vision:

- College leaders will describe role of the curriculum repository in on-going improvement efforts;
- The Coordinator of Technology Systems will demonstrate existing curriculum repositories.

Infrastructure

The curriculum repository will be created in the school's existing installation of Moodle; different classrooms will be created for different groups. The exact configuration of the groups will be determined with the input of academic and faculty leaders. Using Moodle has several advantages for this initiative. First, the Moodle classrooms that serve as curriculum repositories will use existing computing capacity, administration and management procedures, and support systems. Additional Moodle classrooms will not necessitate additional expenses for infrastructure, there will be no need to negotiate or define new procedures and support professionals will not have to learn a new system. Further, the existing backup and disaster recovery plans will protect the curriculum repository in the same way they protect other classrooms.

Second, experienced faculty already understand how to use Moodle, contributing to the curriculum repositories will not necessitate they learn a new system, so less new training is necessary compared to using new systems. In addition to building on the existing capacity to use Moodle, participation in the curriculum repository project will increase faculty members' skill in using Moodle. Those who have been reluctant to use Moodle will learn basic functionality and operations, and all faculty will explore advanced features.

Third, there will be no interoperability problems; materials created in the curriculum repository built in the LMS will function as expected in Moodle classrooms on that same installation. In addition, new features that are added to the college's LMS will be available in both the repositories and in classrooms, so the features will function consistently in both.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of using Moodle will be that faculty will be able to use the import function to immediately transfer materials from Moodle repositories to Moodle classrooms in which students are enrolled. As the repositories mature, there are options for extending the capacity populating Moodle classrooms with content from Moodle repositories. Depending on the needs of the users and the organization of the repositories, either course templates or metacourses will allow efficient transfer of large amounts of content from repository to classroom. These features will be especially useful when using the Moodle repositories to create course with multiple sections.

The essential first steps in deploying the infrastructure will include:

- Discuss the initiative with IT leader and support professionals to ensure the plan does not conflict with existing procedures and that it will not place excessive demands on the system;
- Define procedures and responsibilities regarding administration and management of the repository classrooms;
- Create a metacourse that details the vision of the college's curriculum repository, procedures for using the repository, tutorials on using unfamiliar tools in Moodle, links to OER sites, information regarding social and active learning, tips for creating ADA-compliant materials, and other resources that will contribute to the work;
- Use the metacourse to populate Moodle classrooms for each curriculum repository.

Support

To ensure the curriculum repository becomes a valuable resource for faculty, a comprehensive system of support will be implemented. The system will address four aspects of the curriculum repository.

First, faculty will be introduced to the goal of creating curriculum repositories. Academic leaders will play an important role in this work and will also dedicate professional development resources to the initiative. Coincident with the faculty becoming aware of the vision of the role of curriculum repositories at the college will be demonstrations of curriculum repositories from other organizations, so faculty have a model and can realize the value and features of a good curriculum repository. For consistency, the vision should be communicated to large audiences; for deeper understanding the models should be presented in smaller groups such as department meetings.

Second, faculty will be introduced to the procedures for using the curriculum repositories. Because they will be created in Moodle, a system already in use, training faculty to participate in the curriculum repository will focus on selecting and modifying resources, use of metadata tools to label resources that are added to the repositories, and the use of all tools in Moodle. For example, faculty will be trained in the use of wikis, so they understand it as an alternative to discussion boards. For some faculty, this will represent training in the use of Moodle, but for others it will represent training in unfamiliar features in Moodle.

Third, faculty will be supported in their first efforts to contribute to the curriculum repository. This is best accomplished through immersive experiences such as workshops in which the process of contributing is demonstrated, then individuals have the opportunity to work independently, but with assistance available. Department meetings dedicated to developing the repository have been effective ways to begin this work, but extended workshops (for example in the summer) at which faculty collaborate to adapt, develop, and contribute resources are most effective in creating useful repositories in a brief time.

Fourth, faculty will be supported in ensuring the materials in their curriculum repository can be adapted for their courses. This on-going participation will include efforts to improve the items in the curriculum repository.

The essential first steps in developing the support of curriculum repositories will include:

- Identifying the academic programs that will be the first to adopt curriculum repositories;
- Reviewing existing courses to identify under-utilized tools;
- Develop ADA-compliant templates and other resources to guide the work;
- Schedule workshops and invite participation.

Anticipated Timeline

It is anticipated the initial curriculum repositories will be available to faculty and supporting students by the fall of 2019. These will serve as models for more repositories and the faculty who participated will form a cadre to lead others. To meet that goal, the following timeline is proposed:

January: Articulate the vision in collaboration with academic leaders

Develop procedures with Moodle administrators for managing the curriculum repositories

February: Present the vision to faculty, including demonstration of other repositories

Create the metacourse which will contain resources for all participants

March: Create Moodle classrooms to serve as curriculum repositories

Complete alpha-tests of the repositories for functionality, and review of the repositories with faculty leaders, support professionals, and other stakeholders

April: Complete beta-tests of the repositories with a group of faculty users

Introduce procedures to the first users

Summer: Offer 3-day workshop for faculty who will be the first to use the repositories

Revise the metacourse and other procedures and training materials based on faculty input

Fall: Provide training sessions for importing individual resources from the repositories into classrooms

Develop procedures for version management as resources are improved

Develop and alpha test course templates and metacourses to prepare for scaling up the use of the curriculum repositories

Expand the use of curriculum repositories to all programs and departments, include faculty who participated in summer institutes in sharing their work

Collect data regarding to assess the progress. Specific data will include:

- Quantitative data regarding use of the resources in courses
- Evidence of student interaction with the materials in course evaluations
- Faculty satisfaction surveys regarding effectiveness of the resources
- Qualitative data regarding the use of the materials, specifically observations of students using the materials and interviews with faculty