# Assignments Charrette

Our goals for this workshop are to practice collaborative methods for refining existing assignments and to generate specific ideas about how these assignments can be used to improve student learning in our discipline.

Each participant will have five minutes to concisely summarize and provide additional context to frame discussion of their assignment. By the end of the 5-minute introductory statement, each Charrette member should have a clear understanding of the following:

1. Course location within the curriculum (course level, program, required for major or gen ed?)
2. Student demographics (who takes your course)
3. Why do most students take the course
4. Ways assignment reflects or assesses knowledge of course content
5. Proficiencies, skills, or concepts of the discipline being assessed
6. Experience with assignment (is this a work in progress or a time tested assignment)
7. Particular challenges faced by students (what aspects cause them to struggle)
8. Questions for colleagues (what do you want help addressing from the group today)

## After the introduction, all group members should participate in a guided discussion of the assignment led by the group facilitator. The goal is to find weak areas or confusing language that can be strengthened, strong points that can be emphasized, ways to scale these assignments over the course of the semester so that students are prepared for the next step, and connections to the overarching learning goals in the discipline. Wherever possible, consider how these assignments relate to the course learning goals, the program goals, and the gen-ed or college level goals.

## Suggestions for questions from the group

* What are specific qualities and characteristics that highlight the strengths or weaknesses of this assignment?
* How is the assignment related to course goals? Could the connection be made more explicit for students? How does it relate to program learning goals? Do students recognize this connection?
* Do students have a clear understanding of what is expected and how they will be graded? How? Is there a rubric or other tool that students know about?
* How might students misunderstand the assignment or approach it differently than was intended? Is there a place where the language could be clarified or the assignment revised to correct these misunderstandings?
* How is this assignment part of a growth process for students—ie what came before to help them prepare and what comes after to help them build upon this learning?
* What are students expected to learn by doing the task? (Not just: What are they demonstrating by completing the assignment?)
* What opportunities do students have for practice, feedback, and refinement?
* Is this a ‘high stakes’ assignment?
* Does the student’s experience in the discipline make a difference?
* What would a response from a more advanced student completing this assignment look like?
* What would a more advanced level paper look like, and how are these different from responses in an introductory class?
* Is the language clear? Is the format easy to understand? Are there components that are either missing or extraneous, given what the instructor wants students to do?
* Could this assignment be adapted to other formats successfully? Hybrid or online?

## Some questions to consider during and after the workshop:

* What are the key teaching issues/challenges that faculty and students are facing in their courses?
* What are common observations about the role of assignments in learning?
* What are some characteristics and qualities of good assignments?
* To what extent are desired learning outcomes in courses shared across disciplines? Where do we see distinguishing characteristics of each discipline?
* How might our colleges and professional organizations help to support work on assignments?