

EXPANDING YOUR COMFORT ZONE: TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM THROUGH CO-TEACHING

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• Why Co-Teach?

i *Co-teaching (or team teaching) can be an effective approach for faculty to extend their expertise to develop and deliver courses that address gaps in the curriculum or highlight new directions in the field. We developed an applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) class in the context of our HDFS graduate program. Potential benefits include:*

- Enhancing knowledge and skills in a particular domain of interest (professional development).
- Promoting curriculum development
- Supporting student engagement
- Creating professional networks across your university
- Facilitating discussion of teaching pedagogy and practice

• What is involved in Co-Teaching?

i *Co-teaching is more than just collaboration. It involves shared instructional responsibility and accountability. Here are some points to consider in planning a co-teaching strategy:*

- Division of content - assign topics by expertise? Consider course-related tasks such as the creation of assignments and exams and grading.
- Course preparation – do either of the instructors require training to teach the course? How will this requirement be equally distributed? Are you sharing lectures as they are developed?
- Structure of course –teach on alternating days/weeks OR teach and observe method with both instructors in each class?
- Pedagogical strategies - Think about differences in pedagogy - can they complement each other and enhance student engagement?
- Support from administration – Department and/or college recognition is critical for successful implementation. What department will “house” the course? How will the course load and salary be split among faculty?

- **Our Course and Approach**

i *The primary purpose of our approach was to develop a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) course that would allow our graduate students (and other graduate students at the university) to be able to understand and carry out these analyses. Our students had been requesting it and the opportunities for an entry-level SEM course on campus were limited.*

- The class built off a series of intensive workshops in that topic that had been developed and delivered previously in the department.
- We consulted with colleagues at peer institutions and attended trainings in SEM.
- Much of the course involved hands-on applications of doing analyses and interpretations of SEM.
- The course was taught over two weeks in the summer, with 5-hour days of teaching. We both attended all sessions but alternated primary responsibility on an alternating day basis, split up the grading of the homework, and co-constructed exams.

- **Our Reflections on our Co-Teaching Experiences**

i *Co-teaching is a uniquely challenging but also uniquely rewarding teaching activity. It allowed us to develop a course that can serve our students well and that really required a co-teaching approach in our context.*

- You need to work with someone with whom you feel comfortable making mistakes. It is an intense working relationship. You need to be able to honest in your challenges in the development of the course and use your co-teacher for support.
- Flexibility is also key. You can never be prepared for all of the things that come up in the course of a class and being able to be flexible is important.
- Co-teaching doesn't really cut down on the work required for the class, at least in the way we did it. We probably spent more time collaborating and working together in order to make sure that we had co-constructed our course in an effective manner than if we had worked on it separately.

- We both felt that we learned a lot more about SEM for our own purposes and that working together caused us to both reflect on our teaching more broadly.

- **Moving Forward: What Opportunities Exist for Co-Teaching?**

i *Can you identify opportunities to support co-teaching at your institution? Here are some factors to consider as you pursue this possibility.*

- Identifying a course – Is there something missing from the curriculum? Is this a course that fits within your department or does it represent an interdisciplinary collaboration? Is this a course that you hope to regularize?
- Finding a collaborator - Consider faculty within your department and across the university, as well as graduate students. Think about colleagues who have personal characteristics that enable them to work effectively as part of a team.
- Securing funding – Are there grants available to develop and/or teach new courses on your campus? These grants may be associated with summer programming or centers of teaching excellence. Costs to consider include those associated with course preparation (e.g., time/effort to build the course, training, consultant fees) and course delivery (e.g., delivering the course).