**HOW TO ORGANIZE A CAMPUS-WIDE COURSE REDESIGN PROGRAM
USING NCAT'S METHODOLOGY**

II. Assessing Institutional Readiness to Redesign

Before beginning a course redesign program, most institutions have found it extremely useful to think through their readiness to engage in the endeavor. An institution has two categories of issues to consider when assessing its readiness to undertake a course redesign initiative: level of institutional support for the redesign program and available resources to support the redesign program. Conducting a successful redesign program requires that both institutional support and needed resources be in place before the program begins.

Assess the Level of Campus Support

Do you have sufficient support on campus to initiate a redesign program? If not, you need to develop a plan to secure that support before beginning to plan and develop a redesign program.

- *Faculty Support.* You need to identify the academic and/or resource problem(s) that course redesign can correct. You need to clearly specify the problem and gather data that supports the need for change—such as student pass rates for the past several years or lack of consistency among sections. The question then becomes, do all faculty members in departments with courses likely to be redesigned understand the nature and extent of the problem? Even though many of the course redesign teams that have worked with NCAT believed at first that the scope of their identified problem and the need to solve it were well-known among their peers, they subsequently learned that others did not share that understanding. That's why you must make sure that all department members are aware of the problem and supportive of the need to correct it. Most faculty members are not familiar with NCAT's course redesign methodology and will need assistance in understanding it.

- *Administrative Support.* Do academic administrators (department chairs, deans, vice presidents, provosts, presidents) understand the nature and extent of the problem you are trying to correct? Have they seen the data? Even though many administrators do understand the scope of the problem the course faces (indeed, it may be the administration itself that initiates a redesign program), others, surprisingly, do not have that understanding and will need to be informed. Most administrators are unfamiliar with NCAT's course redesign methodology and will also need assistance in understanding it. Administrative issues will have to be dealt with throughout the redesign process, and campus resources will be needed; consequently, having solid administrative support is extremely important to the success of the redesign. In addition, administrators may have to step in to support the redesign effort when colleagues or other departments or divisions question the redesigns. And senior administrators must be prepared to provide that support.

- *Unionized Campuses.* Faculty unions strive to ensure that faculty members work in a secure and productive working environment with a reasonable workload. On some campuses, work rules may seem to be obstacles to redesign. Because one of the goals of course redesign is to reduce instructional costs, unions sometimes conclude that faculty will automatically lose jobs or be required to carry heavier workloads. NCAT has successfully worked with institutions in many states that have faculty unions, including Massachusetts, New Jersey,

and New York. The campus administration and those initiating the redesign need to take into account the specific union contract under which the redesign will occur.

NCAT's Scope of Effort Worksheet (see Appendix D of <u>How to Redesign a College Course Using NCAT's Methodology</u>) has been designed to help campuses document that the number of hours faculty devote to each redesigned course will be the same as or fewer than the number of hours devoted to the course in its traditional format, even if class size grows or the number of sections that faculty carry increases. This is possible because course redesign off-loads to the technology certain tasks like monitoring student progress and grading. Explaining how this occurs and documenting the changes by using the Scope of Effort Worksheet enable redesign leaders to help union leadership understand the benefits of redesign for both students and faculty. Having union support is crucial to successful change on a unionized campus.

Assess the Availability of Financial Support

Do you have sufficient financial resources available to support a course redesign program? If not, you need to develop a plan to secure that support before beginning to plan and develop the redesign program. Financial resources may be needed to support three things depending on the nature of the redesign.

- *Faculty Released Time.* To focus on planning the redesign, a subset of full-time faculty will need released time from some or all of their teaching responsibilities. Financial resources will be needed to pay qualified adjuncts to teach those sections so that faculty who are key to the redesign can have time to do the work. Not all faculty involved in the redesign need released time. Those granted released time should hold pivotal roles in the planning and development of the redesigned courses.

  NCAT does not recommend using extra service or overtime pay rather than released time. Because faculty members were presumably fully employed prior to the beginning of the redesign process, paying overtime means that faculty must work on the redesign after hours or on weekends. The use of overtime payments also means that faculty may incur difficulty in scheduling important meetings with team members or others on campus. The overtime payment method of remuneration forces faculty to place the redesign lower on their priority list because their current classes and students must come first.

  If the planning schedule permits, paying stipends during the summer may work. Some faculty cannot be released during the year for various reasons, which prohibits their participation in the redesign project. If you decide to pay summer stipends, it is important for all participants to be on campus with a regular meeting schedule and set tasks to complete as part of the redesign's development.

- *Technological Infrastructure.* Some institutions have robust infrastructures, but many need to expand their infrastructures to support larger labs or to equip small classrooms. Typically, course redesign means more students will be using on-campus computers and accessing the campus network. Thus, an institution's technological infrastructure will need to be examined and may need expansion as new demands are placed on it and the volume of student engagement increases. Again, senior administrators are typically those who make such important infrastructure decisions. As noted earlier, they must understand the reason for the redesign and the anticipated benefits for students and the institution.

- *Computer Labs/Classrooms.* Some institutions have existing computer labs/classrooms that are underutilized and can be rescheduled and repurposed. Other institutions will have to expand their labs/classrooms because more students will be using them than were using them before the redesign. Still others will need to build new labs/classrooms. When repurposing or expanding existing labs/classrooms or creating new ones, senior administrators are typically those who make such important space decisions. As noted earlier, they must understand the reason for the redesign and the anticipated benefits for students and the institution.

Even though all successful redesigns will reduce instructional costs over time, some financial resources are needed up front. (Funds that will be needed as an ongoing feature of the redesign to buy software or technology-based services such as grading assistance or tutoring should be included in overall redesign planning.) Where do those financial resources come from? Some institutions have redirected internal funds to support redesign. Other institutions have received outside funding from Title III or Title V grants or from private foundations that seek to improve student retention and success. The ability to clearly articulate the problem the institution is trying to solve by implementing course redesign will go a long way to enable funders (either internal or external) to understand and support the redesign effort.

Take Advantage of NCAT Resources

Once the institution has a clear understanding of its goal and believes it has the necessary support and resources to move forward in the development of a redesign program, both faculty and administrators must learn more about course redesign, what its strengths are, and how it actually works.

- *Background Reading.* Chapter III of <u>How to Redesign a College Course Using NCAT's Methodology</u> includes a short bibliography of NCAT articles about course redesign. Distributing the articles to campus leaders and potential redesign teams and discussing them as a team and with others are good activities to pursue in preparing to develop a plan for a redesign program.

- *Redesign Case Studies.* NCAT has provided the higher education community with almost 200 <u>case studies</u> of redesigns that both improved learning and reduced costs. The case studies are sorted by discipline, redesign model, and degree of success. The NCAT website has an array of free resources for those seeking to implement a successful redesign, including data from both two-year and four-year institutions.

- *Campus Visits.* Those involved in the redesign program—both faculty members and administrators—should consult with and visit institutions that have successfully implemented at least one large-scale course redesign. Visiting multiple institutions is a good way for program leaders to observe exactly what occurs in a course redesign, to see actual interaction between students and instructors, and to discuss issues that may have arisen during the planning stage. Campus visits have been definitive in convincing faculty and administrators who may feel hesitation about course redesign or who cannot envision either exactly how it would work in practice or its effectiveness. When faculty and administrators see course redesign in action, talk to students, and talk to their colleagues, they tend to come to understand that course redesign is a viable way to solve both academic and resource problems at their institutions.

- *Redesign Scholars.* In 2006, NCAT established a Redesign Scholars Program to link those new to course redesign with more-experienced colleagues whom they can turn to for advice and support. Trained in NCAT's course redesign methodology, Redesign Scholars have led successful redesigns that have been sustained over time. Only exemplars in course redesign are selected to be Redesign Scholars.

  Individual institutions interested in initiating course redesign programs may wish to invite a Redesign Scholar to visit their campuses. Site visits focus on issues of curriculum and pedagogy, administrative matters, assessment and evaluation efforts, and implementation issues. Redesign Scholars are also available to campuses via telephone and e-mail for ongoing consultation. Redesign Scholars are engaged on a per-event basis and determine their consulting fees individually.

  Follow the links at http://www.theNCAT.org/RedesignAlliance/ScholarsList.htm to read about each Redesign Scholar's background and redesign project in order to choose someone who would make a good fit with your particular redesign idea. Contact information is also provided.

Readiness Checklist

- Have you clearly identified the problems the redesigns will solve? Do you have data to support the extent of the problems? Do others on campus also acknowledge the problems?
- Do you have sufficient resources to support the redesign program? Have you identified sources of external or internal funds to support the redesigns?
- Do the senior administrators who make funding and space decisions understand the needs of the redesigns? Do they have sufficient information to make appropriate decisions?
- If your campus is unionized, have plans for the redesign program been discussed with union leadership? Have you shared completed Scope of Effort Worksheets to document that the redesigns will not increase workload?
- Have you visited other campuses that have implemented successful redesigns, or have you had telephone discussions with their faculty members and administrators? Were others who might have reservations about the redesign invited to join the visits or the phone calls?
- Have you considered asking Carolyn Jarmon, NCAT Vice President, and/or one or more NCAT Redesign Scholars to visit your campus and offer advice about the redesigns?