



Interconnect: A double collaboration

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Intentional teacher collaboration builds partnerships between faculty and departments and is encouraged on our campus. The use of real life situations to inform student learning is good practice to ensure students are ready for life after graduation. An important 21st century skill, collaboration is no longer considered “nice-to-have” but a necessity (World, 2016). To this end, faculty from the department of Art and Design developed a collaboration with their students, the Biology department and the Fashion department. The objective of this project was to build a collaborative relationship between students and faculty from different departments that would not normally work together.

The Eckert Herbarium is a collection of over 16,000 preserved specimens of vegetable material; it was assembled to support instruction in the Biology Department. The last ten years have seen the acquisition of 8,000 new specimens, improved storage, and a total reorganization. This collection is a valuable resource for the Biology department but faculty in Art and Design saw a different valuable use – to use the Herbarium as inspiration for student projects.

The collaboration between the Herbarium and freshmen enrolled in Design 101 sections continued for two semesters with the Herbarium providing monitored access to specimens. This vital hands-on learning experience for budding visual artists resulted in drawings made from plants and fungi, the first step in each student’s design process. Back in the studio, drawings were worked up into distinctive motifs with each student creating a portfolio of symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns from them.

At this time, Art and Design contacted the faculty in the Fashion department to discuss a further collaboration. Artists often sell their work to major fashion companies so that the companies may develop fresh surface designs for their garments each season. In this second collaboration, 13 designs developed by the Design 101 students were scanned and given to students in a surface design class.

The surface design students were shown the chosen garment pattern, a basic A-line dress with scuba back, and charged with developing a surface print appropriate for the garment using the scanned images from the Design 101 student work. Restrictions on manipulation of the original designs were instituted but the students had freedom to alter color, scale and repeat. The surface designs students prepared industry ready repeat tiles and engineered yardage according to the digital textile print specifications. One interesting observation at this point was that the instructor noticed that the surface design students preferred using someone else’s art/design to manipulate. When using their own art/design images, the students tended to be less creative and

restricted themselves, however they spent more time manipulating these images than students have in past classes.

Once completed, the Fashion faculty contracted to print yardage of the completed surface design patterns. Then, students in construction courses were chosen based on quality of their work and given a portion of the custom printed fabric to cut and sew the final design. All of the garments were made in the same size and, due to the simple A-line shape, easy to fit. These designs were then highlighted at the annual department fashion show as part of the collaboration with the Art and Design Department. One yard sections of the custom fabric were given to each of the DES 101 students to use as part of a display within their department and for their portfolios.

At the end of the semester, students were able to come together to share their creative thoughts and ideas with each other and discuss the final outcomes. This came about in the form of an exhibit to showcase the work the students had accomplished over the past school year. The garments were placed on dress forms with matching or coordinating fabric panels next to them. The students could view each other's work and other's interpretation of their work; orally critique the work and ideate ways to improve the design process of 2D art to a 3D garment and finally to enjoy the chance to work together and see what the collaboration was able to accomplish.

We feel that this double collaboration is unique and extremely valuable to student learning. The students have experienced new avenues of inspiration, developed collaborative relationships with students from varying fields of study and were able to visualize their designs in new and exciting ways. Holding sessions in which the students interact with each other enhanced the learning process and hopefully paved the way for future partnerships. The Art and Design faculty mentioned that their students worked more diligently knowing that their designs could be chosen to be printed on fabric. The Fashion students worked more carefully to ensure a quality garment as they knew the garments would be not only shown in the fashion show but in a gallery exhibit. Overall, the faculty felt that this project was a success and will look for ways to continue this type of collaboration. In the future we would like to see students in both departments working together earlier in the project to develop a wider variety of garments for surface designs.

World Economic Forum. (2016). Executive Summary: The Future of jobs and skills. Retrieved on March 20, 2018 from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FOJ_Executive_Summary_Jobs.pdf