

Communities of Practice

What are communities of practice?

A group of people who share a passion for a particular discipline or topic and engage in frequent gatherings to discover ways to enhance their work.

Communities of practice are important because they:

- Connect people who might not have connected on their own.
- Provide a shared space to connect around one another's experiences.
- Enable dialogue.
- Stimulate learning by promoting self-reflection, coaching, and communication.
- Capture and diffuse existing knowledge to assist members in enhancing their field.
- Introduce a collaborative process to stimulate ideas.
- Produce purposeful actions that deliver results.
- Generate new knowledge.

Three elements:

Domain - members share expertise in and commitment to the focus area.

Community - members engage in collective dialogue and activities to learn how to enhance similar initiatives.

Practice - members will produce a collection of resources (e.g.; shared experience, knowledge, tools) that informs their work (individually or the field).

Steps in creating communities of practice:

- Identify membership
- Establish purpose, goals, expectations and learning outcomes
- Pilot with a select group and topic
- Roll out to the broader community over a period of time
- Grow each community
- Sustain each community

Learning theories associated with communities of practice:

- Constructivist Theory - create new knowledge based on current/past knowledge
- Critical Theory - address inequalities in institutions
- Social Learning Theory - observing and modeling behaviors leads to learning

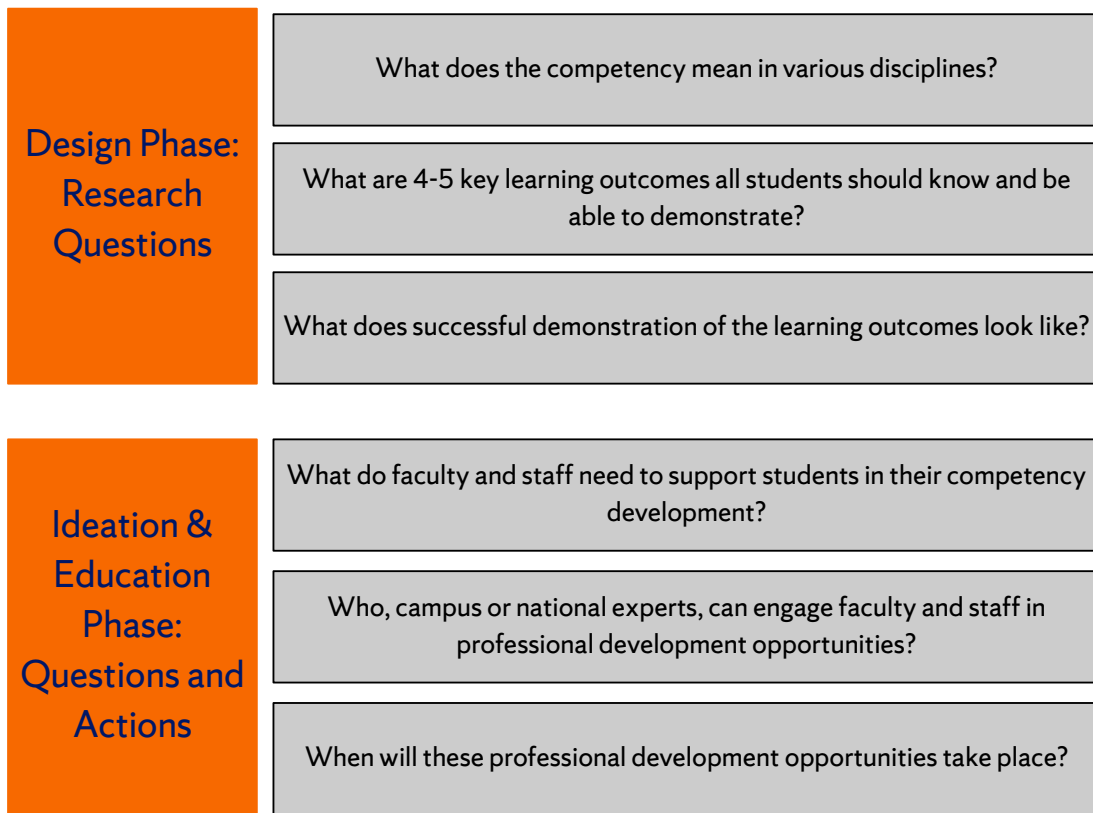
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Role communities of practice play in the Shared Competencies initiative:

The goal of each community is to lead efforts in enhancing undergraduate education around the community's competency area. This goal is achieved by answering key questions and taking actions during the following phases:



Community of Practice	Design Phase	Ideation & Education Phase ¹	Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Accreditation Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Skills • Information Literacy and Technological Agility 	2020-2021	2021-2022	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics, Integrity, and Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion • Civic and Global Responsibility 	2021-2022	2022-2023	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical and Creative Thinking • Scientific Inquiry and Research Skills 	2022-2023	2023-2024	MSCHE Self-Study Design

¹ During subsequent years, communities will engage in reviewing and revising outcomes when needed and hosting professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.