

# Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Connecting Narrative Based Research Projects to Communities

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# Brief Introductions

- Purpose - To Think About the Creation, Implementation and Potential of Interdisciplinary Team-Based Community Engaged Research Projects at Academic Institutions
- Tasks
  - Discuss the value of interdisciplinary groups and projects
  - Discuss examples of community engaged scholarship you have experiences with
  - Discuss characteristics of successful collaborative academic groups
  - Reflect upon UMBC's Interdisciplinary CoLab as a possible model
  - Brainstorm what similar work might look like with your communities

## Discussion Question #1

WHAT IS SOMETHING VALUABLE YOU LEARNED FROM SOMEONE FROM A DISCIPLINE OTHER THAN YOUR OWN AT THE CONFERENCE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEARN FROM AND WORK WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF YOUR DISCIPLINE

## Discussion Question #2

AT THE CONFERENCE, DID YOU SEE ANY EVIDENCE OF STUDENTS INTERACTING WITH THE LARGER COMMUNITY THROUGH PROJECT BASED LEARNING? IF SO, PLEASE SHARE A QUICK SUMMARY.

### Discussion Question #3

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC GROUP YOU PARTICIPATED IN, IN ORDER TO COMPLETE A TASK? WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU SEE WITH UNDERGRADUATE GROUPS WORKING TOGETHER TO COMPLETE A PROJECT?

# Examples

CoLab Example #1  
Stories on a Sphere: Climate  
change in the marine  
ecosystem of the Arctic



- 4 Undergraduates (Geography and Environmental Studies, Biology, Psychology, Theatre/Individualized Studies)
- 2 GES Graduate Student CoLeaders (Lead Researcher and Project Leader)
- Partnered with NOAA to create a guide for creating narratives for 'Science on a Sphere' and to construct a narrative about the impact of climate change on the arctic for middle school tours of their facility



## CoLab Example #2

### Amazing Stories: Investigating UMBC's Coslet-Sapienza Fantasy and Science Fiction Fanzine Collection



- 3 Undergraduates (Media & Communication Studies/Gender & Women's + Sexuality Studies, Computer Science, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)
- Worked with Special Collections to highlight an underused collection to community of science fiction fans in the Baltimore area, and academics interested in underground publications
- Wrote a collaborative history of the collection, three individual research projects, and three digital stories, all of which are featured the website they built for the library: <https://umbcspecialcollections.omeka.net/>

# The CoLab Initiative

- Background
- Key Features
- Structure
- Compensation and Funding
- Assessment
- Project Links and Call for Participants 2020

# 2013 - Campus Strategic Plan

- Updated University Vision Statement
- Creation of the Interdisciplinary Activities Advisory Committee (IAAC)

Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.

- 2017 - IACC Submits Interdisciplinary CoLab Program Proposal to Provost identifying Summer/Winter Programs, and The Dresher Center for the Humanities as partners
- 2018 - CoLab Pilot - (3 CoLabs, 9 students)
- 2019 - CoLab Round 2 (3 CoLabs, 13 students)
- 2020 - CoLab Round 3 (Currently soliciting applicants (5 CoLabs, 15 students))

# Key Features:

- Interdisciplinary Student Teams
  - Cross disciplines and colleges
  - Selected based on interest, skills, merit, and desired team composition
- Narrative Based Research
  - Humanities based outward facing research products for 'clients'

## CoLab Structure

- First 4 weeks of summer session, 30 hours a week internship
- Project leaders - 10 hours a week of hands-on guidance
- CoLab teams complete work for 'clients' - websites, brochures, videos, etc.
- Final presentation for community partners (past, present, and hopefully future), participant friends and families, and larger campus community

# Common Core Activities for All CoLabs

- First Week Presenters
  - Professional Behavior, Collaboration, Narrative Based Research, Research Ethics, Digital Storytelling
- Weekly debriefing and reflection sessions

# Compensation and Funding

- Students are compensated with tuition remission for a three credit internship course and a \$3000 stipend.
- Project leaders are compensated with a \$5000 stipend (\$3500 each if co-lead)
- The project is supported through the Provost's office with future funding opportunities being explored and negotiated



# Assessment of Student Learning

- We compared program goals essays with final learning analyses to assess: interdisciplinary collaboration and narrative-based research skills, student confidence in these skills - as a measure of metacognitive learning
- Project Leaders assessed student learning across the 4 weeks as well
- Focus group and anonymous survey to gather details about program experience, learning, and recommendations for improvement
- RESULTS - A profound learning experience and substantial growth in confidence in narrative research, collaborative, and technical skills.

# Assessment of Faculty Experience

- Anonymous survey to collect feedback from Project Leaders.
- RESULTS - Excellent, engaged teaching experience for faculty, each of whom would participate again or recommend to colleagues.

## Completed and Upcoming Community Partners

- 2018 - <https://iaac.umbc.edu/summer-2018-projects/>
- 2019 - <https://iaac.umbc.edu/summer-2019-projects/>
- Zion Church of the City of Baltimore
- German American Cultural Center
- Baltimore Immigration Museum
- UMBC Sustainability Office and Climate Action Steering Committee
- The Center for Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) and Art of Transformation (AoT) in Baltimore
- The Baltimore Jazz Alliance
- Baltimore Green Space

Discussion Question #4

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM, ITS STRUCTURE, SUSTAINABILITY, SUCCESSES, LIMITS, AND CHALLENGE?

Discussion Question #5

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES  
RELATED TO INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION  
AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL?

Discussion Question #6

WHAT DOES UNDERGRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH LOOK LIKE ON YOUR CAMPUS? WHAT INITIATES AND/OR SUPPORT ARE AVAILABLE FOR SUCH ENDEAVORS?

Discussion Question #7

HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES UTILIZE NARRATIVE-BASED RESEARCH TO COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS? WHAT EXAMPLES HAVE SUCCEEDED AT YOUR HOME INSTITUTIONS?

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