Go Climb a Rock: Becoming an Active Learner
in a Geology Learning Community of the 21st Century
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Goal of our Geology Learning Community is to incorporate as many high impact practices (as defined by the AAC&U’s LEAP Initiative) in the classroom and beyond as possible to enhance student success. Our Geology First-Year Learning Community was initiated in 2012. Current focus of the learning community is on high impact practices such as diversity and global learning as well as collaborative assignments and projects. In addition, Essential Learning Outcomes (as defined by LEAP) are addressed to maximize student success.

Introduction

Our First Year Learning Community
Triad G consists of a 50-100-seat Physical Geology lecture, Geology labs (21 students/section) and First-Year Seminar (25 students/section). Triad G students include Geology and Environmental Science majors.

AAC&U’s LEAP Initiative: High Impact Practices
Within our learning community we strive to incorporate high impact practices as defined by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) emphasizing the bolded practices listed below.

• First-Year Seminars and Experiences
• Common Intellectual Experiences
• Learning Communities
• Writing-Intensive Courses
• Undergraduate Research
• Collaborative Assignments and Projects
• Diversity and Global Learning
• Service Learning and Community-Based Learning
• Internships
• Capstone Courses and Projects

AAC&U’s LEAP Initiative: Essential Learning Outcomes

• Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
• Intellectual and Practical Skills
• Personal and Social Responsibility
• Integrative and Applied Learning

Our Approach – Path to Active Learning

1. Build foundational knowledge outside of the classroom: Blackboard Assignments
   - BASIC
   - INTERMEDIATE
   - ADVANCED

   Fig. 1 Drag and Drop Exercises
   Fig. 2 Interpretation of Graphs
   Fig. 3 Study and Interpretation of Current Geologic Topics

2. Apply foundational knowledge from the course to new settings: Geology of the World Portfolio

   Fig. 4 World Map depicting areas of study assigned to students (red dots).

Success = Team Effort

Student that Rocks!

Conclusion
In our Learning Community, we encourage active learning. By doing so, we anticipate our students will become more responsible and critical learners. By focusing on high impact practices and the Essential Learning Outcomes, we can be more intentional about the skills we expect our students to use and develop. We hope that our approach to active learning will help our students be more successful, not only in their major courses, but also in courses across the core curriculum. In addition, by aligning our outcomes with the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, we feel that our students will be better prepared to enter the global workforce.