

FlyerEd Episode 02: Capitalizing on CAP with Dr. Michelle Pautz Transcript

- Hey everyone, Kent here from the Office of E-Learning and this episode is a FlyerEd Podcast. I sit down with Michelle Pautz, Assistant Provost for the CAP program at the University of Dayton to discuss the unique traits of the CAP program that set it apart from more traditional Gen-Ed curriculums, the effect the backwards design has on student outcomes, and favorite pizza toppings. Alright, let's get to it. Okay, this is the Flyer Ed podcast and I am here with Michelle Pautz. Michelle, can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Your career at Dayton or your career beforehand?

- Sure, and thanks for having me. I am an Associate Professor of Political Science and I am the Assistant Provost for our Common Academic Program. I've been at UD since fall of 2008. In a prior role to at UD I was the director of our Master of Public Administration program.

- And what led you to teach in political science or even the Common Academic Program?

- So political science, I've always, since I was a little kid, been into politics and government. I have long been a fan of the West Wing.

- Oh nice.

- Series, so in school, as an undergraduate, I studied economics and I studied political science and I stayed with the political side of things, government. More specifically the study of government in graduate school and then I have always been passionate about how government works and how government can be a force for positive change.

- Yeah.

- And so helping other students find passion in the public sector and find their paths forward in the public sector.

- Cool and how about the Common Academic Program? How did you get there?

- Sure, so the Common Academic Program, of course, or CAP is our approach to Gen Ed at UD, but it's a bit of a misnomer because it's much more than Gen Ed. I don't know what your experience was with Gen Ed, mine back in the day was a lot of intro courses that weren't connected at all and I didn't really understand, I just wanted to take political science classes. Here, for the Common Academic Program, are foundational courses like that, but there are also advanced courses beyond that introductory level that expose you to the depth and breadth of areas of study beyond their own majors, integrate their majors and their major coursework, and it's a very developmental and scaffolded approach, in that your introductory courses build into your crossing boundaries courses which build into your advanced studies courses, all along parallel tracks, all four years or five years at UD, not just something you do in year one to be done with.

- Right, so it sounds like a very purposeful interdisciplinary experience that all students get.

- All of our students, regardless of whether or not they are students in the professional schools or students in the College of Arts and Sciences, all have these common experiences. So you find a Flyer alumni somewhere around the globe, since CAP has been in place, they've all had those same experiences, and CAP was designed by the faculty. We're in our sixth year of implementation of CAP, but it was when the faculty got together and said our gen ed approach, this cafeteria model of intro courses isn't working, it isn't serving the needs of our students anymore.

- Wow, very cool. And what outcomes have you seen from CAP thus far?

- Sure, so again, we're still early, I like to say CAP is off to Kindergarten, about six, right? What we're seeing is real creativity in faculty, creating learning experiences for our students that CAP affords them, sort of the elbow room to do. Our students take four different Crossing Boundaries courses, for example, which by definition, cross disciplinary boundaries, and some of the cool classes that faculty have worked together in very formal ways with colleagues, so there is some team teaching, and some just building on the knowledge of other faculty to pull together a course that is exciting for the faculty member, which often translates to a very exciting learning experience. We all know it's better to teach something that you're really into than be less into.

- And so, in the CAP program have you guys discovered any teaching hacks that the professor of a course that's maybe not necessarily connected to the CAP program might be able to use in their course anyway?

- I think having a good awareness of the different components of CAP, and how it fits into all of our students' time at UD helps us understand and say, and I find myself in the political science classes I teach now and some of them are CAP classes as well. Being able to say, okay, so in your Social Science 200

course, you talked about this, I know you did, so let's build on that, and maybe it's a, oh, I don't remember. Oh yeah! When you start getting into it, I think CAP provides such a foundation for our students that we can do much more in the classroom. I'm not sure if that really gets to your question about teaching hacks per se but I think helping students, and being explicit about those connections is an essential part of what we do as faculty.

- Right, so well as a good teaching technique, recalling that prior knowledge is always a good thing to do. It sounds here that CAP, the cool part about it is that it provides everyone with a common foundation so that the professor in physics or the professor in theology can recall this common foundation that everyone has. So definitely that's one cool teaching hack that we can certainly call upon. Can you think of any other things that have been discovered through the interdisciplinary pieces of CAP that might enable professors in the non-CAP courses to, I don't know, succeed or are there any little techniques that you guys have seen come out of the program?

- Sure, I mean that I think, you know, you would be better off talking to some of the faculty pairs who put together some really exciting courses.

- Sure.

- One of the things too, I think, that's been really valuable about CAP is faculty who teach courses that are approved for CAP and want to continue to have those courses approved for CAP are making great strides in tracking, okay, this is going into this course, this is what I want my students to learn. I mean that's why we are all here. And so there is a formal assessment piece of CAP that we're getting off the ground where faculty are being very intentional and say, whoa, I teach an environmental policy course that is also CAP approved. I want my students to learn these three things, how am I going to make sure and track that they're learning that? And if it doesn't go so great because some semesters, I know sometimes my semesters aren't as good as I want them to be either. What do I need to adjust, how do I calibrate, what do I do differently in the future?

- Right, so it sounds like there is some backwards design that goes into some of these classes, and then even iterative design so that they'll build upon what they've learned and try to improve the courses over time.

- The other thing about CAP that I think is worth pointing out in this facet of conversation is the community aspect of it. So typically we all teach our own class, maybe we work with people in our department, or there is some, within a department coordination about content and pedagogy and so forth. But outside of your department, historically, there has not been a lot of approval, communication, just conversation about that learning, and while each unit has their own curricular approval processes

beyond the department, CAP, if you want your course to be approved for CAP, it goes to a university wide committee with representation from across campus, and there is conversation. Your course goals and what you hope your students are gonna learn get published to the entire campus community. So we are sort of opening up that conversation. We talk so much about community, we live so much community here at UD. This is another facet of that learning community in just getting a sense of what other faculty are teaching, what the students are learning, and I frequently find myself going, so that class just got approved for CAP, can I fit that into my schedule, can I go? When is that gonna be offered? Because I think it's just amazing.

- What we seem to be able to learn from CAP here, is that treat your course as if it's part of a larger experience.

- It is part of a larger experience, and what students are learning in Social Science 200 or Comm 100 is going to be built on, not only in major courses, but also in CAP courses, and culminating in all of our students' experiences and their capstones.

- And have you seen that affect the students positively then too?

- I think so. This fall have just launched our first survey of students about their experiences and attitudes about CAP and we are still very, we have just closed down the survey so I have nothing to report about what students said, but I'm very eager as a social scientist to dig into the data we have gotten from first year students and fourth year students about their experiences with CAP.

- Well we look forward to hearing about that. Okay, well last question. What is your favorite pizza topping?

- My favorite pizza topping? I really like brussels sprouts and caramelized onions, actually.

- Interesting. That sounds awesome. I love brussels sprouts and caramelized onions, so cool. I'll have to try that sometime. Thanks Michelle, we really appreciate your time here.

- Thanks for the invitation.

- Well that's it for this episode. I would like to thank Michelle Pautz for appearing on the program. It was a lot of fun to learn about how a strategically designed common experience is transforming the university for the better. I also found a new pizza topping that I'm pretty pumped to try. The background song, Let It In, was provided by Josh Woodward. You can find more of his work at joshwoodward.com. Thanks for listening and until next time, Go Flyers.