CPR Self-Study Workshop 3: Retreats

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❯ Retreats – Why have them? How to make them useful? (How to make them not be terrible…)

❯ Guest speakers to support a retreat

- **Angela Clark**, Academic Integrity Specialist
- **Yelin Su**, Teaching Commons
- **Sheril Hook**, Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning, York University Libraries

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A retreat: Not just an "extra long staff meeting with lunch"

MEETING

> Regular business

RETREAT

> A "step back" from regular business to focus on big(ger) picture items

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The goal of any retreat is to:

PROBLEM SOLVE

BUILD COMMUNITY

LEAVE WITH A GREATER SENSE OF VISION, COMMITMENT, AND UNITY FOR MOVING FORWARD

These are not goals of a staff meeting

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> The idea is to harness the **collective creativity** of your faculty to address problems.
>
> A retreat is simply a mechanism to solve your problems together as a group and **take advantage of the diverse experiences and knowledge** of your group and to focus everyone's attention on the issue for a short period of time.
>
> Unfortunately, this is anathema in many academic cultures where suspicions of hidden agendas and backroom deals sometimes abound..

Dr. E. Scott Bair (2004) "Advancing By Retreating"

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A retreat: Not just an "extra long staff meeting with lunch"

MEETING

- Regular business

> If you go into your planning like this ➜ you can/may shift away from planning a long staff meeting

RETREAT

❯ A "step back" from regular business to focus on big(ger) picture items

❯ Problem solve, build community, leave with a greater sense of vision, commitment, and unity for moving forward

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"The purpose of a retreat is to tap the collective insight, creativity, and energy of your colleagues"
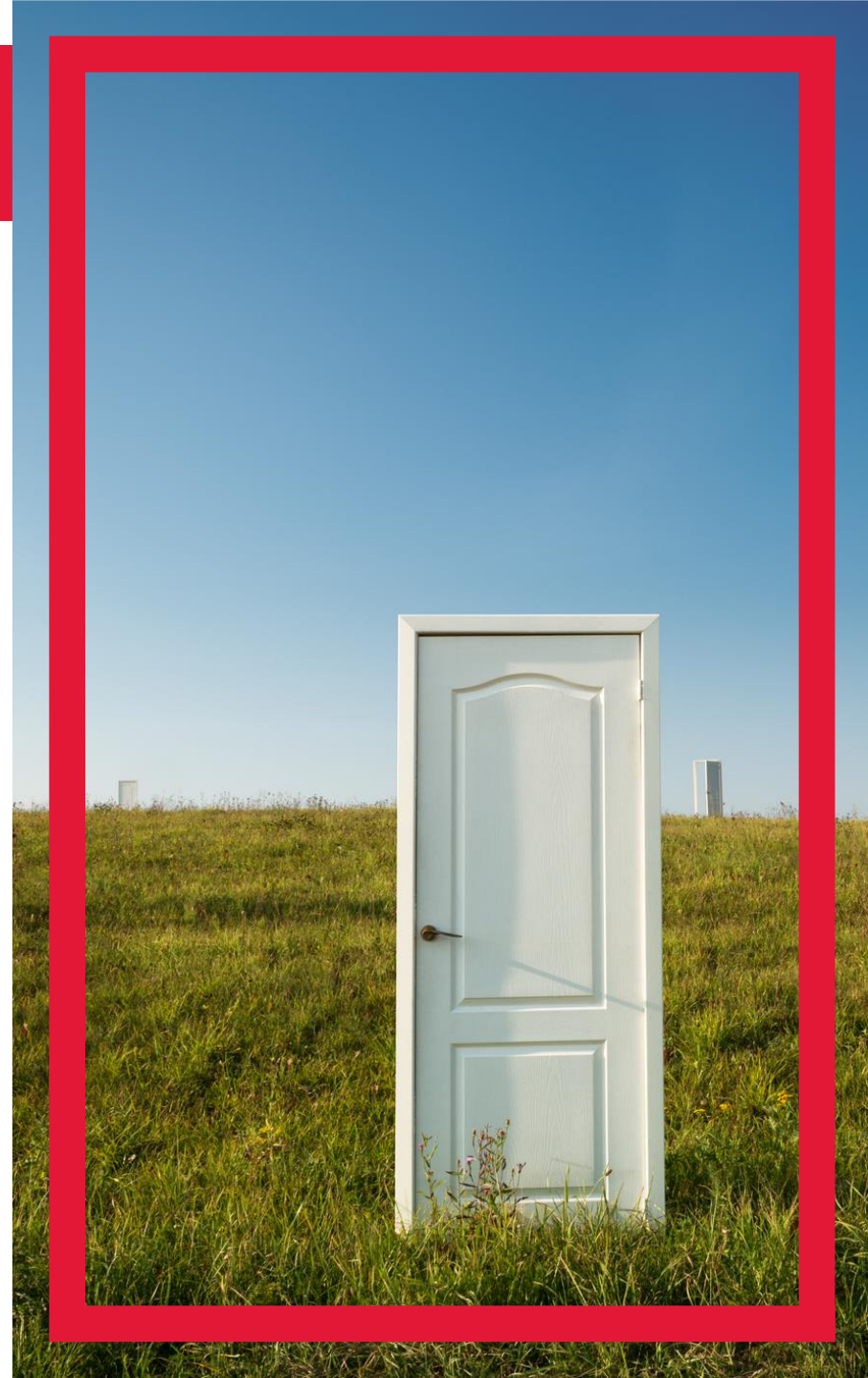
DR. E. SCOTT BAIR (2004) "ADVANCING BY RETREATING"

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Four Tips for Developing Your Retreat

Tip 1 – Change things up

- Create a difference atmosphere than a regular faculty meeting
- Develop an agenda that doesn't focus on regular business
- Think of where there can be (safe) creativity

Tip 1 – Change things up
STRATEGIES

Meet in a different spot than your regular meeting rooms

Have food and drinks

Book a specialist/guest speaker/facilitator

Create a different type of agenda than "Business/Lunch/Business"

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# Tip 1 – Change things up
STRATEGIES

Set up expectations beforehand

"Advancing by Retreating"

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"**Advancing by Retreating**" suggests:

❯ Prepare and distribute (a week before the retreat) an Overview Document that contains:
- A statement of purpose
- The agenda
- Logistics and location maps if needed
- Any preliminary assignments
- Data to be presented at the retreat
- Other materials as necessary

❯ The document has three important purposes:
- It serves as your strategic game plan.
- It presents the framework for the retreat.
- It documents your level of commitment for the faculty to see.

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Tip 2 – Have a clear goal(s)

- Overall goals: *Problem solve, build community, leave with a greater sense of vision, commitment, and unity for moving forward*
- Define purpose with specific goals that shape the agenda
- Recognize/define steps to meet specific goals
- Check overall goals with discrete steps
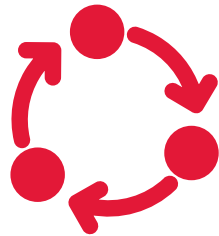
Tip 2 – Have a clear goal(s)
STRATEGIES

Be specific

Don't over schedule

"Determine the purpose [of the retreat]. Figure out what items can be managed best in a retreat setting and what agenda items can be handled in the normal course of business" (Fraser Consulting, LLC)

What would be the best possible outcome for all of us coming together?
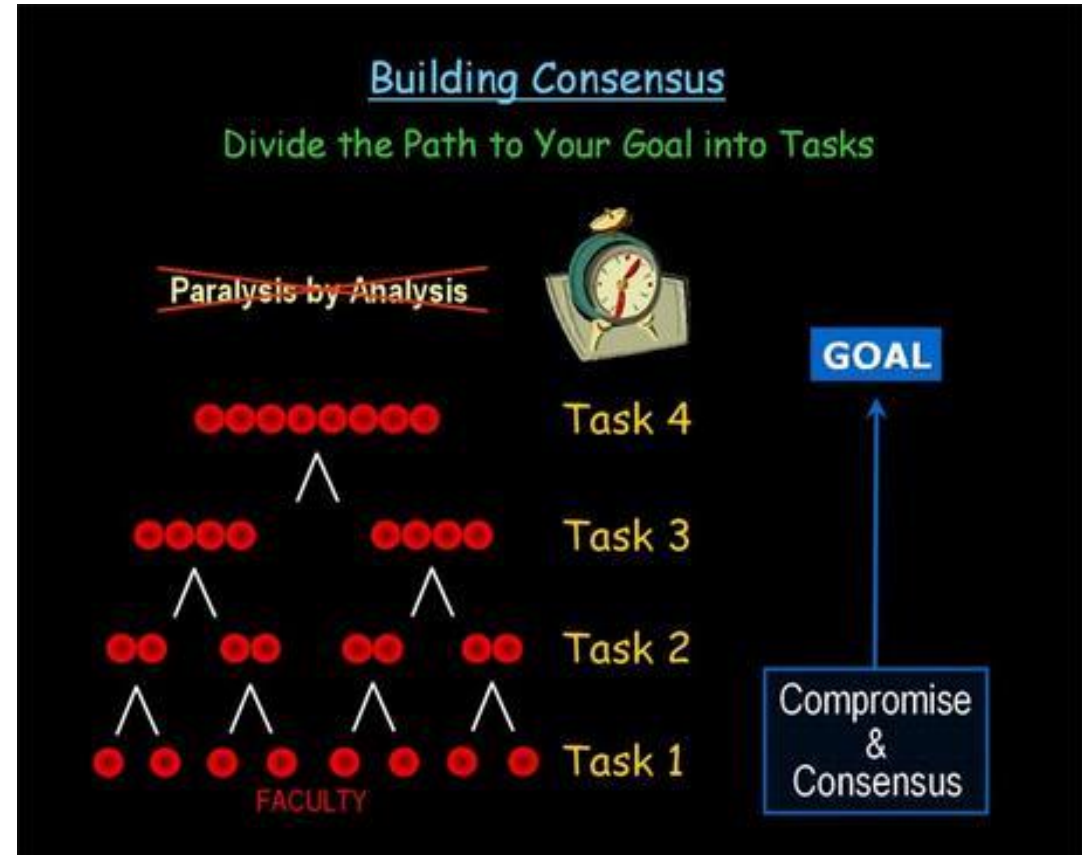
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Tip 2 – Have a clear goal(s)
STRATEGIES

Build consensus

"Advancing by Retreating"

"Advancing by Retreating" suggests:

> One strategy to promote compromise and build consensus is to divide the path to your goal into tasks.

> With the completion of each task, combine two sub-groups so that each successive task is addressed by a larger group.

> This will facilitate compromise within each group as it becomes larger and build consensus as you move toward your goal.


Building Consensus
Divide the Path to Your Goal into Tasks
Paralysis by Analysis
Task 4
Task 3
Task 2
Task 1
FACULTY
GOAL
Compromise & Consensus

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Tip 3 – Make it personal, but not too personal

Make it personal

> Recognize difficult work everyone engages in

> Who are the individuals in the room?

But not too personal

> Ensure everyone is comfortable sharing or that the space is comfortable for sharing (anonymous?)

> Clear boundaries with a plan for dealing with blocks/conflicts
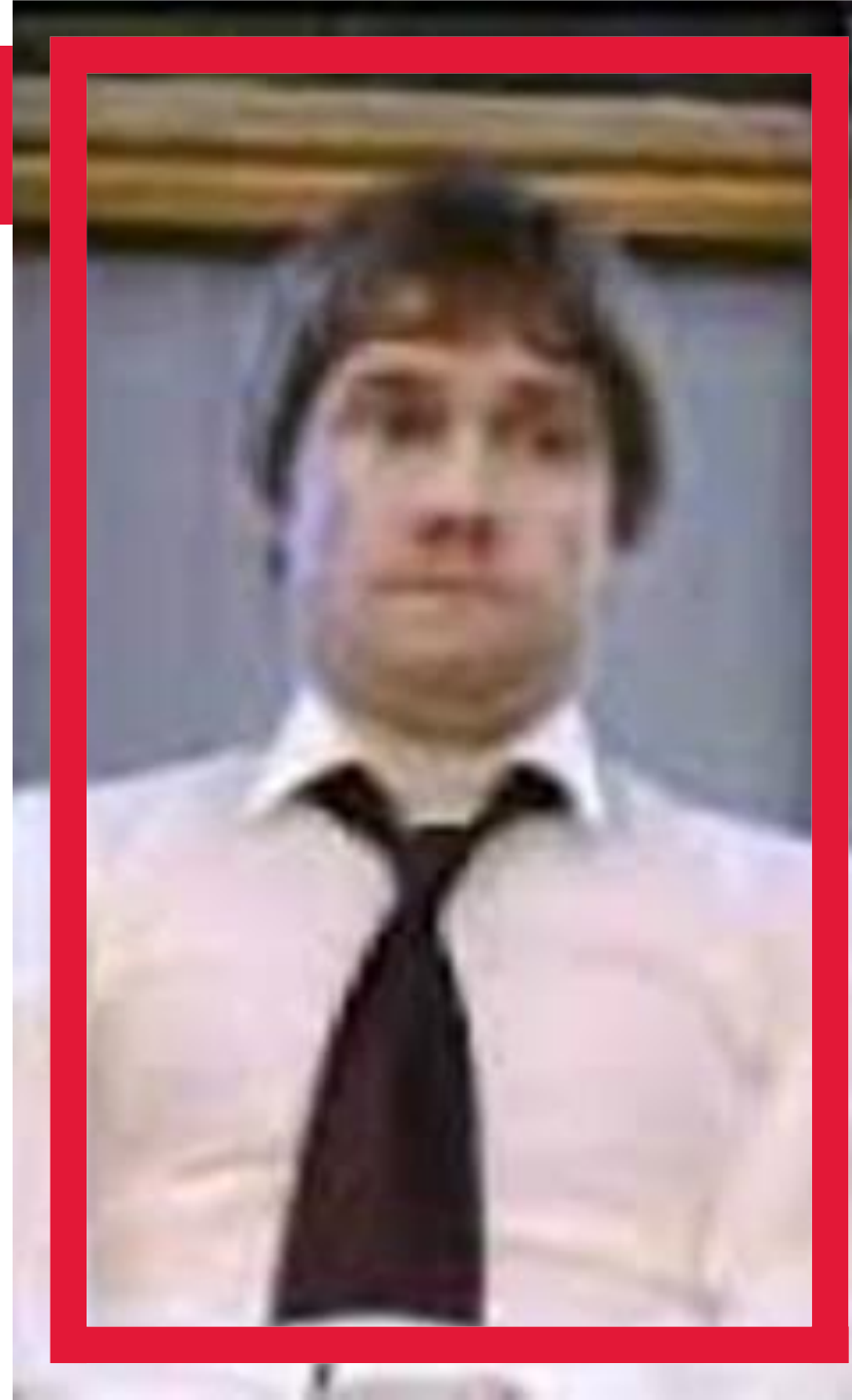
Tip 3 – Make it personal, but not too personal
STRATEGIES

Make it personal

Ensure new/adjunct faculty is properly introduced

Begin with a rewards moment: Teaching special moment or publications or conferences or personal milestones

Coffee break potluck

"Where would you rather be?"

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Tip 3 – Make it personal, but not too personal
STRATEGIES

📢 Allow for venting

> **Venting** – necessary to share frustrations
> **"Bitching"** – to stay in frustrations
> **Meditative deliberation** – patiently explore not just for a 'solution' but to understand dimension of 'problem'

"Advancing by Retreating"

\- Cutrara (2020)

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"Advancing by Retreating" suggests:

> Facilitate early venting by holding a preliminary discussion that enables the release of their pent up issues.

> Consider putting a recent pedagogical article and a recent trade journal article about the state of your discipline in the Overview Document. Have faculty read them before the retreat and make the very first agenda item a discussion of what they and their roommate or partner see as the salient points.

> Usually this permits all the venting that is needed and the remainder of the retreat can proceed unimpeded by excessive accumulation of gas. **So vent early, NOT often.**

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Tip 4 – Know your audience

> Who are the people in your program? What are their personalities like? How do they interact? What are the ways the see themselves/their courses/their research in relationship to the program?

> Don't set up a situation in which people will actively reject/refuse

> Create situations where people can equally participate

Tip 4 – Know your audience
STRATEGIES

Don't plan activities that your colleagues will be uncomfortable with participating in

Ensure everyone will be able to participate

Don't *rely* on "pre-work"

New and adjunct non-tenure-track faculty assigned to scribe/presenter to encourage participation (Siow et al. 2019. "A Faculty Retreat Model...")

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> If you take the time to plan your retreat, design it around a specific goal, provide a comfortable atmosphere that promotes sharing ideas and compromise, throw in a little levity among the angst, and hand out the words to Kum-Bye Ya, you all can sing happily ever after about the fun and productive retreat you took... Okay, you can at least try to harmonize together until the next major issue arises.
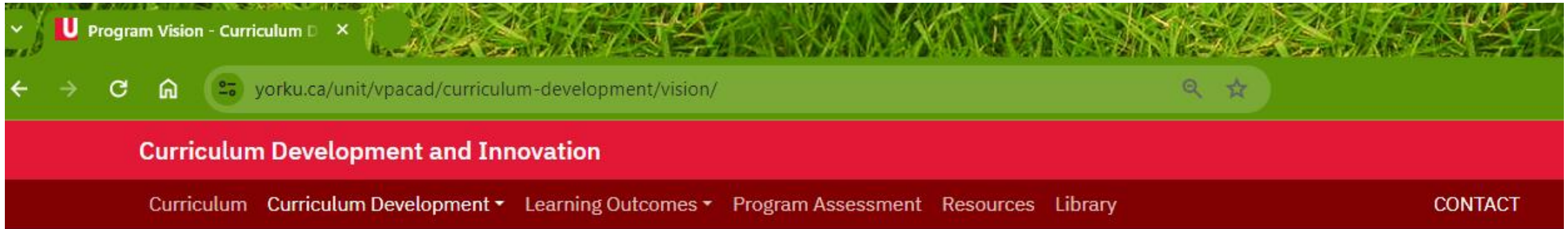
Dr. E. Scott Bair (2004) "Advancing By Retreating"

23

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Sample Agendas/
Activities

Sample Agenda – Winter

- 9:15   Coffee and roundtable sharing highlight of the term
- 9:45   Introduction to the CPR process
- 10:00   Discussion of CPR
  - What has been done so far. What needs to be done. Schedule. Any elements of snapshot we want to ensure are in there.
- 11:00   Activity/Discussion: Program vision and objectives
  - What are they? How are we ensuring they are on track? What do we want from our *program*? Program outcomes – What are they? What do we want from our graduates?
- 12:15   Catered lunch
- 1:00   Discussion: Assignments
  - What assignments have worked well this year? What are the ways we can ensure students are progressing through the courses?
- 2:00   Potluck coffee break
- 2:30   Academic Integrity in the program (*Guest speaker)
- 3:15   Potluck coffee break part 2
- 3:30   Discussion of program outcomes and assessment
  - How do we want to consolidate these conversations?
- 4:15   Good bye!

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Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6-8

Individual Thinking

Before coming together as a group, ask program proponents to dream the biggest dream they have about this program and articulate the content, skills, and values that would be part of this dream.

Ask them to write this down - specifying content, skills, and values - and be prepared to share their thinking (although not necessarily the document) when the group meets together.

Tips

- This step would ideally be completed *before* coming together in workshop. However, if this is not able to happen, ensure people know ahead of time that this question will be asked and invite them to do some individual thinking ahead of time.
- While program development usually centres faculty members' ideas, dreams about the program can also be solicited by students, staff, alumni, community members, businesses, and other stakeholders. How might these ideas be gathered ahead of a curriculum development meeting?

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6-8 |

Group Discussion

Bring program proponents together as a group. Have a discussion about the *future* graduates of this program be entering.

- What is the world they will contribute to?
- How will they be a leader in this world?

Tips

- In this initial discussion, focus less on the program and more on the environment that alumni of the program will be part of following graduation. This creates a common view for post-graduation that the program should work toward.

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

| Step 1 | Step 2 | **Step 3** | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6-8 |

Sharing Ideas

Using a visual brainstorming tool such as Jamboard, ask proponents to add their individual thoughts developed in Step 1 to a shared space related to what students should know, do, and value by the end of the program. We've provided a template here.

Before contributing to the communal list, invite individuals to edit or revise their ideas to reflect the group discussion on the future alumni will be part of.

Tips

- This activity could be done in person using post-it notes. It could also be done as a "graffiti" activity, where people walk around and write their thoughts in designated stations with the "know," "do," and "value" headings. The key aspect of this step is that individual contributions all come together in one communal place. It works even better when individual ideas can be moved around on paper or virtually.
- Note that while this step brings everyone's ideas together, it is beneficial at this stage for individual contributions to be anonymous. It creates an even playing field for contributions and ensures everyone's thoughts can be part of the whole.

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | **Step 4** | Step 5 | Step 6-8 |

Grouping Themes

With the thoughts of all individuals shared in one place, group together shared ideas, themes, and/or concepts. Maybe even name these groups to demonstrate their connections.

You can also identity unique ideas or outliers or ones that reflect the conversation about the future.

The goal of this step is to bring pattern to everyone's thinking and demonstrate commonalities, repetitions, and shared commitments that will become foundational to the program you're developing.

Tips

- This sorting and naming step can be done by the group, but it could be also done by one designated member of the group *or* by a third party, such as curriculum support from the Vice Provost Academic Office or Teaching Commons. An outside set of eyes may see curricular patterns that experts in the field wouldn't notice right away.(1)
- While you are doing this grouping and sorting, ensure that nothing is deleted. Some ideas or concepts won't be as prominent as others, but these can be part of its own group that can be reassessed at anytime.

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

| Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 | Step 4 | Step 5 | Step 6-8 |

Reviewing Brainstorm

As a group, take a look at the groupings of ideas, themes, and/or concepts and assess whether they reflect the content and skills that people envisioned as part of this program.

- Does it make sense to name these groupings? Name them?
- Are things missing from the groupings? Add them in!
- Are the valued elements of the vision of the program included? Ensure they are highlighted!

Review York University's priorities and commitments, especially related to decolonization, sustainability, anti-racism, experiential learning, internationalization, and others.

- Are these reflected in your groups?
- How can they be more integrated?

These thematic grouping can act as a useful concept organizing for curriculum design.

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	**Step 6-8**

Decide what is the best next step for you

Steps 1-5 ensured that everyone could contribute to the dreams of your program and that these dreams could be organized for further use. This work is the foundation for your program development.

Depending on how the groupings and discussions went, you can do one of three things next. All three need to be completed, but one step might be more logical for you to start with:

1. Begin to design the curricular elements of your program (i.e. defining the Learning Outcomes, credits, and courses)
2. Research curricular innovations, market trends, and student data and include these as into the notes related to your program. York's Office of Institutional Planning and Analysis (OIPA) can support some of this work.
3. Write a vision statement for your program that reflects your dream. This could be an internal vision shared amongst faculty and/or a vision that will become public and articulates the program objectives.

As you work through these three elements, explore how they work together and will modify and revise the other. This iterative process of curricular exploration is important in developing a sound, forward-thinking curriculum that represents the values shared within the program.

https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/curriculum-development/vision/

Sample Agenda – Spring

- 9:15   Coffee and sharing any idealized summer plans
- 9:45   Summary of CPR process to date
- 10:15   Collaborative creation of a work plan for completion
- 10:45   Coffee and **data**
- 11:00   **Discussion of data**
- 12:00   Catered lunch
- 1:00   **Breakout groups analyzing and writing data summary**
- 2:15   Outside coffee break and discussion of program's future
- 3:00   Good bye!

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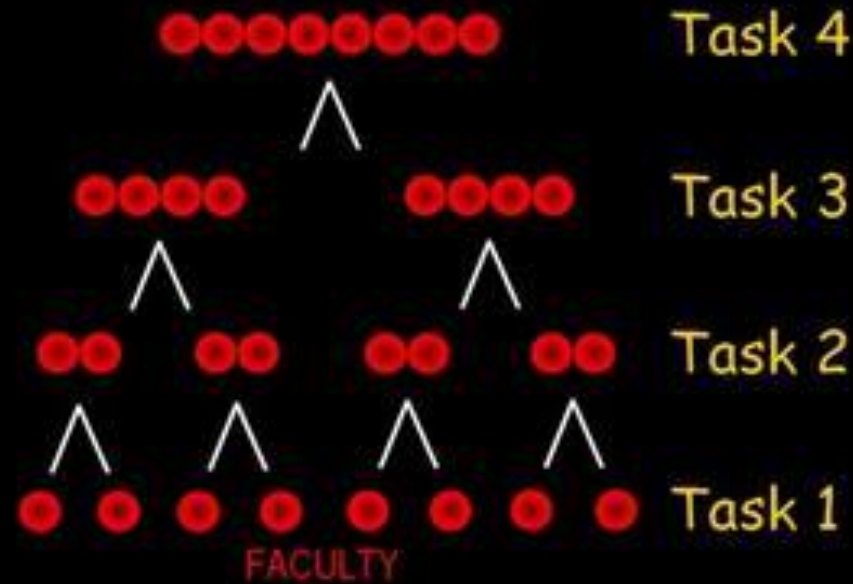
Guest Speakers

GUEST SPEAKERS:

> **Angela Clark**, Academic Integrity Specialist, Office of the Vice Provost Academic

> **Yelin Su**, Educational Developer, Teaching Commons

> **Sheril Hook**, Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning, York University Libraries

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