ATTW 2019 Proposal

This panel develops accountability as a means to a deeply sustainable programmatic perspective (Schreiber & Melonçon, 2018). While Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) has spent considerable time thinking of program sustainability through assessment (e.g., Allen & Hundleby, 2010; Coppola et al, 2017), Schreiber and Melonçon provided a model for continuous programmatic improvement that looked beyond assessment to incorporate the views and considerations of a variety of stakeholders. Their model affords program administrators and faculty a holistic approach. However, Schreiber and Melonçon's model, while useful as a programmatic tool, lacks detailed attention to the connections between the stakeholders.

This panel introduces the "programmatic network" to foreground connections between stakeholders that are material to programmatic sustainability. Each presentation highlights specific connections--program, course, staffing, and field--within the larger programmatic network. Once visualized, the connections between stakeholders can be leveraged to increase programmatic accountability and sustainability.

1. Program Outcomes: Accountability Beyond Assessment

This presentation focuses on the program level of the programmatic network. Commonly, programmatic outcomes are used for assessment, a forensic process in which student work is analyzed to assess whether the program is meeting its goals. To consider program outcomes only at the terminus of the programmatic workflow does not provide administrators with a reflexive means to foster adaptive revision of programs. However, multiple stakeholder groups can be enrolled in the programmatic network to build in critical reflexivity at all stages of program administration.

An example presents a program that constructed a stakeholder network encompassing faculty, administrators, alumni, and industry professionals to both analyze and develop program outcomes, thereby reframing linear, top-down program design into a model based on ongoing dialogue. Enrolling an extended stakeholder network is vital to development of a sustainable program, affording accountability that can be enacted reciprocally throughout the administrative process, from outcome development through assessment.

2. Unifying Program and Course Goals with Curricular Expectations

This presentation examines the connection between program goals and course outcomes by employing curricular expectations that identify criteria that all courses within a program should incorporate. By making explicit for faculty what the program valued and what each course needed to emphasize, curricular expectations connect the key stakeholders of faculty and students within the programmatic network.

An example shows how a course in New Media was shifted to one in Digital Rhetoric. Mapping three specific curricular expectations to onto two specific course goals tied course goals concretely to classroom activities and assignments, allowing students to see how the Digital Rhetoric course related to their degree program. This example illustrates how course outcomes and programmatic goals can reflect and inform one another to unify courses within a program and with program objectives, providing both students and faculty a more holistic understanding of how individual courses fit within a degree program.

3. Facilitating Faculty and Sustainability through Critical Reflexivity

This presentation focuses on connections between faculty, professional development, and course outcomes as key components of the programmatic network. Because TPC programs comprise diverse faculty, administrators are challenged to facilitate all professionalization needs (Melonçon, 2017). In moving toward accountability as sustainability, TPC program administrators can incorporate professional development opportunities emphasizing critical reflexivity.

For example, professional development workshops could include a session introducing the concept of pedagogical reflection as a technique that engenders more mindful practices. In the session, faculty examine a specific assignment sequence that includes the student-facing assignment, as well as instructor-facing apparatus such as optional writing tasks and classroom discussions. The instructor-facing apparatus guides faculty in the process of pedagogical reflection, connecting their classroom activities to course and program goals, and to future lessons or assignments. These skills are transferable between courses, enabling faculty to consistently improve their practices through critical reflexivity. As this example demonstrates, accountability is realized by allowing instructors time to reflect on their own practices can enable a more sustainable program.

4. Sustainable Identity: Connecting Field and Program

A key aspect of the programmatic network is the often overlooked connection to the field's identity. TPC situates its identity at the field level, emphasizing a concern for both academic and professional trends across the nation. However, this presentation highlights the key connections between faculty and best practices at the field-wide level, as well as professional best practices in our home departments. While TPC has long been concerned with ensuring that curricula align with managerial expectations, an equally enduring concern has been the problem of establishing connections between academic programs and field-wide trends.

This presentation will provide specific field-level data on skills and competencies, aligning these data with both the local context and other academic programs. These data show the importance of connecting academic and professional stakeholders, which moves toward ensuring that students leave our programs prepared to be successful citizens and professionals. Using field-wide data helps hold programs accountable to each other and the field, ensuring the sustainability of both.