



University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2014 WINNER



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Trailblazing With Wikipedia: Improving Student Learning and Easing Implementation

Innovation Description

Editing Wikipedia allows students to transmit the knowledge they are gaining to real-world audiences beyond U-M. However, crafting assignments that promote effective student learning and meaningful collaboration, while also respecting Wikipedia's rules and style conventions, can present a daunting challenge.

Fortunately, instructors no longer have to "go it alone" or "reinvent the wheel," thanks to the pioneering efforts of Prof. McNeil and her GSIs, who began creating Wikipedia class projects in two graduate level-courses (CHEM 538 and 540) in 2008. After further course iterations, their body of experience was parlayed into national and local structures that facilitate other instructors' effective use of this teaching strategy.

At the national level, the Wikipedia Education Program is home to a vigorous online community eager to help instructors incorporate Wikipedia assignments into their teaching. The website also serves as a storehouse of instructional videos and sample syllabi, including materials from McNeil.

Locally, a support network of trained Wikipedia Ambassadors at U-M can minimize instructors' start-up costs and ease implementation of Wikipedia class projects. For example, students can be trained to edit Wikipedia by either the Michigan Wikipedians student organization or Ye Li, a university science librarian.

Comments

"The support received was vital to the success of the pages we edited."

"This project provides a great opportunity for STEM students to practice [the skill of] conveying scientific material to a general audience."

"I feel much more confident communicating difficult chemistry topics to nonchemists."

Being required to create figures for the Wikipedia entry "teach[es] students how to clearly summarize and supplement the text in a way that will draw a viewer into the article."

The "round of peer reviews" during which "classmates verify new content for accuracy and clarity...is a great opportunity for classmates to learn how to critique each other in a productive way."

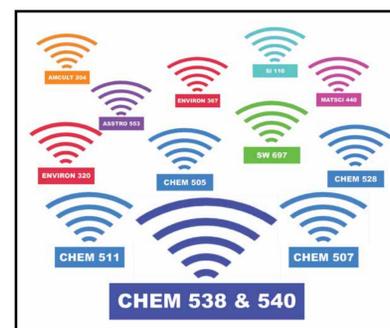
"The team aspect helps students prepare for real world experiences where collaboration is very important."

"The logistics and timeline of the project were well organized."

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Input from McNeil and GSI Cheryl Moy helped shape the Wikipedia Education Program, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Education_program.



A strong support network has enabled this innovation to scale up significantly, spreading throughout chemistry to other LSA departments, as well as to other U-M schools (information, social work) and colleges (engineering).



Michigan Wikipedians and Science Librarian Ye Li are invaluable resources. Ye's 45-minute, in-class presentation covers not just editing Wikipedia, but avoiding copyright infringement, identifying diverse resources, and following community etiquette.