Supporting Developmental Relationships with Coaching Techniques in a Design Capstone Course

Cindy V. Beacham, Ph.D.

West Virginia University

Most contemporary academic programs include a final capstone course that requires students to analyze and synthesize skills and knowledge acquired throughout their program of study. In some programs, students are also tasked with showing their ability to individualize their learning and apply concepts to different professional contexts. Often students in more individualized programs need additional guidance to “make the content their own”. This need, however, is sometimes overlooked in the course design because of student numbers, time, and other confounding factors. Building developmental relationships can address the individual needs of students and provide additional guidance for their progress (Kram, 2014). Including processes within the course design to foster these developmental relationships can assure that individual student needs are considered. Coaching, or “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (ICF, 2015), is one such process. This presentation illustrates a proposal to integrate a Transformational Coaching Model (Hawkins & Smith, 2013) into
a design-base capstone course to encourage developmental relationships between students, faculty members and professionals. The presentation will cover proposed design features and identifies potential learning outcomes, benefits, and challenges of this approach.


• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr. Cindy Beacham is a Professor of Design at West Virginia University, where she developed and oversaw the Design Studies program for over a decade. Our world is in desperate need of individuals who can look at issues through new lenses and provide much-needed vision for our future, and Dr. Beacham knows that design thinking provides that skill. She is passionate about providing opportunities for students to develop and refine their design thinking skills, allowing them to create innovative approaches to complex problems within countless contexts. As a design professional, she has been involved in a wide variety of design contexts including corporate design, large-scale project management, academic design research, design pedagogy and design coaching. Her graduate work in interior design, architectural construction management and human development provided her with a holistic view of the impact design has on all parts of our lives and environments. Design can change the world, and Dr. Beacham is committed to teaching students how to impact the future of humanity through design thinking!