

A Living Laboratory: Revitalizing General Education for a 21st Century College of Technology

(2010-2016; P031S100159)

Jonas Reitz (Project Director), Charlie Edwards (Co-Director)

About City Tech

New York City College of Technology (City Tech) is the designated senior college of technology within the 24-campus City University of New York (CUNY). Located in downtown Brooklyn, it serves a diverse student body of more than 17,000 undergraduates in a wide range of professional and technical degree programs.



What is “A Living Laboratory?”

The project (openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/livinglab/)

aimed to address a critical weakness raised in City

Tech’s 2008 Middle States reaccreditation report, which found that students experienced General Education courses as disconnected from their studies in the professional and technical majors, and that faculty in those programs struggled to integrate Gen Ed into their pedagogy. In response, the college designed four interrelated activities that sought to re-envision Gen Ed as a “living laboratory” using City Tech’s signature strengths: the hands-on, experiential models of learning familiar to students and faculty in the majors, and our vibrant Brooklyn Waterfront location. As we describe below, each activity made significant change at the college – change that lives on via the project’s successful institutionalization.

The Living Lab General Education Seminar

Sandra Cheng, Mary Sue Donsky, Karen Goodlad (Co-Directors)

The Seminar enables faculty from across the college to revitalize General Education in their classrooms using high-impact educational practices, place-based learning, and open digital pedagogy. Each year of the grant, interdisciplinary groups of faculty fellows were convened in two seminar programs, for a total of more than 170 participants during the grant period. In the final grant year, we also piloted a new



program in which a cohort of seven fellows implemented change in multisection courses in their departments. Two additional fellows focused on communications, conducting a final Living Lab Symposium and creating an online resource exchange, the Living Lab Learning Library, or L4 (openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/l4), to capture innovative activities developed by participants and others.

The Seminar has been institutionalized as part of the college’s faculty development offerings, and integrated with the assessment cycle for Gen Ed student learning outcomes. We also documented our best practices for faculty development and shared them via a suite of train-the-trainer workshops.

Making an Impact: High-Impact Practices and Open Digital Pedagogies for Student Success

New York City College of Technology, City University of New York
U.S. Department of Education Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Programs
New Project Directors’ Conference, November 2-3, 2017

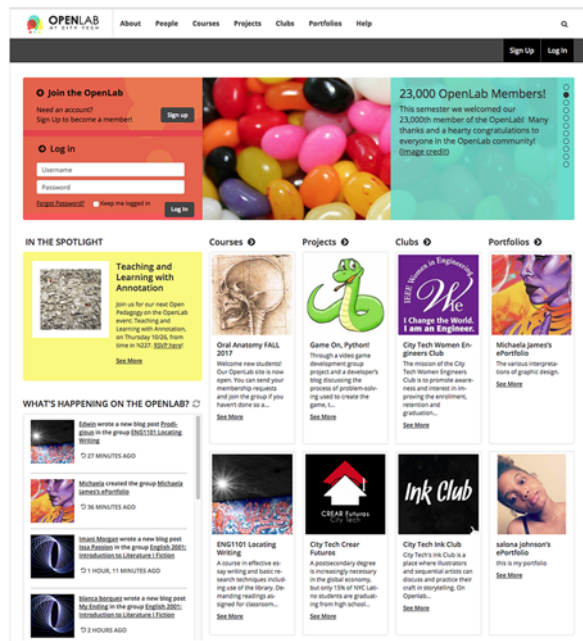


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Building the OpenLab

Jill Belli, Charlie Edwards, Genevieve Hitchings, Jody Rosen, Jenna Spevack (Co-Directors) and team

The OpenLab (openlab.citytech.cuny.edu) is an open digital platform designed to support teaching, learning, and collaboration at City Tech, and to strengthen the intellectual and social fabric of the college. Since its launch in Fall 2011, the OpenLab has become a vital hub of intellectual activity: over 23,000 students, faculty, and staff have used the site, which has proved a powerful tool for building community at our urban commuter institution. The OpenLab will be publicly released in 2018, making the software freely available to other institutions around the nation and the world.



A Culture of Assessment

Tammie Cumming (Director) and team

City Tech's Office of Assessment and Institutional Research (air.citytech.cuny.edu) worked to integrate comprehensive outcomes assessment into the General Education curriculum, with impressive results: almost 400 full-time and part-time faculty have participated in professional development; critical course assessment is at 100% compliance for all departments; and outcomes have been assessed for thousands of students in core competencies such as information literacy, oral communication, reading, and writing. Comprehensive outcomes assessment has been institutionalized through the college's Assessment Committee as part of a continuous cycle of data collection, analysis, and improvement, and the Living Lab Gen Ed Seminar now aligns with the improvement phase of the cycle.

The Brooklyn Waterfront Research Center

Richard Hanley (Director), Anne Leonard, and team

The BWRC (brooklynwaterfront.org) seeks to raise awareness about critical issues facing Brooklyn's waterfront through research, teaching, and public programming. Each year, it helps Living Lab Gen Ed Seminar Fellows and other faculty to integrate place-based learning into their pedagogy. It also engages with the City Tech community and the public through its Breakfast Talks, annual conferences, and research fellowship program. The grant supported the creation of an endowment that will support BWRC activities for years to come, and the development of an interactive map of the Brooklyn waterfront, currently in beta, that enables faculty and students to showcase their place-based research.



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