

Kajiura, L. (2017). Enhancing Student-Centered Collaborative Learning in Capstone Courses: A model for using creative themes & media for applied knowledge mobilization & integrated problem solving. Presented a peer reviewed presentation at the Western Conference on Science Education, Western University, London, Ontario., Canada, July 6th 2017

The Western Conference on Science Education



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July 6th 2017, London , Ontario

Enhancing Student-Centered Collaborative Learning in Capstone Courses: A model for using creative themes & media for applied knowledge mobilization & integrated problem solving.

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ABSTRACT

With the changing mosaic of educational landscapes, educators attempt to implement creative strategies to engage students as committed contributors of knowledge. Effective learners embrace change-imposed challenges as valuable learning opportunities for academic advancement and scholarly progress. This session will describe a capstone undergraduate course that implements a fusion of problem-based learning (PBL) and inquiry frameworks to encourage students to apply concepts to synthesize solutions addressing real and pressing issues in Biology. The model utilizes in-lecture and online research activities, integrated presentations and reports, constructive feedback critiques, insight share-a-thons, “experts in the field” networking, and reflection journals. It sparks interdisciplinary mentorship involving upper level undergraduate students via the production of learning tools for current and future students. This capstone experience also scaffolds community-engaged and globally linked projects. A unique feature of the course involves students disseminating scientific knowledge using creative multimedia and distinctive role playing presentation themes, such as reality show global ecology policy makers, superheroes serving eco-wise agencies, and bio tourism info-commercials. These modes facilitate learning. Participants of this session will get “hands on” access to resources that show the model’s structure, educator/ students’ activities, assessment rubrics, and creative exemplars. It is anticipated that attendees will be inspired to implement these course components to support self-directed, team-based knowledge mobilization, and problem solving.