Your Project Was Selected – Now What?

Congratulations on the approval of your Bass Connections project! Here are some key considerations and resources to help you get organized and make a strong start.

CLARIFY AND ARTICULATE PROJECT GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

Feedback from faculty and students who have previously participated in Bass Connections suggests that it’s important to set clear and achievable goals and expectations for everyone involved in the project before the project begins – and even before you start recruiting students since this will ensure that everyone enters into the project with aligned expectations. Some suggestions include:

- Host a kick-off meeting with all of the faculty involved in the project to clarify goals, roles and time commitment.
- Use a planning document such as a team charter to help jump start your planning. We’ve provided a Project Team Charter Template in the Team Resource Center.
- Review the project description that the Bass Connections team prepares for you to be posted on the website and ensure that it clearly articulates the goal of the project and your expectations for students (this description will be sent to you for review in early January). This will help students make informed decisions.

RECRUIT A STRONG TEAM

While every team is unique, evidence suggests that the most effective Bass Connections teams include undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and community partners/clients with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some questions to consider when forming your team include:

- What is the right size for your team? How much work needs to be done and how do you envision this work being structured? Most Bass Connections teams have between four and twelve students.
- What disciplines/skills/experiences would benefit the team?
- What mix of undergraduates, professional/graduate students would be ideal?
- If you haven’t already identified a client or community partner, how could you possibly integrate an external partner? See tips on engaging external partners.
- Do you need a project manager and who would be best to play that role? Feedback suggests that having a project manager helps improve team functioning, reduces the workload of the faculty team leaders and provides a valuable developmental opportunity for professional/graduate students or post-docs. See more information about how to effectively structure the project manager role.

Tips for recruiting participants

Once you’ve defined what you need, consider the following strategies to recruit students to your team:

- Advertise the project to students in your current and previous classes, current and former advisees, and other students you know.
- Circulate a description of your project through your department’s email listserv.
- Participate in the Bass Connections Fair in late January. This is a great opportunity to discuss your project directly with the most interested students.
• Ask other faculty for student recommendations and/or to publicize the project to their students.

• Target graduate students by contacting relevant Directors of Graduate Studies (DGSs) and asking them to share information about your project with their students and/or ask for student recommendations. You can find contact information for the DGSs by department.

• Advertise the project through listservs and student groups in the master’s programs and professional schools.

MINIMIZE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS
There are several steps that you can take up front to minimize the administrative demands of leading a team including:

• Talk to the theme administering your project and then your school/department financial administrator to discuss how funds will be managed and administered.

• Pick a time for your team to meet weekly and publicize this time during registration so that students who sign up can schedule the rest of their courses around this time. This is a recommendation that has been heavily emphasized by prior team leaders who have found scheduling to be the single greatest challenge for their team.

• Identify and plan for IRB approvals early.

• Determine whether students will receive stipends or course credit and how crediting and grading will work before the project begins. In general, students receive stipends for any work performed over the summer, and course credit for participation during the academic year (the exception being advanced PhD students who do not need course credit). See hourly student rates.

• Identify a project manager who can help keep the team on task.

• Use resources available through Duke to help the team communicate.

STRUCTURE YOUR TEAM EFFECTIVELY
Student feedback has demonstrated that the opportunity to engage in team-based inquiry is one of the most valuable and rewarding aspects of Bass Connections. That said, poorly structured teams are also the most common source of frustration for faculty and students alike. Before your team begins its work, we encourage you to visit our Team Resource Center which contains materials and guidance that may be useful to you:

• Executive Summary: How Our Research Teams Fail and Succeed
• Project Syllabus Guide and Template
• Team Building Suggestions
• Setting Team Norms
• Project Team Charter Template
• Research and Technology Support Resources
• Engaging External Organizations and Communities
• Using a Project Manager to Improve Your Team
• Video: Moving from Collections to Connections: Conversations on Teamwork