

TO : Professor Simon SM Ho, Vice Rector (Academic Affairs)
FROM : Vat K.H., CTLE Representative
SUBJECT : Follow-up on Design/Operational Ideas for RC Reading Club
OCCASION : After our feedback meeting on 2010AUG04 at T308
REFERENCE : CTLE Memos dated 2010JUL25 and 2010JUL28 Enclosed
CC : Professor VP Iu and Professor George Watts (RC Heads)
DATE : August 8, 2010

I am writing to follow up with some design details, conceived on the part of CTLE, concerning some operations for our RC Reading Club (if started in the coming fall of 2010), following the captioned feedback meeting on 2010AUG04, in support of the *House Life in Brilliance* project, extensible with the emergent RC development philosophy from our two RC Heads, as collected from the same meeting. It is understood that our pilot RC program is to be experimented at our Taipa campus (2-house program from 2010 to 2013), to accrue experience for follow-up improvement to be realized in the official RC program (12 houses) in our Hengqin campus starting from the fall of 2013.

Reading Club in the 2 Pilot RC's

Assumptions

1. The Residential College System (RCS) at UM is meant to be a four-year interdisciplinary liberal arts program integrating and realizing the vision and mission of an elite undergraduate education, with a unique relevance of General Education (GE), in the emergent context of a research university, emphasizing the quality of teaching and learning.
2. The relevance of GE in our RCS context remains the platform where students and teachers can together reflect on issues of common concerns, issues that are across disciplines of concern to humanity and modern society. The goal is to nurture our students to become educated persons in the modern, ever-changing world, with the intellectual and emotional ability and inclination to be able to appreciate and to become a positive force in any situation of concerns.
3. The Residential Colleges (RC's) could be characterized as a living-learning community because RC students live and learn in the same physical space. Our RC community encourages and welcomes participation from different members of the UM family, including staff, students, faculty, friends, and alumni.
4. The RC's at UM should have a curriculum (activity-based learning, modeled after Harvard's experience) of their own, which is largely interdisciplinary and engages students in creative exploration of the humanities, the social and the natural sciences, the engineering disciplines, the visual and performing arts, as well as some intensive foreign language study. The goal of the RC curriculum is to foster students' genuine appreciation and lifelong passion for learning, not merely individual quests for knowledge, but preparation and encouragement that lead to effective and responsible engagement in the real world.
5. The RC's at UM should make a unique contribution to higher education, by combining typical residence hall facilities (dorm rooms, lounges, dining halls, recreational rooms, and many others) with the academic and artistic resources

required for a liberal arts education (classrooms, creative studios, faculty offices, performance and exhibit spaces, and different types of student support services). Each RC is meant to be a small college community fully integrated with our major public University of Macau. It is guided by a philosophy of participatory education – basically everyone gets involved in our RC's.

Objectives of RC Curriculum

Following the GE model from Chinese University of Hong Kong, our RC curriculum is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide a broad intellectual perspective and to instill an understanding of the values of different academic disciplines;
2. To develop sensitivity to the common concerns of human existence especially from the perspective of Chinese and Western cultures;
3. To help students develop their own judgment and sense of values;
4. To cultivate awareness of the connections among different fields of knowledge; to develop the potentiality for integrating different fields of knowledge as needed;
5. To equip students with life-long learning capacities especially through understanding of the connections between academic pursuits and life experience.

Design Mission of RC Reading Club Activities

The Reading Club is meant to be an activity-based learning embodiment (or instantiation) of our RC curriculum, presumably called *Think, Read, and Write* program. The requirements of this program are to conceive suitable learning activities for RC students to complete, so as to accomplish the above-mentioned objectives of our RC curriculum. In the context of writing the learning outcomes for our students joining the Reading Club, such outcomes must be compliant with the SMART guideline (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria): namely, to be strategic and/or specific, to be measurable, to be attainable, to be relevant/realistic, and to be tangible and/or time-bound.

- ***Strategic*** – *A strategic activity has a much greater chance of being accomplished*

The mission of our RC Reading Club is not just to provide an opportunity for those of our student residents who are fascinated by books and love reading, to gather, to indulge in their reading hobby, and to participate in regular discussions about books they have read, but also to create a living and learning atmosphere for all of our student residents to experience our collegiate community, in close and constant association with one another, and with their tutors, advisors, coaches, and mentors, to experience our pastoral care in a trust and safe environment to grow into an all-round character expected of a college student in an elite undergraduate education environment. So, it is the aim of our RC Reading Club to provide, through thoughtfully designed academic and social activities, an enjoyable opportunity and environment to share with one another, in order to facilitate character development and lifelong learning in each of our RC student residents, to live up to the promise of holistic student development in the UM campus.

- *Specific* – A specific activity has a much greater chance of being accomplished.

Who: There are reading groups made up of individual RC students (typically 10 per group), who meet in person at regular intervals to discuss a specific topic such as a related book reading experience. Each group is assigned a facilitator played by our volunteer teacher as coach and mentor to probe, to guide, and to steer the course of learning activities.

What: Such gatherings tend to be more personal and intimate since members have the chance to meet often, face-to-face and they usually could develop a strong social and intellectual dimension through mutual sharing. It is mentoring in action, or rather in the terms of pastoral care, shepherding in action, especially when student writing is expected, such as from their own blogs.

Where: Popular places for reading groups to meet include RC meeting or recreational rooms, library discussion rooms, our emergent learning commons, café or even in restaurants over meals. In practice, they could also meet online through some group e-spaces. That should not be a big problem with our current UM facilities.

Why: In addition, each group tends not to grow too big (not more than 10 persons typically) so, as members, they have more control over the choice of reading matter. Usually, the title for each period (say, two weeks to a month) is voted from a list of suggested titles or the members may each take turns suggesting a book.

When: Typically, twice a month for face-to-face gathering, but unlimited online exchange is always available and plausible, with the setup of some group e-spaces. However, the small size per group also means the views and perspectives involved in the discussion can be a bit limited. This could be compensated by timely bringing in two or more groups with the same title (or book) chosen during the same period since we have about 10 to 15 groups of student residents in each house, if we were to organize our student residents in groups of 10 each for various reading club activities.

How: Two possible modes of operations could be conceived, but the single-title one is much preferred for obvious reason:

■ *Single-Title:* This is the most common method, where one title is selected at a time and all members read the same book in the same time frame. They then meet to discuss this book and this method works particularly well for those who like intensive discussion of books. Members are responsible for obtaining their own copy of each period's title, although they can either buy (new or second hand) or borrow from our library. In some instances, if buying a good number of copies of the same title from a book seller, our library could help order them at a negotiated discount.

■ *Multi-Title:* In this case, members all read different books at the same time but the same group of books is rotated around the club so that each member reads each title

in a serial fashion and ultimately, all members will have experienced each book. When they meet, individual members of the group share their learning and impressions after reading the designated title, and each member picks up something from one another, and each sequence of sharing, adds something new to the sharing of each title among the group. Interactive feedback during each sharing can then be based on how prepared each member has been in leading the book discussion, stimulating the next member who is to read the same title, and returning to the sharing of previous period responding to the sharing of earlier member who read the same title.

In each case, it is highly recommended that individual student keeps a Web blog of what they experience during the reading so as to induce the reading and sharing of their fellow students.

- **Measurable** – *Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of a specific goal related to certain activities. Ask questions such as how much? How many? How will we know if a goal is accomplished?*

Kick-Off Activity: On checking in each RC student, invite him or her to sign in a form with a specific section called Reading Club Questionnaire (by default, every RC student resident is a member of the Reading Club, as an RC curriculum requirement, with the goal to develop student's Think-Read-Write ability through learning-by-doing).

- Provide a simple survey to do a self-evaluation in proficiency of reading, thinking and writing: Good, Average, and Remedial.
- Provide some categories of reading materials to collect his or her reading favorites: Books, Magazines, Blogs, and many conceivable others.
- Provide a list of books to gather his preferences, say, choose three from a set of books given, in a descending or ascending order of interest.
- Ask specific questions on how much the student would like to see his or her abilities in reading, thinking, and writing improve, to get the most of his or her study at UM. Provide such choices as: strongly, average, not at all.
- Ask specific questions on whether the student is aware that his or her achievement in college is closely related to the ability to think, to read, and to write.

Ask: How many students choose ...? as the beginning of our student profiles (or portfolios).

- **Attainable** – *Goals should challenge students to their best, but they need also be achievable.*

Starting our Reading Club Blog: Today, blogs are inexpensive. In fact, most of the popular blogging services offer free-of-charge hosting to bloggers. So, starting a blog

will take very little time, though we should pay attention to the following questions before setting up our blogs in cyberspace:

- *What is the purpose of the blog?* Many existing reading clubs have blogs on the Web with very specific purposes. Some are to review only new books and up-and-coming authors. Other blogs are devoted to talking any and all books, from ancient texts to the most modern rap song lyrics. In the context of our RC Reading Club, our blogs should serve the mission we earlier stated in the beginning. Accordingly, our design and organization, as well as the content, must be consistently in place to live up to the objectives of our RC curriculum.
- *Who will have the ability to post on the blog?* Because the blog is attached to our Reading Club, comprising a community of student residents, we are to allow more than one person to gain entry to the workings of the blog so everyone can post at leisure. To facilitate control of the process, it is possible to install an individual blog for each club member to post his or her own blog, and each reading group is also likely to be assigned a suitable group blog to manage their group activities. This is not a difficult task to accomplish, but requires some organization and setup.
- *Will we allow comments on our blog?* Most blogs today allow visitors to post comments if they are so moved. Indeed, we would like to see our students writing their own blogs and responding to others; so, this is a value proposition from RC's viewpoint, as some blogs simply are meant to engage our students in discussion, like the group blog to stimulate group members' active writing in blogs.

CTLE, together with ICTO, could certainly help create the necessary blogging mechanism to enable our students to get started with Web blogs activities – writing their blogs, expressing themselves through blogging as their journaling activities after reading, preferably on a daily basis. The facilitator must lead the blogging activities by writing their own blogs to be the shepherds of their flocks.

- ***Relevant*** – *Goals need to pertain directly to the performance challenge being managed. To be realistic, our goals for students to achieve must represent an objective toward which students are both willing and able to work.*

■ ***Reading Club Field Trips:*** Once our reading club is established (on track) and members have gotten to know one another, organizing a field trip can be a wonderful way of enhancing relationships within the club community, and adding another dimension to the discussions. The simplest trip is probably just to have regular meeting at an unusual place, like visiting a cinema to watch an adaptation of a recently-discussed book. This will often provide great fodder for further discussion as members can debate on the accuracy and quality of the adaptation, the suitability of the actors, how well the story translated to the big screen, whether the screenplay did justice to the original, and many others. Or, instead of a movie, we could visit a theatre to watch a play or musical adaptation of a book. Again, this could stimulate

much additional discussion and writing, particularly if the story was adapted in an unexpected way, such as the *Tuesdays with Morrie* episodes. Or, we could visit some historical sites as those in Macau, considered as cultural assets of our world heritage, and return with students' own story-telling through their blogs.

■ *Reading Club Community-Minded Ideas*: While our Reading Club is initiated with the intention of discussing books or other literatures, it is not uncommon that our club activities may evolve into enjoyable social gathering and as members get to know one another, many would become keen on the idea of other activities besides book discussions. Group outings and themed nights based on a particular title, are popular alternatives, where we could organize food and music, for some good cause (charity perhaps) to match the book content, such as serving food and music that have significant meaning in the book or are the favorites of the characters or events in the book. We may also surprise our fellow students (those not living in the RC) with our momentum (or gift) of a book that our Reading Club has read and enjoyed, and invite them to join our Reading Club activities, in preparation for their enrolling into our RC house the next school year. Or we could help organize some Reading Enhancement program for our high school community, through mentoring individual high school students to enhance their reading ability, to appreciate and to enjoy reading and learning, through our online facilities.

The key: All such activities must be organized by the students in the reading groups themselves. So, facilitators among the reading groups must help lead the leadership training in each group to organize themselves and to plan and lead such activities. These are all learning-by-doing episodes, and are extremely important to develop students' abilities in creative problem solving, and other skills highly valued by the University.

The requirements: Our reading group facilitators must receive training, too, to serve our students, and to train them to lead themselves. So, programs like Train-the-Trainer for Learn-To-Learn, among students with There-is-a-Leader-in-You, become important.

- *Timely – Enough time to achieve the goal: Not much time can definitely affect project performance. A goal should be grounded within a time frame, though. Meanwhile, our goals must be tangible so that our students could experience them with their senses. Tangible goals tend to be specific, measurable and thus attainable.*
 1. Our RCs must provide opportunities for students to integrate the academic mission of UM with a community living environment. Our RC staff should assist students in creating a living and learning environment, conducive to students' understanding of cross-cultural differences, personal and community responsibility, as well as life (or career) planning.
 2. The RC staff should work hard to provide a supportive, involving and safe atmosphere within each residential college. A variety of activities and programs

are scheduled during the year within each house to meet social and educational needs of students. Students are encouraged to discuss with the RC staff their ideas about programs and their living environment.

3. The installation of RC Reading Club is meant to be an important means to meet the social and educational needs of our resident students, especially to bring forth the perceived Reading Club benefits (RC curriculum objectives) as described in the earlier section. Students, after settling down in a specific RC, will be organized into different small groups (preferably comprising 10 students per group, with a specific group structure and identity), known as the Reading Groups. It is estimated that there could be up to about 15 to 20 groups in each RC, and such groups form the specific community of each RC.
4. Each of the RC reading groups must receive leadership training to manage themselves in terms of our RC living and learning rules (or expectations) of the house, and be assigned a facilitator to advice and coach their living and learning activities. One of the important topics in leadership training is *Learn-to-Learn* (including upfront practice of *Think, Read, and Write*) among our resident students.
5. All resident students in each RC are invited to participate in this exciting *Learn-to-Learn* opportunity to gain immediate concrete skills, such as identifying one's own strengths and how to utilize that knowledge to begin planning college experience. Through our Reading Club group discussions, individual assessment, and plausible service opportunities, designed into our Reading Groups in the RC, it is expected that students will lay the foundation for involvement as servant leaders at UM and beyond, during and after the four years of living and learning experiences.
6. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club, is to meet once every two weeks for about two hours, preferably on Friday evening, including (or after) dinner or Saturday morning, including (or before) lunch. The gathering must be informal and family-like, with a simple agenda, to blend social interaction with learning in action through community-based involvement. The atmosphere is largely sharing-based, with information specific enough for the group to work on throughout the fortnight, accommodating the flexibility of group-based, pair-based, and individual involvement. Discussion and sharing of specific themes around the selected works of literature is considered the lead in the two-hour gathering so as not to miss the boat of our reading experience.
7. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club is to be equipped with an electronic group space, with individual electronic personal space for each group members, to encourage their blog writing, and to facilitate intra-group and subsequent inter-group communications. And the whole Reading Club should also be supported with an electronic portal space to facilitate any community-based announcement and activities. Through the personal e-spaces, students are

- expected to keep their individual learning portfolios in the form of their own blogs, sharable for others' reading. Such personal blogs are considered as a means to share student living and learning experiences, as an important part of their RC habits of learning. It is through students' blogs that their gains of common reading experience, could be made visible – it is an opportunity to learn to read, to think, to experience and to write – some concrete skills valuable throughout their four years of study and beyond.
8. There must be some kind of leading educational philosophy behind our Reading Club, and the Servant-as-Leader (<http://greenleaf.org>) context could fit right in. The overall Reading Club program together with any subsequent Servant-Leadership Program (comprehensive, four-year long, if any) must strive to develop a capacity and commitment of service and leadership to others. This can only be accomplished by helping students critically reflect on their experiences and sharing those experiences, rather than merely engaging in activities. We might be familiar with the learning pyramid (<http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/polovina/learnpyramid/index.html>) which states that students remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what is demonstrated to them, 50% of what they discuss, and 75% of what they practice. That same pyramid also states that students retain 90% of what they teach others.
 9. There must be some electronic portfolios to keep track of individual students' development. Through active engagement, critical reflection and mentoring of others, the Reading Club activities can truly become the fiber of one's character. It is expected that students could retain at least 60% of what they do, 80% of what they do with guided reflection and 90% of what they teach or give to others. This model forms the basis for our RC-GE connection program to truly help students become active engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Throughout their four years, our RC participants will reflect on their learning opportunities and service experiences through their electronic portfolios. Such reflections will be guided and responded to by peers, faculty and administrative staff (SAS and AAS).
 10. If we need any motto to guide the development of our RCS and thus the Reading Club and our subsequent Servant Leadership program if any, the *4D* context could be a timely touch for our GE-RC link: *Determined + Dedicated + Disciplined + Drive*.

The Challenge: In the first semester (or the first year) of our pilot RC program starting from Fall-2010, it is quite a challenge to accomplish all we expect. Thus, we should really keep a down-to-earth approach to lead the *House Life in Brilliance* program. The key is to build the bridge as we walk on it. We should really take it one day at a time, since this is a trial from our zero-foundation before we could take off in three years. Fortunately, we have three years to incrementally develop our RCs, but we must be realistic and pragmatic enough to experience this trial operation of our RCS.

The IDEAL Model – What CTLE could help along the way!

It is convinced that our RCS represents a whole system change effort in higher education in the history of UM, though such an effort has been experienced in many a research and liberal arts universities in Europe and in North America. To prepare for change and learning from our RC experience, CTLE is committed to help along the way. One way to extend our help is to suggest and to put in place a collaborative inquiry process for those of us involved in the RC to get started with our learning how to conduct a continuous improvement program for our RCS.

One likely model is the IDEAL model originally conceived as a life cycle model for software process improvement based on the capability maturity model (CMM) for software at the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) of Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU). The IDEAL model has been found a very helpful model in the change management of many an organization.

The IDEAL model suggests a useable and understandable approach to continuous improvement by outlining the steps required to establish a sustainable improvement program through five different stages of work:

1. Initiating (I) is to lay the groundwork for a workable improvement effort.
2. Diagnosing (D) is to determine where we are relative to where we want to be.
3. Establishing (E) is to plan the specifics of how we will reach our destination.
4. Activating (A) is to do the work according to the plan.
5. Learning (L) is to learn from the experience and improve our ability to adopt new technologies in the immediate future.

See more of the IDEAL model from: <http://www.sei.cmu.edu/library/abstracts/presentations/idealmodeled.cfm>

Some Human Resources Requirements for RC Reading Club

To properly run the RC Reading Club, it is expected that each RC must recruit a good number of reading group facilitators, preferably one per group, selected from among our faculty members, playing a volunteer role to coach the development of the reading group, whose group structure includes such roles as group coordinator (like a leader), group scribe, group liaison member, and other group members, all of which are played by resident students.

To support the growth of each reading group, it is also desirable that one SAS-based student worker could be assigned to each group, and each such student worker could serve more than one group, say, from 2 to 4 groups; so, a total of 8 such workers is needed to take care of all reading groups in the two RC houses: about 30.

If we organize 10 to 15 students per group, there should be 14 groups in East Asia Hall (137 students), and 16 groups in Pearl Jubilee Hall (162 students). So, if each facilitator is to care for two groups, one in each RC house, we need a total of 15 facilitators, recruited from among our volunteer academic staff. The best case is one facilitator per group, meaning a recruitment of 30 volunteer academic staff. It is perceived that the CTLE Faculty Mentoring Group led by Professor Rik D'Amato could render some volunteer reading group facilitators, including some colleagues from the Department of Psychology, such as Dr. Gertina, our CTLE Coordinator in Mentoring and Professional Development, and Professor D'Amato himself. Besides, we might need to ask help from our *English Language Center* to volunteer some Reading Group facilitators.

In the official RC organizational structure, the role of reading group facilitator could also be played by our non-resident fellows. So, we need to take stock of how many non-resident fellows we have so far. It is expected that the role of Chief-of-Student (Chief-of-Staff, being a much better term) in each RC should get involved in the coordination of the reading group facilitators (non-resident fellow), to plan the use of RC spaces and schedule of other RC activities such as the Sports Club.

The ten to twenty reading groups in each RC are the constituent of the respective RC community. It is important to conceive what kind of community we want to develop among these student groups. Overall, it is not too much to expect such a community of students to be a purposeful community with drive, dedication, determination, and discipline. But it must also be a caring community for the collective and the individual growth of each group, as well as each student member in each group, in the community.

Other Meaningful Activity worthy of our Reading Club's Consideration

To nurture RC students' proper habit of thinking and learning, writing up their experience after episodic reading is considered useful if we could offer some stimulus to encourage and stimulate students' writing practice. This could best be done by enlightening our students how important in accomplishing their study it is to acquire the skills to express through writing, and by recognizing the same achievement in the RC community, say, enabling those students with certain level of achievement to become leaders (or mentors) for others. Hence, such practice could eventually become part of our RC's student leadership program. But, first is the program to promote the habit of keeping a learning journal for each student, like re-learning how to keep a diary for themselves. It is important to nurture the habit of think-read-and-write. So, another aspect to be emphasized is how to help our students to do the proper thinking, or simply, to learn to learn.

CTLE Feedback on SAS Suggested Model of Reading Program dated 2010JUL30

- The general impression is that pastoral care must be the axle around which our RC programs ought to be designed, including the Reading Club program. Currently, the suggestions read like another study program IMPOSED on our RC student residents rather than a SUPPORT system (an informal network of people willing to serve and

to help) to facilitate student growth through the reading activities, operated through some pastoral care DESIGN of learning in communities.

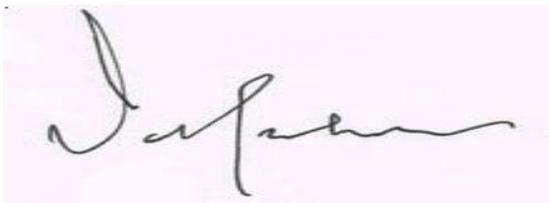
- Besides, the use of student BOOK REVIEWS in an occasion of COMPETITION judged by group tutors, and rewarded with book coupons for the selected winner (or winner groups) smells a sense of traditional operant conditioning based in behavioral psychology. It is believed that Professor Rik D'Amato might have a better interpretation of this scheme in terms of what learning experience to bring forth for our RC students. But, the emphasis in Reading Club activities including reading, thinking and writing should be exquisite joy in itself discovered by our students through MENTORING in the context of relationship building in the living and learning experiences of our RCs.
- Moreover, reading one book per month sounds more like an assignment, if our interest is targeted at the book reviews produced by student (or student groups). It is convinced that our students already have a very tight schedule of classes and coursework to finish. The last thing they want is another such assignment to complete. So, the emphasis in SUPPORT system for our RC students must be in place - PASTORAL CARE in what form through this Reading Club.
- With all the respect for our new RC Leadership Teams, CTLE is quite willing to further work with them to see how our RC Heads look at the design ideas we have accumulated so far to provide the best possible living and learning experiences for our RC students. This is something important for the future development of our university.

Thanks for your reading and attention.

All the best,

Vat

2010AUG08

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light pink background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Kam H. Vat'.

Kam H. Vat (Mr)

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