Creating Successful Exhibits
AZA Professional Training Course
Syllabus
NEW CENTURY COLLEGE
(NCLC 521, 3 credits)

1. Name and contact information
Course Administrators:
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An additional four AZA staff members with senior expertise in creating exhibits are selected to participate in the course each year as course assistants.

2. Course Description and Learning Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes)
This 6-day intensive course provides an integrated overview of the overall exhibit development process, management of the process, and technical skills associated with exhibit development and construction. Creating Successful Exhibits follows the phases of exhibit development, from concept to operation, in chronological order of the tasks. The course materials present a model that can be adapted to each course participants’ own institution, and is applicable to a wide range of aquariums and zoos. In order to model the interdepartmental team approach to exhibit development, course instructors represent a variety of disciplines (administration, animal programs, facilities, interpretation, and design). Instructors also represent both large and small institutions, and terrestrial and aquatic animal collections. Each has a strong commitment to the course goals, especially that of increasing students’ self-confidence to implement their new skills.
Goals for Creating Successful Exhibits are:
1. Participants will understand the overall exhibit development process and the steps necessary to create effective aquarium and zoo exhibits.
2. Participants will gain a working knowledge of the team approach to exhibit development and necessary roles within the team. They will recognize and begin to develop the interpersonal skills necessary for effective communication within the team, within the institution and with external audiences.
3. Participants will experience an increased individual confidence in the exhibit development process and techniques.
4. Participants will develop technical skills that will aid in their level of participation in the overall exhibit development process.
Enrolled students should be employed in a professional position in which they normally have, or anticipate having a role in the exhibit process at their institution.

3. Textbooks and other course materials
A customized course notebook is assembled and sent to the students in advance of the course. The notebook is used for each section of the course, containing the section lesson outline, objectives and relevant reading material for reference use. This notebook is updated annually to ensure the materials reflect current thinking within the field. Reference materials include reprints of technical and peer-reviewed articles, which are for student use only.

4. Assignments and Grading Policies
This course is an intensive 6-day program. All students are expected to attend all sessions and participate fully in class discussion, group assignments and required evening seminars. Paperwork submitted in the two-phase final group project must indicate participation and input from all members of the team. Students will be required to provide anonymous ratings of their team members indicating levels of participation. Course instructors will also submit observations on student participation. There are 46 hours of formalized in class instruction, with additional group working time outside of class.

5. Weekly Course Schedule
Day 1- (2 hours)
Evening Kickoff
Exhibits Course Icebreaker (student and instructor introductions and goal setting)

Day 2- (9 hours)
Course Overview
Function of exhibits at zoos and aquariums
Developing Exhibits - Team Process
  - Team Roles
  - Skills Building
  - Institutional Process Understanding
Concept Development
  - Context of Master Plan/Strategic/collection plan
  - Visioning sessions
  - Developing the Big Idea /measurable objectives
  - Outline full Program statement
  - Feasibility studies
  - Overview of timelines, budget
Introduction of Student Assessment Project

Day 3- (9 hours)
Student Assessment Project –Presentation #1
  (Discuss case studies for concept design, with instructor input)
Concept Development (continued)
  - Developing comprehensive timeline with milestones
Developing the animal collection
Understanding institutional review process
External communications (Marketing and Development) and buy-in
Front-end evaluation and audience research
Deliverables at end of concept development

Design Development
- Animal concerns and design requirements
- Keeper and visitor safety requirements
- Aesthetics and design considerations
- Utilizing /working with consultants
- Being an effective client
- Team roles, communication- gathering staff input
- Bubble diagrams

Day 4- (9 hours)
Design Development (continued)
- Tools of design
- Models and working drawings for review
- Managing the creative process
- Skills to acquire to be a full participant (e.g., Gantt charts, reading blueprints, asking questions)
- Developing construction drawings
- Project and operational budgets
- Value engineering
- Formative evaluation
- Marketing surveys
- Effective interpretive techniques
- Interpretive technologies

Day 5- (9 hours)
Design Development (continued)
- Fabrication techniques and technologies
- Legal standards/issues for public display and housing
- Communications- “outside forces” impact on projects
- Donor/Board/Gov’t communications
- Image/ public relations campaign development
- Design development deliverables

Construction
- Bidding process
- Value engineering
- Life support systems
- Animal acquisition and holding
- Managing construction on-site
- Staff training and communications
- Marketing and public relations - external communications
- Grand Opening
Day 6- (8 hours)
Student assessment project - Presentation #2
(6 teams @ 15 minutes plus 5 minute question period)
Instructor feedback, review and check off sheets
Post Opening/Commissioning
- Break-in phase
- Staff recognition
- Summative evaluation
- Exhibit modifications
- Project de brief and exhibit development process review
- Development of on-going maintenance procedures and budget
- Transition to operational budget and staffing

Course evaluation by students

6. Student Support
Since this course is conducted in conjunction with the combined AZA Professional Development Schools, all students have access to the pool of instructors for this course and other relevant courses. Instructors assist students in finding the most appropriate resource person to provide support for the topic in question.

7. Honor Code
The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. This is especially true in New Century College. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please talk with us or to a trusted friend or counselor to get your situation in perspective. The University provides a range of service to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, and other related concerns.

Some projects are designed to be undertaken individually. For these projects, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently. As in most learning communities and in many other classes, your final integrated group project in this unit is designed to be completed by a study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Over the course of the week you may find that it is necessary for different group members to take the lead on various assignments leading up to the integrated final group project. However, the faculty do expect that all group members will contribute equally and that the pieces will be conceptually integrated in the final end product. Using someone else’s words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words (including
8. Learning Community Principles
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3. Participants will experience an increased individual confidence in the exhibit development process and techniques.
4. Participants will develop technical skills that will aid in their level of participation in the overall exhibit development process.

The 6-day course of study combines facilitated discussion, case studies, small group activities and hands-on training in topics that improve participants’ effectiveness in the exhibit development process. The process model identifies four distinctive phases: Concept Development, Design Development, Construction, and Post-Opening and Review. Three “strands” or “tracks” run through the course: 1) Overall exhibit development process, 2) Communications and management skills, and 3) Technical skills that will facilitate involvement in the exhibit development process. Creating Successful Exhibits will be team-taught by AZA professionals with a wide range of experiences in zoo and aquarium settings.

9. Student Learning Assessment
Students are assigned a group project that extends the length of the course. The project involves the creation of preliminary and refined exhibit planning documents based on the material taught each day. Background and forms are provided by the instructors, which provide a framework for the students’ discussions, but does not structure their final product. Student groups make oral presentations followed up by written documentation of their team process and progress. A panel of the course instructors evaluates a two-phase authentic assessment group project. The two-phase approach has been selected to model the types of assessment steps in an actual exhibit project. This allows the instructors to provide on-going feedback to the student groups. This also allows students to observe and comment on other presentations. The group project will also promote the team approach to exhibit development. In addition, the Creating Successful Exhibits course will utilize the standard AZA school evaluation form. Adjustments will be made on an annual basis based on student recommendations and comments.

Grading Structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Report</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Report: PowerPoint</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative Assessment: Daily Discussion questions</td>
<td>30%</td>
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