

Shaping the Debate about Common Reading Programs

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Session presenters with email addresses:

Amanda Breu, University of Houston Victoria: breua@uhv.edu

Susanna Eng-Ziskin, California State U. at Northridge: susanna.eng@csun.edu

Gina M. Garera, University of North Carolina Wilmington: garerag@uncw.edu

Leslie Jo Sena, Washington State University: senal@wsu.edu

Cheryl Spector, California State U. at Northridge: cheryl.spector@csun.edu

We will be using these three scenarios for small group discussion today. Choose just one scenario as your focus for discussion:

1. Your provost or president (or other key administrator) reads the “Beach Books” report* and sees that your campus’s book is among those attacked as less-than. She asks to meet with you to discuss your program, your choice of this book, and your plans for future books. How do you prepare? What will you say?
2. For all ten years of its existence, your Common Reading program has chosen contemporary books (books published since 1990). This year, your faculty president (an English professor and Shakespeare scholar) has nominated Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* but your committee can only choose it by ignoring your long-standing selection criteria. The professor has asked you to explain your Common Reading program to the Faculty Senate. What do you say to foreground the value of your program?
3. This year, your Common Reading program is so successful that National Public Radio has set up a time for a phone interview with you about it. Why did they pick you? What did you do right?

*Thorne, Ashley, et al. “Beach Books 2012-2013: What Do Colleges and Universities Want Students to Read Outside Class?” *National Association of Scholars*. August 2013. Web. 14 Feb. 2014. <http://www.nas.org/images/documents/BeachBooks-2013.pdf>

New Tumblr blog announced during this session: Common Reading Promotional Materials: a place to share successful promotional materials used for Common Reading programs. Visit <http://commonreadingpromotion.tumblr.com/> and contribute your materials.