

# DEVELOP AN EXCITING COMMON READING PROGRAM

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COLUMBUS STATE  
UNIVERSITY

# Common Reading Programs Purpose

**Broad Goal: Foster student success**

**Specific Goals:**

**model academic behavior**

**set expectations for student success**

**foster student involvement**

**promote more meaningful learning**

Laufgraben, J.L., (2006). *Common reading programs: Going beyond the book* (Monograph No. 44). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

# THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

- Involve EVERYBODY
  - Selection committee should have representatives from all areas of campus, faculty, staff, students
  - Start early. Late October – November good times for the following fall
  - Give each member a specific task and a timeline for completion

# THE SELECTION PROCESS

- It's political! Try to pick a book that most departments can embrace.
- Don't let one department/discipline dominate the process.
- Choose a book with local interest/connection
- Three rules for the selection:
  - Must be under 325 pages
  - Must be accessible to ALL freshmen
  - Cannot have been made into a movie (enough said !)

# MAKE THE BOOK ACCESSIBLE

- Buy the book for All incoming freshmen, Freshman Learning Community instructors, Freshman Seminar instructors
- Provide the book for administrators, deans, chairs, freshman composition instructors.
- Get copies to freshman advisors, upper-division instructors, and staff who express an interest.
- IF THEY CAN GET IT, THEY'LL READ IT. IF THEY READ IT, THEY WILL USE IT IN THE CLASSROOM AND TALK ABOUT IT ACROSS CAMPUS.

# AUTHOR

- Schedule the author to speak after students have had a chance to read the book
  - CSU schedules the author for 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October
  - Speech is heavily advertised and held at the common meeting hour when no classes meet
- Author meets with special groups or classes in addition to the campus-wide speech
- Author's fee is always a consideration when selecting a book

# COLLABORATE

- Take advantage of events/programs already being planned on campus and in the community.
  - Freshman Convocation speaker
  - Southeastern Literary Festival
  - The Big Read
- Encourage instructors in upper-level courses to use the book.
  - Communications majors interviewed Vietnam veterans' widows for Library of Congress archives (*The Things They Carried*)
  - Political Science majors held campus debates on guns on campus (*No Right to Remain Silent*)

## Select a Book with Community Connections or Specific Ties to the Area

- Increases campus interest in Common Reading
- Allows students many opportunities to tie classroom learning to real-life examples
- Assures easy access to local experts and resources
- Spurs community participation in campus activities associated with the book



# ACTIVITIES

- Provide a variety of activities to complement the year's selection.
  - Freshman convocation speech, lectures, class guests
  - Entertainment events: movies, student-led music/art
  - Service opportunities
  - Field trips, essay/art contests
- Schedule events throughout the year to maintain interest across campus
- Involve campus and community members in campus-wide and classroom events
- If you feed them, they will come

# ASSESSMENT

- Assessment is essential. What do you want to achieve? How do you know when you've met goals?
- Take roll – how many students attend/participate in events? What percent of freshmen participate?
- Get feedback – survey students, faculty, community
- Imbed questions about Common Reading in end-of-term student and instructor evaluations of FYE.
- Use this data to modify and improve Common Reading program.