

# **Common Reading Experience**

---

## ***VISION STATEMENT***

The Common Reading Experience will unite the University of Kentucky as an academic community through a shared intellectual exploration of a single book and will be a model for reading programs around the country.

## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

The Common Reading Experience eases the academic transition by providing a shared intellectual exploration for the entire campus community through small-group discussion, curricular assignments, and co-curricular programming based on a single book.

## ***GOALS***

The Common Reading Experience will:

1. Establish immediate expectations for engagement of students in an intellectual community
2. Provide opportunity for discourse regarding personal, University, community, and societal values
3. Foster a sense of community among students, families, faculty, and staff through shared academic experiences both inside and outside the classroom
4. Promote interdisciplinary involvement in meaningful learning surrounding a single book

## ***LEARNING OUTCOMES***

As a result of active participation in the Common Reading Experience, students will be able to:

1. Reflect on their personal experiences and relate them to the common book
2. Relate their personal values to those discussed in the book and articulated by the University
3. Compare and contrast the academic expectations between the University and their high schools
4. Identify peers, faculty, and/or staff with whom they have formed a relationship through the program
5. Articulate the importance of reading and discussion for academic success at the University

## ***ASSESSMENT EFFORTS***

As the inaugural Common Reading Experience (CRE) launched in March 2009 with programming beginning in the upcoming fall semester, we will not assess the program until the end of the 2009-10 academic calendar. However, in order to improve the Common Reading Experience each year and to ensure that we are making progress on our goals and desired

learning outcomes, we will conduct a comprehensive assessment plan where we gather data and use it to inform future programming decisions. Possible forms of assessment may include:

- Gauging students' reactions to the common book and gathering their personal reflections on how the book relates to their lives through the essay contest, UK101 essay assignment, UK101 personal expression activity (i.e., the Mask Activity for *The Color of Water*).
- Evaluating student participation in annual contests, such as the Photo Contest.
- Distributing a post-discussion paper/pencil survey to new students who participate in the K Week Common Reading Discussions to evaluate readership, satisfaction with the book selection, etc.
- Tracking attendance at CRE events.
- Track growth in participation from year to year, including readership, number of discussion leaders, number of CRE-related events, number of classes utilizing the book, etc.
- Facilitating an end-of-the year online survey to students, faculty and staff to evaluate all aspects of the program.
- Conducting focus groups.
- Performing a cost/benefit analysis of the program each year.
- Utilizing the Common Reading Selection Committee and the Common Reading Experience Advisory Board to brainstorm ideas for future books and programs, and to provide multidimensional feedback on those books and programs.

## **RETENTION EFFORTS**

In a review of the literature regarding student success and retention, the Office of New Student & Parent Programs has compiled a list of factors, frameworks, and best practices which we consistently refer to when developing and evaluating our goals, learning outcomes, and programs. In reference to this list, we strive to enhance the retention of UK students through the Common Reading Experience by:

- providing a common intellectual experience for all new students through the reading and discussion of a common book
- setting high expectations for student learning and student behavior through a letter to all new students from the president and provost, and through student-faculty interaction in small-group discussions during K Week
- introducing students to campus values through the selection of a book that reflects those values, through small-group discussion, and through CRE events
- articulating strategies successful students utilize in their learning through small-group discussion with faculty and upperclass students
- encouraging frequent faculty-student contact in and outside of the classroom through small-group discussion during K Week, incorporating the book into class, connecting students with student-faculty research opportunities related to the book, and encouraging faculty participation in CRE events
- supporting both academic and social peer interaction through small-group discussions during K Week, through an online discussion about the common book, and through social events and volunteer opportunities relevant to the book

- cultivating students' respect for diversity by choosing a book that presents issues of diversity, through small-group discussion, and through CRE events
- providing collaborative learning opportunities through small-group discussion, by incorporating the common book into the classroom, and through CRE events
- connecting classroom work with out-of-classroom experiences
- connecting students with undergraduate research opportunities by advertising those relevant to the common book on the CRE website
- strengthening participation in campus activities by partnering with various campus organizations and departments to coordinate events relevant to the common book

## **DIVERSITY EFFORTS**

Building community and introducing the issue of diversity on a college campus through a shared intellectual experience is a focal point of the Common Reading Experience. Through the CRE students will explore diversity issues by:

- reading a book that explores one or more themes and/or issues of diversity
- developing a respect for diverse opinions through engaging in a multidisciplinary discussion of the common book with students, faculty, and staff
- participating in various CRE related events which focus on diversity issues, such as lecture series, film series, volunteerism, undergraduate research, and more, co-sponsored by various academic departments, the Student Activities Board (SAB) Cultural Arts Committee, the SAB Engaging Issues Committee, the SAB Multicultural Affairs Committee and/or the Center for Community Outreach
- engaging in personal reflection of one's identity through the CRE essay contest, the UK101 essay assignment, and/or the UK101 artistic expression activity (i.e., the Mask Activity for *The Color of Water*)

Additionally, the Office of New Student and Parent Programs will strive too:

- partner with various faculty and academic departments to incorporate the common book in a diverse offering of classes
- engage faculty and staff from all disciplines and backgrounds in leading small-group discussions during K Week
- recruit a diverse K Crew who will co-lead the small-group discussions during K Week
- solicit a vast collection of book recommendations from the campus community for future Common Reading Experiences, giving consideration to all types and topics
- appoint a diverse group of students, faculty, staff to the Common Reading Selection Committee and the Common Reading Experience Programming Advisory Board