Preparing Students for a Global Society
Diversity-Related Student Learning Outcomes

The world we live in today is increasingly global, complex and multicultural. Consider this: in the Kansas City metropolitan area, the percentage of non-white residents has increased 159% between 2000 and 2010. A broadened definition of diversity includes differences in language, sexual orientation, ability, religion, age and gender. As a result, educators are challenged to rethink learning outcomes so that students are prepared to compete successfully in this world of differences. The fast-paced work environments that graduates face require creativity, sophisticated interpersonal skills and critical but nimble thinking skills. Since American business is increasingly global, employers also seek students who have the ability to understand and interact with diverse groups of internal and external “customers.” In fact, cultural and linguistic competency can make the difference between meeting the needs of a changing customer base, and losing business to a competitor.

As employers demand that higher education respond to this reality, this begs the question: How do we educate students of all backgrounds to appreciate the value of diversity and inclusion? How do we create future leaders of institutional transformation to respond to rapidly changing circumstances? The answer lies in integrating learning outcomes that prepare students for a diverse societal and business environment. UMKC recognizes this need by including “Cultural Diversity” as one of its general education learning outcomes. But what does this outcome really mean? It begins with educational experiences that help students appreciate the economic, environmental, political and social issues facing all cultures. Selecting books, articles and other media authored by multicultural scholars has a double purpose. It helps all students recognize the societal contributions of diverse groups, as well as exposing students to different perspectives. Where appropriate, equipping students with concepts related to inequality, power and privilege heightens awareness of societal dynamics. Students also benefit from field experiences and speakers in diverse communities, which enliven student discourse with exposure to role models of all types. The result: students who have a deeper understanding of one’s own and other cultural identities, practices and accomplishments.

Knowledge and awareness of cultural differences—though important—is not a sufficient end result. Learning outcomes must also involve student learning competencies and skills that promote
Introductions Abound with New Assessment and Discourse Leaders

Discourse Coordinator seeks cohesion in Writing Assessment

As the newly appointed Discourse Coordinator, my first few weeks have been both exciting and challenging! As I enter this new role, I am looking forward to working with folks across the University to improve student achievement. My first opportunity to collaborate was with the Office of Assessment. After assembling a team of Discourse, composition, and public speaking instructors, we strategized on ways to strengthen Discourse assessment with student and university needs driving our revisions. Our goals were to create more usable and consistent rubrics, to provide formative and summative assessment opportunities, and to streamline the rubric templates already in place.

Our first priority was to create cohesion between the types of assessment for each level of Discourse. It was decided to create a summative assessment rubric for each level of Discourse that evaluated student learning outcomes in the course as a whole. This approach allows for a holistic assessment of SLOs in each course, but also helps shape course-level expectations of students moving forward. These methods, furthermore, refine instructor pedagogies in the classroom by highlighting patterns of student success and persisting areas of concern.

As a supplement to the summative SLO assessment, we kept in place the essay and speech rubrics which had been used to great success last year. We saw opportunities to strengthen these rubrics by creating more uniformity across assessments within the University. Our team modeled the Discourse essay rubric after the RooWriter rubric. Though the two rubrics are not exact replicas, these methods, furthermore, refine instructor pedagogies in the classroom by highlighting patterns of student success and persisting areas of concern.

During September, UMKC Assessment Coordinators are preparing to submit annual assessment reports using the WEAVE online system prior to the October 1st deadline. We have a new series of video tutorials to support this work created by Dan Stroud, Graduate Assistant for Assessment. These four videos share the advantages and the procedures for completing Part 1 of the annual report (Mission, Goals, Learning Outcomes, Measures, Findings, and Action Plans). The second part of the annual report consists of a 1-2 page narrative description of each program’s assessment process during the 2013-2014 assessment cycle. Be sure to review the feedback that your program received at the conclusion of last year’s assessment cycle to inform the development of your annual assessment plans. See the videos by visiting the following link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCptiBF00y6pn2enFXGp-tQ

The RooWriter, UMKC’s undergraduate writing assessment, enters its second year of implementation in September. This student-centered, formative and summative assessment opportunities, and to streamline the rubric templates already in place.

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respect and effective interaction and problem solving in a diverse society. For example, classroom activities can be structured to allow students to practice civility while engaging in difficult conversations about difference. (A caveat: educators must be prepared to respond sensitively to the content and the natural discomfort that can arise when discussing diversity issues). Team projects can highlight the outcome of learning how unconscious bias—something all humans have—can impact judgment and decision-making. In addition, outcomes that require students to demonstrate effectiveness when communicating and interacting across diversity lines can be very helpful. Students can also be encouraged to pursue a second language, resulting in an outcome of increased linguistic competency.

As we go deeper into higher education, learning outcomes can and should be tied to discipline-specific competencies. A few random examples to illustrate this work at UMKC might be helpful. Case-based learning in the health professions and basic sciences can include diverse patients and conditions that prompt discussions of the social determinants of health. Urban planning coursework can incorporate content on culturally-responsive principles in community organizing. Marketing courses can enhance opportunities to design actual target marketing approaches in diverse communities. And learning outcomes can be designed that prepare students to choose tools that are culturally and linguistically appropriate when conducting individual and program assessments. Integrating diversity-related content into learning outcomes has some unintended positive consequences. This step allows us to better create a welcoming learning climate and connect with diverse students. Going a step further, diversity-related learning outcomes contribute to the learning of the entire university community. The ultimate outcome of this work: students who are equipped to go forth and be successful in an ever-changing, colorful and diverse world!

For more information about global and diversity related outcomes, you may find the following website helpful: http://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/vol17no2/index.cfm.

1Brandeis University;The Heller School for Social Policy and Management; diversitydata.org 2012.

~ Susan B. Wilson
Vice Chancellor
Division of Diversity and Inclusion

FaCET Teas and Teaching with Barbara Glesner-Fines

Thursday, October 2, Miller Nichols Library
FACET Office, 4 pm

Tuesday, November 4, Hospital Hill
Location to be determined, 4 PM

Monday, December 1st, Law School
Admin Conference room, 4 PM

All faculty are invited to share refreshments and conversation related to effective teaching and assessment.

Weave Deadline: October 1, 2014

Departments need to wrap up the findings phase of their assessment and finish action plans as the 2013-14 Academic Assessment Cycle comes to a close. For online help go to the following link:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCptiBF6pn2enFXGp-tQ

Student Learning Outcomes are now required for ALL courses at UMKC.

Undergraduate course learning outcomes must be submitted by February 1, 2015. Graduate and professional course learning outcomes must be submitted by May 1, 2015. Additional information and instruction will be forthcoming. Stay tuned!
Reflection and Self-Assessment

The Keys to Learning from Experience

Reflective practice is a habit of master learners. Those who do not critique their own performances regularly, evaluating and re-evaluating how their daily actions are shaped by their values, preferences, and perspectives will never be aware of their own strengths (so as to capitalize on these), weaknesses (so as to improve), or passions (so as to sustain themselves).

“Reflection gives meaning to experience; it turns experience into practice, links past and present experiences, and prepares the individual for future practice.” Teachers, then, should strive to inculcate in their students the habits of reflective practice. Reflective practice is especially important in helping students to learn from experience and so can be found regularly in courses with service learning or clinical components.

Reflection as a tool for self-assessment is an integral part of the learning process. It is the process of critically reviewing the quality of one’s performance in an activity. Reflection can also serve as a tool for learning from observation, when a student places themselves in the shoes of the person he or she is observing and asks, “Why did he do that?” or “How would I do this the same or differently?”

How can educators assess and improve their students’ skills of reflection and self-assessment?

First, we can provide significant learning experiences: readings, observations, and experiences that are engaging, relevant, and challenge the students. Expecting students to learn from reflection if the underlying experience is rote or routine or thin is like adding yeast to sand and expecting that one can make bread. It will simply fall flat.

Second, we can lead students to their reflection. Many students may be unfamiliar with reflection, confusing “reflection” with “reporting” and missing the critical step of self assessment that is at the core of reflection. Where students are asked to reflect in writing, their focus may be simply on the writing, rather than the content. (I know my students do not understand what I am asking of them in reflective journaling when they ask, “What citation form should I use for my footnotes?”) For students to improve their reflective abilities, they must know what this skill requires and the reasons for engaging in the practice. Prompts can be very important tools to use in guiding student reflection. Prompts can:

* ask students to describe their experience/action;

* evaluate their actions (or the actions of others) against agreed-upon standards

* compare their choices (or the choices of those they are observing) to alternatives approaches

* identify the motivations, values, or assumptions that drove their own action or the action of others;

* place their choices in context of some larger theory or pattern;

* conceive how their judgment in the future might be affected by this experience and reflection.

Third, we can engage students in the product of their reflection. That engagement can be through oral discussion and dialogue, but there are many reasons to consider asking students to reflect in writing. The formality of written reflections can encourage students to spend more time and be more precise in articulating their reflections. Written reflections produce artifacts of the student’s learning that both student and teacher can revisit at a later time to look for signs of growth.

Faculty assessment of the products of student reflection presents a number of challenges. In order to use written reflections as tools for measurable assessment, faculty must decide what the criteria are by which they will assess reflection and the levels of mastery of that skill. Developing a rubric to assess reflection can help crystallize these agreements. Examples of these rubrics can be found in the educational literature of many different professional degree programs. One of the most common concerns in assessment of reflection is the fact that the product of the reflection is not something one can

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Self-Reflection (Continued from Page 4)

predict or which might be measured against some objective standard. However, if it is the skill of reflection that is the outcome being targeted, the assessment should focus on that skill, rather than the conclusions drawn from its application. With explicit criteria for evidence of a reflective process, reflections from very different experiences with very different conclusions can be compared and evaluated. A second concern is whether assessment will be used as a basis for the course grade. Some research indicates that students will be cautious and guarded when they know they will be judged on their reflections; while other research indicates that graded reflections can provide important incentives for attention to the task. Providing students opportunities for formative assessment in reflection can help to alleviate some of these tensions.


2Sue Schutz, Assessing and Evaluating Reflection, Reflective Practice In Nursing, 55-80 (Chris Bulman and Sue Schutz, ed. 4th ed. 2008).

~ Barbara Glesner-Fines Executive Associate Dean For Academics and Faculty, School of Law

WHAT’S NEW?

Check out the Weave Tutorials on our new UMKC Assessment Youtube website. They include:

- How to create a Mission Statement
- How to create Goals and Outcomes
- How to create Measures/Findings
- How to create Action Plans

Just one more way the Office of Assessment is trying to meet all University departments ‘ needs!!!
I was fortunate to collaborate with some of the savviest composition and speaking instructors on campus: Henri Wood, Thomas Ferrel, Desiree Long, Alexis Petri, as well as Daniel Stroud and Jennifer Friend in the Office of Assessment—all of whom helped immeasurably of each other, they have increased internal integrity, and consistency that allows for clearer data collection. These rubrics allow students to clearly identify instructor expectations, enhance student understanding of evaluative feedback and ultimately improve student success. Lastly, I encourage open communication regarding the ways in which the UMKC Assessment Office can support excellence in teaching and learning. I look forward to meeting you at one of our FaCET sessions focused on assessment, starting with Barbara Glesner Fines facilitating a session on Assessing Reflection on Wednesday, September 17th at 2:00 p.m. in Miller Nichols library, Suite #225. As our Faculty Assessment Mentor, Barbara is available for individual consultation sessions and also extends an invitation to open conversations (and snacks) at Tea Times this semester. We hope to see you there!

~ Jennifer Friend

Fall 2014 FaCET Training Schedule

September 17, 2014  Self Reflection and Assessment, 2 - 3:30 PM*
October 15, 2014     Survey Methods, 2 - 3:30 PM*
November 12, 2014    Closing the Loop: Examples of Assessments That Have Improved Learning, 2 - 3:30 PM*

* Location for all meetings at Miller Nichols Library in Facet Office

New Discourse Coordinator (Continued from Page 2)

online assessment system was designed by the University Writing and Reading Board (UWRB) and the Department of Information Access. Each undergraduate student is required to complete the RooWriter by writing a 750 to 1,500-word essay in response to a reading packet related to one of six topics of choice. Essays are assessed by two independent evaluators, and the results support conversations between students and instructors to improve critical literacy skills. We welcome Crystal Gorham Doss as the new Coordinator of Writing Assessment for UMKC! For more information on the RooWriter, visit https://www.umkc.edu/RooWriter/logon.aspx or send an email to roo-writer@umkc.edu.

Rhiannon Dickerson, who will serve as Discourse Coordinator, is another new addition to the UMKC Assessment Team. Learn more about improvements in the alignment of scoring rubrics with student learning outcomes for undergraduate Discourse class essays and speeches in this newsletter. Also watch for a series of videos that will be shared later this semester featuring UMKC students, instructors, and librarians sharing their “Discourse Perspectives”!

I was fortunate to collaborate with some of the savviest composition and speaking instructors on campus: Henri Wood, Thomas Ferrel, Desiree Long, Alexis Petri, as well as Daniel Stroud and Jennifer Friend in the Office of Assessment—all of whom helped immeasurably during this process. We look forward to sharing assessment results as they become available!

~ Rhiannon Dickerson