General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title Comm 10/Comm & Human Relations   GE Area D1-Human Behavior

Results reported for AY 2013-2014   # of sections 6   # of instructors 3

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Department Chair: Deanna Fassett    College: Social Sciences

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 5: Students will be able to recognize and value individual and cultural differences in the construction and reconstruction of interpersonal relationships.

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

First, the basic course topics - creation of the self, gender, conflict, family communication, etc. – all address this SLO in one form or another. Indeed, one instructor found it challenging to look at this SLO separately because most of the course topics are embedded in the recognition and appreciation of diversity. This connection creates ongoing opportunities for discussions and activities that focus on the impact culture has on language, emotional expression, creation of identity, and perceptual differences, to name a few. One instructor uses a video clip from Jessica Simpson’s old show, The Price of Beauty, that shows her traveling to other countries to uncover what beauty means to them, ultimately demonstrating that standards and expectations vary greatly from culture to culture (e.g. in Uganda, women are sent to a fattening hut for a month before they get married in hopes of gaining as much weight as possible to look good for their future husbands).

Second, instructors noted that the Intercultural Interview Paper is ideally suited to this SLO. This assignment requires students to interview at least two other people who have different cultural experiences and backgrounds, utilizing course concepts and outside research to gain insight and understanding into how those differences are socially constructed. One instructor had students interview people who are of different age categories than themselves. This broadened their idea of ‘culture’, and by interviewing people and talking about differences, they came to understand and appreciate those differences at a deeper level. Another instructor had students present their papers in a group, panel-type format, with advance preparation time given so that students can assess the cultural differences and similarities that they found in their interviews and wrote about in their papers.

Third, instructors emphasized the need and benefit of creating a supportive class environment that enables students to directly address their own cultural differences. This approach capitalizes on the diversity of our student population by allowing them to apply communication concepts and skills to create interpersonal relationships with others who are culturally different. The key to making this work
is to create opportunities for ongoing student interaction in the classroom, which in turn enables students to develop open and trusting relationships with each other.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

First, spend more time working with students early in the semester selecting the cultural groups and individuals they will use for the Intercultural Interview Paper. This will allow them to give more thought to the process of culture, and how they can apply the concepts to their assignments. One instructor is going to require students to delve deeper into the reasons why the results of their interviews conflict with the research they found (this happen regularly). While students do a good job acknowledging the differences when they surface, they don’t usually follow through and explore why the “real life” experience doesn’t connect with their research.

Second, related to the modification above, broaden the definition of culture for the Intercultural Interview Paper. Students initially look solely at race and ethnicity as culture. Spending more time on an expanded definition will enable students to see religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, etc. as part of a person’s cultural background and experiences.

Third, schedule the Intercultural Interview Paper so that it coincides with the International House student pancake breakfast. The purpose would be for students to make connections for the required interview, to observe and enjoy many cultures celebrating their diversity, and become inspired to learn more about different cultures.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, the course coordinator and instructors are doing an excellent job keeping the goals, SLOs, content, support, and assessment consistent across sections. Regular communication between the coordinator and instructors and between the instructors maintains continuity within and across sections.

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

We cap enrollment in Comm 10 to 25 students, allowing instructors to add only two students beyond the cap. Since we do not offer larger sections, students are able to receive thorough feedback and engage in practice and revisions of their writing within the current configuration of the course and workload of the instructors.