General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: _NuFS 16: Science, Physiology, & Nutrition_  
GE Area: _B2_  

Results reported for AY: 2014-2015  
# of sections: 6  
# of instructors: 4

Course Coordinator: Judi Morrill  
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Department Chair: Lucy McProud  
College: Applied Sciences and Arts

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 to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>, 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

To be completed by the course coordinator:

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

SLO (GELO)-1: Students will be able to use methods of science and knowledge derived from current scientific inquiry in life or physical science to question existing explanations.

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

In the Academic Database Search Assignment, students came up with life-science questions, in class discussion and individually, concerning common beliefs, advertising claims (e.g., does drinking green tea lower the risk of cancer?). Librarian Emily Chan held a hands-on session at the library for each section, showing how to search the PubMed database to find current peer-reviewed studies. Students found and evaluated knowledge derived from current scientific inquiry to justify their answer to the question they posed; their written submissions were graded accordingly. Of the 165 students assessed, 61% achieved SLO-1 at a high level (90+%), 21% at a moderately high level (80-89%), 11% at an average level (70-79%), and 7% at a marginal level (69% or less). An unexpected complication was that PubMed started including magazines such as Time magazine in its database. (In the past, PubMed only included peer-reviewed journals.) As a result, some students used not-so-scientific information from magazines in their conclusions. Librarian Emily Chan found out how to filter out these magazines, and this filter is being used in Fall 2015 to confine the search to peer-reviewed journals. This has been a good assignment for students to question existing explanations by assessing the strength of current scientific knowledge (e.g., weak evidence because studies not well controlled). SLO-1 is incorporated throughout the semester, & the students did well on the relevant class activities, etc., but individual instructors had their own preferences for what to discuss (e.g., a current news item) & how to assess (e.g., individual answer on index card). Our major assignments and some class activities have always been standardized for assessment, but we are still looking for ways to standardize ad hoc class activities across sections to provide assessment data.
(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.)

Three of the four instructors teaching in Fall 2014 met before and after the semester to exchange information on the course and assignments. Often, discussion centered on how to promote critical thinking & active participation in class. One method was for students to have group discussions on a topic and then turn in their individual responses on index cards. We also decided to expand genome-related information (e.g., a UCB plant scientist gave a guest lecture on genetically modified food). For the current Fall 2015 semester, the two instructors met several times over the summer to make the course more timely (e.g., include the microbiome in discussing the digestive system), and to standardize some class responses to provide more GE assessment data. For example, we often discuss & critically assess current news items, but the items vary by instructor (e.g., salmonella outbreak, new data on effects of global warming). This semester (Fall’15), both instructors have posted the same article on illegal and hazardous drug-spiking of dietary supplements published in the 8/21/15 issue of Science for students to read & post their critical assessment on Canvas. This is a start in standardizing additional activities to provide more assessment data across sections for GE assessment reports.

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?

All sections taught by 3 of the 4 instructors were well-aligned with area Goals, SLOs, Content, Support and Assessment. The 4th instructor taught 1 section in both semesters, & did not meet with the other instructors, nor provide assessment data. This instructor is not teaching this course this semester.

(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.

n/a