The SUNY Assessment Initiative: Best Practices for Mapping Program Objectives to Curricular Activities

Presentation to Middle States Commission on Higher Education Student Learning Assessment Conference

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Presenter:

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SUNY System Administration

Session Objectives:

- Describe SUNY Assessment Initiative and progress to date
- Describe strategies for accomplishing assessment's "second step" – matching programmatic objectives to curricular activities – with an emphasis on dialogue, collaboration and community-building
- Discuss importance of ensuring congruence among objectives, learning activities, and assessment measures

The SUNY Assessment Initiative: History and Background Information

- SUNY Board of Trustees' Credit Distribution Model for General Education (1998)
- Delineation of student learning outcomes by Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education (1999)
- SUNY-wide review of general education

Learning Outcome Areas for SUNY General Education Requirement

- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences
- Social Sciences
- American History
- Western Civilization
- Other World Civilizations
- Humanities
- Arts
- Foreign Language
- Basic Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Information Management

The SUNY Assessment Initiative: Progress to Date

- Work of Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, Fall 1999 – Fall 2000
- Formation of General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group, Spring 2001
- Submission of campus-based general education assessment plans to GEAR Group, beginning Fall 2001
- Collection of data, beginning Fall 2002 (with three years of data now collected)

Assessment's "Neglected" Second Step:

Matching Programmatic Goals and Objectives to Curricular Activities

Assessment's Second Step in the Context of the Assessment Process

- Middle States' *Framework for Outcomes Assessment* and four-step model for assessing student learning outcomes
- Many benefits, if done correctly
  - Increased clarity as to extent to which – and where – learning objectives are being covered and accomplished
  - Increased awareness by faculty of their – and others' – responsibilities in delivering the curriculum, as well as a better understanding of the entire program
  - Multiple opportunities for establishing consensus about the curriculum as well as faculty ownership
  - Positive implications for developing a comprehensive "assessment database"

Relevance to SUNY Assessment Initiative

Criteria for evaluating campus general education assessment plans include “courses and activities that relate to, and are likely to result in, the achievement of the campus’ programmatic goals and objectives.”

Report of the Provost’s Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

November, 2000

Curriculum Mapping as a Strategy for Achieving Assessment's Second Step

Introduction to Curriculum Mapping

"Curriculum development is an ongoing process of evaluation, a continuous effort to incorporate new technologies, research, and methodologies into the overall scheme, even as the goal remains constant: a curriculum that prepares our students to reach the highest standards. Curriculum maps are the tools of the practitioner, the foundation upon which other work is based . . . They reveal a wealth of information. Gaps in the content become evident, and repetitions also are easily spotted."

H. H. Jacobs, 1997

Basic Steps in Curriculum Mapping

- Involve all faculty teaching in program
- Survey faculty with respect to their coverage of learning objectives
- Share information with faculty for review and discussion
- Reach consensus regarding extent to which program is addressing objectives adequately and develop strategies for change as necessary

A Sample Curriculum Map:

The Simplest-Case Scenario

Sample Curriculum Map - SUNY GE Learning Outcomes

COURSE	LEARNING OUTCOME											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MAT 101	X											X
PSY 201	X									X		X
BIO 200		X								X		X
ECO 212			X							X		X
HIS 111				X								
HIS 220					X					X		
ANT 115						X						
ENG 150							X					
ART 110								X				
GER 115									X		X	
ENG 200										X		
PHI165										X	X	
CAP 100												X
SOC 220										X	X	X

Some Observations

- Even simplest approach reveals important information
  - Redundancies and gaps in coverage of objectives
  - Similarities and differences among courses (and course sections as well)
- But, there are problems as well
  - No indication of extent to which courses cover objectives
  - Possible over-estimation of coverage by faculty (with no check on the process)
  - Still much effort, without much information yielded

A More Complex, and Informative Approach

- Have faculty indicate the extent to which they cover the learning objectives for each course they teach
- And, while you're at it, survey if they are assessing students' mastery of the objectives
- If so, have them indicate the type of measure they are using, and even the specific assessment activity being utilized

Sample Information Form for Faculty

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT INFORMATION FORM

Objective: #8 – Students will demonstrate understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process therein.

Course: ART 110 **Instructor:** K. Haring

1. Indicate the extent to which this course emphasizes the stated learning objective:

   _____ No emphasis _____ Some emphasis
   _____ Moderate emphasis ____X____ Great emphasis

2. Does your course include a direct assessment measure of the stated learning objective? ____X___ Yes _____ No

3. If so, classify this measure: _____ Exam _____ Paper __X__ Portfolio
   _____ Oral Presentation _____ Lab Assignment _____ Internship
   _____ Other (please specify: _____)

4. If so, describe this measure in some detail: Students submit at the end of the semester a "photographic essay" including 10 color prints, 8 contact sheets, and 5 slide pages. The photographs must reflect a theoretical and practical understanding of the color photographic system as well as knowledge of the various techniques covered in the course.

Sample Curriculum Map (With Assessment Strategies Added)

SAMPLE CURRICULUM MAP – SUNY LEARNING OUTCOMES
(with assessment strategies added)

COURSE	LEARNING OUTCOME											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MAT 101	E											E
PSY 201	E									P		L
BIO 200		P								O		L
ECO 212			E							P		E
HIS 111				PO								
HIS 220					E					O		
ANT 115						P						
ENG 150							E					
ART 110								PO				
GER 115									E		P	
ENG 200										PO		
PHI165										O	O	
CAP 100												L,E
SOC 220										O	P	I

Assessment Key:
P-Paper **E-Exam** **PO-Portfolio** **O=Oral Presentation**
L-Lab Assignment **I-Internship**

Sample Curriculum Map (Including Embedded and Non-Embedded Measures)

SAMPLE CURRICULUM MAP – SUNY LEARNING OUTCOMES
(including embedded and non-embedded measures)

Embedded measures collected from:	**LEARNING OUTCOME**											
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
MAT 101	E											E
PSY 201	E									P		L
BIO 200		P								O		L
ECO 212			E							P		E
HIS 111				PO								
HIS 220					E					O		
ANT 115						P						
ENG 150							E					
ART 110								PO				
GER 115									E		P	
Non-embedded:												
Portfolio	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO	PO
Writing Exam										E	E	
ACT-COMP	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E				

Assessment Key:
P-Paper E-Exam PO-Portfolio O=Oral Presentation
L-Lab Assignment I-Internship

Summarizing the Benefits of Curriculum Mapping

- Effective tool for consensus- and community-building in a department or program
- Promotes “holistic” perspective of a curriculum
- Clarifies relationships between courses (e.g., course sections, prerequisites)
- Can result in prolific assessment database through “extraction”

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