IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES INFUSED IN A CURRICULUM

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Overview

Assessing student learning of general education is often difficult, particularly for those areas of the program considered to be "infused" throughout the curriculum (hereafter referred to as "infused competencies").

1. *Need to be able to show that each of the infused competencies is, indeed, infused throughout the curriculum;*

2. *Determine "how much is enough" in terms of curricular exposure to the infused competencies;*

3. *Assess the degree to which students meet institutional expectations for the learning of these infused competencies;*

4. *Use information gleaned from the assessment to:*

   a. "Patch" areas of the curriculum considered weak in terms of student learning opportunities

   b. Address any areas of weakness of student learning

Context

For the purposes of this presentation, the following context applies:

➢ "Infused competencies" include the following general education areas –

  ❖ *Critical Thinking*

  ❖ *Information Literacy*

  ❖ *Technological Literacy*

  ❖ *Values and Ethics*

  ❖ *Diversity and Diverse Perspectives*

  ❖ *Global Issues Awareness*

➢ "Infused competencies" implies that students accrue knowledge, skills, and competencies related to each area over the course of the students' entire educational experiences, rather than acquiring them through the completion of single courses.

The Monroe Community College Experience (historically)

[as of 2012]:

For three of these infused competencies (Critical Thinking; Info. Lit., Tech. Lit.), the College had undertaken multiple assessments over three assessment cycles that faculty had found not to be useful or informative.

For the remaining three infused competencies (Values/Ethics; DDP; Global Issues), no prior assessments had been attempted.

No specific focus had been taken to measure whether or not the six infused competencies were, indeed, infused throughout the curriculum.

(Concern: Could it be the case that one or more of these competencies may not be sufficiently present in the curriculum so as to allow every student the opportunity to experience all)?

Addressing the curriculum and assessment issues of the infused competencies

The Academic Assessment Office teamed with the College's Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee to address infused competencies with the following strategy:

1. Develop and execute an "infused competencies inventory" of all courses in the curriculum to identify faculty-declared content covering each of the six general education areas;

2. From the resulting lists of courses covering each of the six areas, develop and conduct a course-based assessment for each of the infused competencies using a sample of courses from across all disciplines.
   a. *Strategy required the definition of each competency, with associated learning outcomes*
   b. *Assessment conducted would utilize mapping of learning outcomes to Course Learning Outcomes*

3. Using results from the inventory, conduct a transcript analysis from recent graduates to determine likelihood that students complete their degrees without exposure to one or more of the infused competencies

4. Analyze results from both #2 and #3 to determine whether or not students were adequately learning each of the infused competencies.

The Infused Competencies Inventory

Conducted over an 18-month period – 88% of courses covered

Preliminary "working definitions" and criteria developed by the faculty on the Curriculum Committee

Executed entirely by faculty with support from Office of Academic Assessment – no administrative involvement

Inventory served as basis for assessment and other work that followed – weaknesses of inventory were not an obstacle to progress

B.3 - Values and Ethics

Values and Ethics: MCC is an academic community that respects the values of varied people and groups, and seeks to promote an understanding of their ethical practices.

**Please check all that apply:**

☐ VE1. The course develops the student's knowledge awareness and appreciation of values and ethics.

☐ VE2. The course exposes students to multiple values and ethics issues, encouraging them to analyze these issues from the viewpoints of affected parties.

☐ VE3. The course gives students an opportunity to articulate and apply values and ethical decision making to situations involving complex dilemmas or controversial topics.

☐ VE4. Alternative ways the course meets this competency.

Alternative Ways:
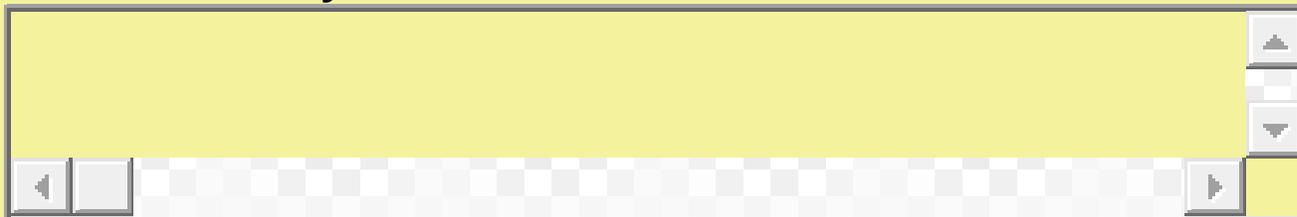
Newly-Developed Course-based Outcomes

Each of the committees developed new definitions and course-based outcomes based on the Infused Competencies Inventory form.

The new definitions and outcomes were reviewed and approved by the Faculty Senate as "provisional," for the purposes of enabling a course-based assessment of each competency.

These outcomes, once assessed, were then re-submitted to the Senate for approval to become permanent.

MCC-VE (Values and Ethics)

- ➢ Apply appropriate moral norms to make an ethical decision regarding an ethical dilemma.
- ➢ Cite appropriate professional ethics codes for responding to ethical decisions in the workplace.
- ➢ List strategies for responding to threats to ethical decision-making and values.
- ➢ Explain the personal or social benefits of behaving according to accepted ethical principles and values.
- ➢ State ethical principles associated with managing information (information: data, shared information, statistical testing, and employment specific information).
- ➢ Describe acceptable methods of resolving conflicts arising from cultural differences that influence ethics.
- ➢ Discuss conflicts that can result when personal values differ from established ethical principles.
- ➢ Analyze an ethical case study using established methods of ethical problem-solving.

The Assessments

Six committees conducted independent assessments of their respective competencies.

Each utilized (and "field-tested") their new definitions and learning outcomes.

Where possible, current work in related assessment projects was leveraged, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Results showed some areas of learning weakness among students.

In all six cases, faculty satisfaction with the assessment process and results was significantly higher than that with prior assessments.

Aggregate Findings and Results

IR Transcript Analysis, based on the data from the Infused Competencies Inventory, indicated that over 98% of students encounter and experience all of the six infused competencies during their degree studies, with varying levels of reinforcement.

Assessment of student learning in each of the six areas showed that students were, for the most part, meeting institutional goals and expectations for the learning of the infused competencies.

The "working definitions and learning outcomes" for each of the six infused competencies were found to be adequate, and were adopted by the Faculty Senate as part of a newly-designed outcomes-based general education reform plan.

New outcomes-based general education plan converts all of the former infused competencies to newly-developed general education outcomes, which can now be assessed at the course level.

Transferrable Lessons

Electronically organized inventories of curricula can be effective means of better understanding whether institutional goals in student learning experiences are being met.

Transcript analysis of graduates' learning experiences allows for clearer picture of what a "random student's experience is" with infused curriculum content.

Contextualized assessments offer a better opportunity for faculty to identify weaknesses in student learning at their source (superior to aggregate measures, like standardized tools).

Inventorying of courses is an effective first step in the conversion of a curriculum from a distributive general education model to an outcomes-based one.

Discussion.