Faculty Collaboration for Assessment Success

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Faculty Collaboration for Assessment Success

Why an assessment retreat?
The University Libraries Curriculum Committee meets monthly to discuss curriculum changes, pedagogy, and assessment. However, we struggle to fit any meaningful progress on developing good assessments into our one-hour meetings. Our solution was an off-campus retreat where we could work together to make significant progress on signature summative assessments for our 100-level courses. Our Assessment Mini-Grant funded two assessment retreats, one in December 2016 and one in May 2017.

“It’s always nice to have the opportunity and time to share and discuss with colleagues.”

December retreat goals
Before we participated in the December retreat, we developed some goals:
1. Finalize 100-level student learning outcomes (SLOs)
2. Develop signature summative assessments to align with the SLOs
3. Develop an assessment plan for 100-level courses

“It was particularly helpful to have dedicated time when we could all focus collectively on one issue.”

100-level student learning outcomes
Students will be able to:

SLO 1: develop a research strategy
SLO 2: access needed information
SLO 3: evaluate information
SLO 4: develop an argument supported by evidence

“You can't help a project or a paper unless that project or paper flows from a question. This question should be significant. It should be meaningful. It should be a question that will engage and challenge our students.”

“The best part of the retreat was having focused time to devote to the SLOs and assessment that was longer than an hour or two.”

Signature assessment - SLO 1
Students work through the steps of the research process throughout the eight weeks of our credit-bearing 100-level courses. However, articulating a distinct strategy based on a research need is difficult.

As a group, we decided to make the task a little more approachable by introducing the concept of mind mapping. By asking students to map their personal research strategies in the first week of class and then again at the end of the course, we hope to identify changes in approach and instill effective, and transferable, research habits.

Signature assessment - SLO 3
To address the multi-faceted nature of information evaluation, this particular assessment is broken down into two parts. The first asks students to correctly identify types of information sources commonly used in academic research. The second, featured below, asks students to evaluate sources based on three evaluation criteria: authority, currency, and relevance.

Students are given a research topic and are tasked with critically evaluating each article to determine which are appropriate for the given information need. Students justify their decisions through written discussions of each article.

“IT was useful to take time out of the usual day-to-day to focus on moving our assessment plans forward.”

May retreat goals
We plan to tackle the following during our May retreat:
1. Create an assessment plan for 100-level courses
2. Analyze assessment data for SLO 1
3. Analyze assessment data for SLO 3

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