

Center for Experiential Learning Assessment Action Report October 2009

In support of the college mandate for all academic programs to embark on assessment of learning outcomes, the CEL committed to an ambitious assessment plan during the 2008-09 academic year. Our strategy was to assess three very different experiential learning initiatives, all closely connected to the college's academic program, but varying in depth and structure. The three programs identified for assessment were

- Leaders for Social Change, a summer academic internship program (led by Civic Engagement)
- the Vocational Mission Statement for SWk 120, *I Want To Help People*, a CEL course-based collaboration (led by Career Connections)
- the Media Studies Digital Portfolio, an academic concentration requiring experiential learning (led by Career Connections)

Explanation of the assessment strategy for each is accompanied by a brief description of the findings and is included as an appendix; the rubrics used in two of these assessments will assist in understanding results of the assessments.

1. Which features of your program are likely to be continued, and which might be modified or discontinued, on the basis of the evidence you gathered about student learning? If you believe changes are warranted, what kinds of changes do you anticipate and why?

Assessment of student learning through specifically identified intended learning outcomes is a new endeavor for the CEL. However, both the process of data-gathering and the evidence collected clearly demonstrated the value of building systematic and manageable assessment into program activities. The primary benefit of our first year's assessment activities was an increased understanding of assessment methodology and pedagogical practices that embed assessment into on-going program activities. Identifying ILO's and determining appropriate assessment methods necessitated increased attention to structuring assignments and activities to achieve the desired results. The value of rubrics as both a teaching and assessment tool was made clear and provided nuanced information on student learning; we will continue to develop rubrics to assess our ILO's. Assessment results have helped us identify assignments and teaching methods with increased impact on student learning; this information has helped revise existing activities and shape new initiatives.

Decisions and recommendations specific to the initiatives assessed last year are outlined following that program's findings. Overall, the three initiatives assessed will continue with modifications that will enhance their impact. SWk 120 is not targeted as part of our assessment activities for the coming year, not because the assessment was not valuable. Instead the success of applying a rubric to both guide and evaluate student essays was so successful that the practice will continue as standard practice in the future.

2. What other actions, if any, might your department take in response to the evidence you gathered?

Early in our assessment efforts, the CEL realized a need to revise our ILO's. The ILO's have now been refined and will be tested in the 2009-10 assessment efforts. The CEL will continue to assess student learning to determine the impact of our activities, expanding assessment efforts in 2009-10 to include evidence gathering from each of our four broad program areas. Specific initiatives targeted for assessment:

- the Identifying Vocational Interest Series, three successive workshops building self-awareness (Career Connections)
- the Media Studies Digital Portfolio, an academic concentration requiring experiential learning (Career Connections)
- Academic Internships
- Leaders for Social Change, a summer academic internship program (Civic Engagement)
- Academic Civic Engagement, course-based civic engagement

- the Johnson Innovation Internship Program, a summer academic internship program (Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship)
- Entrepreneurial Grants, start-up money awarded for innovative not-for-profit and for-profit initiatives (Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship)

The CEL is investigating the possibility of applying for a Bringing Theory To Practice grant through AAC&U. The purpose of the grant is to determine the impact of civic engagement on civic development and psychosocial well-being; each of these outcomes is integrally related to CEL ILO's. The assessment activities required by this grant would extend CEL's assessment efforts, moving us into multi-dimensional longitudinal assessment carried out in collaboration with faculty and/or academic departments.

3. *What kind of assessment evidence would you like to gather next, and why?*

The CEL is committed to approaching assessment holistically. To further that outcome a collective decision has been made to focus on two of our ILO's in 2009-10:

- Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate vocational direction with their academic and/or experiential learning
- Students will demonstrate progress toward their vocational goals

One or both of these ILO's will be addressed in each of our assessment initiatives. Our goal is to develop a standard methodology for assessing these two ILO's, allowing cross-program comparison of outcome attainment.

4. *What kind of feedback and practical support in response to your Assessment Action Report would be helpful?*

- Since the CEL is new at developing rubrics to assess ILO's, it would be helpful to receive specific feedback on the two rubrics that we have developed. We see rubrics as a very useful tool. Several of us have attended learning sessions put on by Jo Beld and we have purchased books to further our learning, but feedback on the efforts made so far would further our understanding of what makes a rubric a useful, developmental teaching tool.
- Many CEL initiatives are collaborative. It would be helpful to know how others are approaching assessment collaboratively across departments or programs.
- In a similar fashion, our academic civic engagement and academic internship programs cut across academic departments. It would be helpful to receive guidance on gathering assessment data relevant to a variety of academic programs and yet focused on CEL ILO's.