

Cultures and Ideas FCC meeting (Benson 207A)
November 1, 2007 from 3:45-5

Members present: Phyllis Brown, John Hawley, Teresia Hinga, Lisa Kealhofer, Scott LaBarge, Art Liebscher, Barbara Molony, Andrea Pappas

Guest: Carol Giancarlo Gittens

The first half hour of the meeting was spent responding to questions and discussing issues related to the FCC's responsibilities with the goal that committee members will be able to respond to questions from faculty in their departments.

Carol introduced herself and described her responsibilities as Director of Assessment.

She suggested that the committee think of our responsibility as identifying potential objectives that can guide faculty as they decide on actual objectives for their courses.

To that end, she clarified some terms and concepts:

Learning goals, overarching and often developmental visions for student learning, can either be "mastery goals," with the idea that students will accomplish something by the end of a course, or "developmental goals," with the idea that students will become better at something by the end of a course.

Learning objectives, which are more specific than goals and specify achievements or accomplishments within the context of a specific course, are usually classified according to the same three categories as goals:

- Knowledge
- Skills (our Habits of Heart and Mind)
- Values (our Engagement with the World)

Learning objectives are articulated with action verbs: students will be able to do X.

Learning outcomes relate to learning that can be measured by the end of the course, while **objectives** are often ongoing processes.

Educational assessment takes place at multiple levels. The most important of these for our work is **level one**, which involves assessing student learning in particular classes. This level is often indistinguishable from grading student work.

Four questions asked in level one assessment are

1. have students learned what we want them to learn?
2. is there improvement during the time of the course?
3. what are strengths and weakness of the students in relation to course material?

4. what are student perceptions of the course?

When measuring what students have learned, it is not essential to distinguish what they knew coming into the course from what they learned in the course.

Level one assessment can be both direct (faculty testing the extent of student learning through exams, projects, papers) and indirect (asking students to report on their learning).

Level two assessment looks at learning across classes; level three assessment evaluates the course rather than the student learning; level four assessment evaluate programs; and level five assessment is concerned with a core curriculum or an institution.

Assessment is cyclical: faculty articulate goals and objectives, teach a course, decide what evidence to assess, and use that evidence to measure learning. The results of that cycle might result in changes in the goals and objectives for the course as the cycle begins again.

So an important challenge is to identify what counts as evidence. Key is the verb selected in relation to a particular goal or objective. The evidence needs to clarify whether students can do whatever is stipulated by the action verb. One value of formalized assessment is that it helps faculty develop activities and assignments that let them know how well students do those things by the end of the course.

Assessment can be both formative and summative. For C & I courses it is important to remember the relation of the foundation courses to C & I 3.

Carol then invited us to look at the “Proposal for the Santa Clara University Core Curriculum” document for language that can be mined for course goals and objectives. She suggested the sentence “First, students should gain a historical understanding of central themes in human experiences and cultures” can be a course goal, while the sentence “Second, students should be able to think and write critically about different definitions of culture and the relationships among global cultures, including the west,” is a learning objective for C & I courses.

The FCC can provide sample goals and objectives to help faculty develop goals and objectives for their specific courses.

The meeting concluded with discussion of how important it is to keep the assessment part of course development from being too onerous and to clarify the value of including specific assignments and activities explicitly linked to learning goals and objectives in course syllabi.

Phyllis offered to prepare a first draft of learning goals and objectives derived from the “Proposal for the Santa Clara University Core Curriculum” document for circulation before the next meeting of the committee.