

## **Outcomes as a Roadmap for Collaboration: The Development of the Co-Curricular Portfolio at Ohio Dominican University**

### **About the Institution**

Ohio Dominican University is a small Catholic liberal arts university located in Columbus Ohio. Traditional enrollment is approximately 1,500 students, with a residential system of 800. Evening and weekend programs bring the total enrollment over 2,500 students. The mission of the institution is summarized in the well publicized motto, "To contemplate truth and to share the fruits of that contemplation."

Ohio Dominican University President Jack Calareso charged the staff and faculty to create a 'holistic' educational experience for the students. The goal was to become a preeminent Catholic university that gives equal emphasis to the curricular and co-curricular experiences. He built his management team with that in mind and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and the Vice President for Student Development (VPSD) have been following suit.

### **AAC&U Greater Expectations Summer Institute**

In 2003, the University sent a team to the AAC&U Greater Expectations Institute. The delegation was comprised of the VPSD, VPAA and three key faculty members. At this summer institute, the delegation discussed liberal education, the importance of the engaged student, particularly the importance of engagement outside of the classroom, and the need for an integrated curriculum. The integrated curriculum can be defined as one that includes the principles of the core curriculum throughout the four year experience, and also provides a 'taste of the major' early in the student's career. Currently Ohio Dominican University, like many institutions, has a "2 + 2" curriculum, basically 2 years of general education followed by 2 years of taking mostly courses in the major. There was also much discussion on the value of a capstone seminar and the need to assess the curriculum based on the intended educational outcomes. By the end of the five-day institute, it was clear to the delegation that the University needed to initiate a full curriculum review with this in mind, but still struggled with the details of including the co-curricular involvements in a meaningful way. The proposal to establish a curriculum review was accepted by the president.

### **Curriculum Review Committee**

In September 2003, the Curriculum Review Committee was formed. This was initially a large committee, with representatives from each of the academic divisions, including tenured and new faculty, and members of the Student Development Division, including the Vice President. The committee was charged with developing an integrated curriculum that included our core values throughout all four years and incorporated both curricular and co-curricular experiences. The committee was also told that "everything was on the table" including the possibility of transitioning from 4 to 3 credit hour courses, limiting

the number of requirements for a major, and the inclusion of a required capstone course. There were many questions on the subject of the curricular and co-curricular collaboration, not about the importance of the goal, but how it would be realized, measured and assessed.

Much of the work of the committee during the first semester was centered around productive conversation featuring presentations from each division on their version of the ideal curriculum. Each presentation discussed the role of our general education requirements, how they could incorporate into each major, identified collaboration opportunities and debated the comparative value of a general capstone as opposed to a departmental capstone. Over the course of the semester, many common elements were identified, and areas that would require some compromise were also clearly identified. Throughout the discussion, there was no consensus on exactly how to incorporate the co-curricular experiences throughout the curriculum. There already exists a First-Year Experience class for one hour credit, and there was some discussion about the effectiveness of including a requirement of involvement credits as a graduation requirement. On several occasions there was also some discussion about creating a Co-Curricular Transcript.

### **Educational Outcomes**

After the presentations were completed, early in 2004, it became clear that to synthesize all of the proposals there would need to be explicit guideposts. There was also much discussion about the assessment of the process, specifically, by which standards would we measure the success of a revised curriculum. These discussions brought us to examine the stated outcomes of the Ohio Dominican education. Although the mission statement is very clear and present on the walls of every building on campus, it does not delineate specific educational outcomes. After a thorough examination of the AAC&U Greater Expectations document and the Catholic Dominican heritage of the University, the committee proposed, and the University has accepted, the following educational outcomes for the Ohio Dominican education:

- Socratic Self Examination
- Critical Communication
- Social Responsibility
- Narrative/Aesthetic imagination
- Quantitative/Scientific Reasoning
- Moral/Ethical imagination
- Understanding of the Catholic Dominican tradition.

The work of the committee at this point has become to review, and in some cases rebuild the curriculum with these desired outcomes as guides. The outcomes will be intentional and clearly stated, appearing in the handbook and in the syllabus for each course.

## **The Co-Curricular Portfolio**

As the committee struggled with the intentional inclusion of collaboration with co-curricular efforts, the possibility of a co-curricular transcript was raised again. There were several objections, and the most important of these are that employers report that they do not read these transcripts. *It has become readily apparent that documenting the co-curricular activities is the role of each student's resume.* Once there was agreement on this point, the question became how to provide the students with a tool that will allow them to recognize that co-curricular involvements are designed to achieve the University's stated educational outcomes and that will provide them with the ability to present achievement of each outcome clearly in a resume and cover letter.

A sub-committee developed the concept of the Co-Curricular Portfolio. Faculty members discussed the educational outcomes and how they are achieved in different venues, the student activities and residence life staff discussed how programming efforts are designed with these outcomes in mind, and the Career Services staff provided the translation from the language of the educational outcomes to the language of representative skill sets, resumes and cover letters.

The current product is a Co-Curricular Portfolio designed to:

- Define the educational outcomes;
- Present representative skills that would show achievement for each outcome;
- Present suggestions of co-curricular opportunities designed to provide students the opportunity to develop each of the representative skills;
- Provide a self assessment tool to identify individual strengths and weaknesses;
- Allow students to track their involvements and progress within each outcome.

## **Implementation**

Each first year student has received a portfolio booklet in the ODU First Year Experience class. In the class the outcomes were explained and the purposes of the portfolio were explained. Students took the first assessment and met with their instructors and peer mentors to discuss and plan co-curricular involvements that will capitalize on their strengths and improve upon their weaknesses.

All academic advisors are familiar with the portfolio and have been using it and the assessment tools as a basis for discussion in their advising meetings.

All first year students are assigned to a Student Development staff member as an advisor, and these advisors have also been using the portfolio as a basis for discussions.

The Office of Career Services has been requiring students to bring their portfolio to their initial meetings. Students are using the portfolio as they define their interests and career goals, and have begun to learn how to translate their activities into strong resumes.

Programming efforts have been very intentional in pointing out to students the importance of their involvements and how they relate to the educational outcomes. One example is the “54 Things To Do at ODU” playing cards. Each card lists a co-curricular activity and notes which educational outcome is related to that activity.

### **Still to come**

The Curriculum review committee is continuing to work on the curriculum. Currently a much smaller sub-committee is integrating all of the proposals and ironing out the details of a curriculum proposal that will be brought to the full committee.

There are discussions about the pros and cons of providing each student with an on-line version of the portfolio.

The curriculum review committee is evaluating all academic programs based on each program’s effectiveness at meeting the educational outcomes. Similarly, the Student Development Committee, a University committee comprised of faculty, staff and students, is evaluating each co-curricular program and service based on the same educational outcomes.

The assessment of the portfolio will take place through surveys, focus groups, and an evaluation report from the Student Development Committee that will rely on input from the Office of Career Services regarding the portfolio’s impact on resume development.

### **Conclusion**

There is much work to be done, however the educational outcomes have made the work much more productive. Faculty have seen that the co-curricular offerings on campus have been designed to achieve the same goals as their curriculum has been developed, not just to entertain students. For this and other reasons, there has been more faculty involvement in these activities, as advisors and participants. Currently the Co-Curricular Portfolio has been the most visible tangible evidence of the collaboration, but there will be more to follow.

For more information or a hard copy of the Co-Curricular Portfolio booklet please contact:

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