Devising an approach to assessing our general education curriculum as a whole

The Foundations Curriculum

(General Education Program at Rhodes College)

- 12 competencies articulated as skills
- F1: Critically examine questions of meaning and value
- F2: Develop excellence in written communication
- F3: Understand how change over time has shaped human culture
- F4: Read and interpret literary texts
- F5: Participate in the analysis of artistic expression or in the performance or production of art
- F6: Gain facility with mathematical reasoning and expression
- F7: Explore and understand scientific approaches to the natural world
- F8: Explore and understand the systematic analysis of human interaction and contemporary institutions
- F9: View the world from more than one cultural perspective
- F10: Develop intermediate proficiency in a second language
- F11: Participate in activities that broaden connections between the classroom and the world
- F12: Develop skills to become an informed, active, and engaged student-citizen

Assessing General Education at Rhodes College

- A faculty standing committee, the Foundations Curriculum Committee (FCC), is responsible for assessing each Foundation and for approving courses seeking Foundations designation.
- The FCC comprises four faculty members, one elected from each of our four divisions, four at-large members, and two representatives from the Office of Academic Affairs.
- The FCC has been assessing approximately two individual Foundation requirements annually with increasing quality and meaningfulness, seeking both direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.

Institutional Project Goals

1. Cultivate a holistic perspective on the performance of the Foundations Curriculum
2. Move away from disjointed assessment processes between our Foundations and program assessments.
3. Reorganize our assessment processes to gather meaningful, actionable, data across our curricula that best capture and display the integrative learning happening on campus.

Institutional Challenges in Assessment

- The Foundations Curriculum was designed and implemented before the assessment of student learning as we currently understand it was well developed. Hence assessment practices are being retro-fitted to the curriculum rather than developing curricular objectives along with assessment processes.
- While there is increasing acceptance among faculty that assessing student learning is necessary, the FCC continues to face challenges in getting broad faculty participation in assessing the Foundations Curriculum.
- The current assessment structure is overly cumbersome and requires streamlining in order to ensure that we can actually assess student learning in all of the individual Foundations.
- Finally, we seek ways to assess the curriculum as a whole.

Institutional Strengths in Assessment

- The FCC working with faculty across the institution has developed localized direct measures of student learning in lieu of using standardized tests.
- The FCC has steadily refined and standardized its assessment processes in such a way that the committee's work is well-articulated and institutionally recognized.
- The FCC is assisted in its work by the Administrative Assessment Committee (Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Student Learning Assessment, and an appointed member of the faculty) to ensure that the assessment work is completed in a timely manner and in accordance with assessment best practices.

Seeking Assistance

Effective and efficient ways to assess an entire general education curriculum that maximizes faculty participation and the cross-articulation of learning with department and program curricula.

Our Team

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