Integration of General Education and the Major: Mapping Integrative Learning

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AAC&U General Education and Assessment Network for Academic Renewal
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CURRENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- Starting Institution
- Co-Curriculum
- Transfer Institution
- Employment
- General Education
- Disciplinary Programs
- Assignments

- Courses

Assignments
How do we help students make sense of it all?

Our institutions tend not to be organized or function towards intentional alignment of student learning experiences. Students learn everywhere, but the institutional organization tends to require students to take the jumble of experiences and organize them for themselves.
The Learning Systems Paradigm

The Learning Systems Paradigm changes the way we conceptualize the organization of the institution, how we work within that organization, and whom we involve in that work. It encourages:

• Working collaboratively across typical divisions
• Intentionally aligning learning experiences
• Addressing needs of the institution’s particular students
• Building transparency for all participants and stakeholders
The Learning Systems Paradigm

A framework for supporting faculty, staff, and student efforts to create greater coherence among the various learning experiences at a given institution—and among institutions.
An Example: Oregon Tech
It all began with assessment...
## Gaps identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified problem in current GE</th>
<th>Essential Studies solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current distribution model with ‘a la carte’ menu of disconnected courses. Curricular mapping indicates lack of clarity and intentionality between institutional outcomes and the curriculum.</td>
<td>Coherent curriculum defined by what all Oregon Tech students should know and be able to do when they graduate. Connections of foundation to practice to capstone. Integrated into the discipline, synthesis in the ESSE and Capstone. ESLO pathways articulate clear connection of required coursework to the six essential outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students lack an understanding of the outcomes they are expected to achieve and fail to see the relevance of GE courses.</td>
<td>The Essential Studies program requirements identify the outcomes (ESLOs) and the curricular pathways to achieve them. GE and major complementary. Major programs place greater value on GE proficiencies by enabling students to continue to develop those proficiencies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum is not vertically connected outside the program. The 36/45 requirement provides depth in program rather than GE.</td>
<td>Practice and capstone levels build upon foundation knowledge and skills. Depth outside the major in required practice courses.</td>
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http://www.oit.edu/faculty-staff/provost/general-education-review/reports
Mapping as a conversation starter

Transformational mapping exercises:

- Identified program alignment with institutional outcomes
- Began faculty conversations to define cross-cutting outcomes
- Built consensus around a conceptual model
- Built shared understanding of final model
Mapping the co-curricular Leadership Academy
Guided pathways

AAC&U LEAP Challenge (2015)
Collective responsibility for student learning

Riegelman (2016)
It all comes back to assignments

Assignment: Research Evaluation and Information Literacy Stage 2 - 10 points

This assignment is to be completed by discipline FY in a semi-research course (e.g., PSY 336, PSY 201, PSY 465). This assignment is meant to be an introduction to information literacy and is intended to familiarize students with the research process. It is a multi-choice assignment and is designed to assess the student's ability to evaluate and critique information.

Instructions:
1. Read the assigned reading material and respond to the following questions:
   a. What is the main idea of the article and what are the key points?
   b. What evidence does the author provide to support his or her arguments?
   c. How does the article relate to the topics discussed in class?

2. Evaluate the credibility of the sources used in the article and explain why.
   a. Are the sources peer-reviewed and reputable?
   b. Are the sources current and relevant?
   c. Are the sources unbiased and objective?

3. Summarize the main arguments of the article in your own words.
   a. What are the key conclusions drawn in the article?
   b. How do these conclusions relate to the broader field of study?

4. Identify any biases or conflicts of interest mentioned in the article.
   a. How do these biases affect the credibility of the article?
   b. How might these conflicts of interest impact the interpretation of the results?

5. Evaluate the article's impact on the field of study.
   a. What are the implications of the findings for future research?
   b. How might the results of this study be applied in real-world settings?

6. Write a brief summary of the article's main points and your own analysis.
   a. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the research?
   b. How might the findings be used in practice?

7. Provide a critical evaluation of the article's methodology.
   a. Are the research methods appropriate and effective?
   b. How might alternative methods have improved the study?

8. Discuss the implications of the findings for your own research.
   a. How might this article influence your future research directions?
   b. How might this article inform your understanding of the research topic?

9. Evaluate the article's contribution to the field of study.
   a. Is the article original and innovative?
   b. How does this article build on or challenge previous research?

10. Reflect on your own experience with information literacy.
    a. How has this assignment helped you develop your research skills?
    b. What strategies can you use to improve your information literacy skills in the future?

Assignment: Research Evaluation and Information Literacy Stage 2 - 10 points

This assignment is intended to be a follow-up for discipline FY in an advanced course (e.g., PSY 336, PSY 465). This assignment is designed to further develop students' understanding of research evaluation and information literacy. It is a multi-choice assignment and is intended to assess the student's ability to critically evaluate and analyze research studies.

Instructions:
1. Read the assigned reading material and respond to the following questions:
   a. What is the main idea of the article and what are the key points?
   b. What evidence does the author provide to support his or her arguments?
   c. How does the article relate to the topics discussed in class?

2. Evaluate the credibility of the sources used in the article and explain why.
   a. Are the sources peer-reviewed and reputable?
   b. Are the sources current and relevant?
   c. Are the sources unbiased and objective?

3. Summarize the main arguments of the article in your own words.
   a. What are the key conclusions drawn in the article?
   b. How do these conclusions relate to the broader field of study?

4. Identify any biases or conflicts of interest mentioned in the article.
   a. Are the biases in the article related to the research design or methodology?
   b. Are the biases in the article related to the interpretation of the results?

5. Evaluate the article's impact on the field of study.
   a. What are the implications of the findings for future research?
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A Second Example: CSUSB

• Development of institutional outcomes
• Conversion from quarters to semesters
• Overhaul of General Education (reduced 154 outcomes)
• Need for coherence between GE and majors
A Second Example: CSUSB

General Education
1. Learning How to Learn/Metacognition
2. Thinking Critically
3. Critical Literacies
4. Global Perspective
5. Integrative Learning
6. Ethical Responsibility
7. Collaboration
Getting There

Campus Conversations about Values
Six Faculty Interest Groups
  3 Structure Teams
  3 Assessment Teams
Independently Developed Models
Campus Conversations about Models
Feedback-Driven Synthesis
The Plan at CSUSB

Seekers: Foundational Seminar

Knowers: Foundations Courses

Makers: Disciplinary Perspectives

Doers: Integrative Experiences

• Four levels of course that (ideally) students experience over their four years

• Coheres in common focus on how knowledge is constructed and used

• Encourages student agency as knowledge producers and users

• Opportunity for thematic pathways to increase coherence

• Designations for writing, diversity, and global perspectives obtainable in GE or major
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Department of English: Old Outcomes
1. Familiarity with writers and periods
2. Understanding of aesthetic forms
3. Understanding of multiple approaches
4. Knowledge of literary diversity
5. Understanding of genre
6. Understanding of linguistic analysis
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Threshold Concepts


- **Transformative**: shape how we see the world around us

- **Irreversible**: once we see that way, it is part of our perceptive lens

- **Integrative**: Reveals the connections of complex phenomena

- **Bounded**: Can be particular to a disciplinary approach to knowledge construction

- **Troublesome**: Can be counterintuitive to what we assume to be true
A Second Example: CSUSB

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**Department of English: New Outcomes**
1. Intertextuality
2. Writing
3. Diversity
4. Theory
5. Semantic Multiplicity
6. Textual Historicity
7. Social Construction
8. Research
A Second Example: CSUSB

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A Second Example: CSUSB

• Curriculum focused on how knowledge is constructed
• GE addresses the multiplicity of disciplinary perspectives
• Major examines one disciplinary perspective
• Thematic pathways offer integration of perspectives
• Designations enable embedding of GLOs into majors
• Assessment can draw on activity in majors
A Process of Reflection

• What is university-level study for?
• How does GE contribute to that?
• How do we get students there?
• How does the major support that?
• How do we determine how we’re doing?
Alignment

Using the agreed upon learning outcomes, faculty and staff align educational experiences throughout the institution for intentional integration, coherence, and fostering of multiple pathways. Alignment involves curriculum mapping, scaffolding, assignment design, mapping of career pathways, and co-curricular engagement.

What needs alignment?
Consensus

Through faculty-led conversations, reflections, and explorations with employers, alumni, and others, a shared understanding and consensus is reached on learning outcomes. This shared understanding serves as the foundation for revising outcomes for enhanced clarity and designing educational experiences.

What collaborative approaches can you use to build consensus?
Communication

Communication and collaboration with students and other audiences through transparent discussions around the outcomes and educational system works to make the implicit explicit. Communication involves exploration and integration with advising, alternative transcripts, admissions, and employers.

How can you initiate conversation?

How and what do you need to communicate to stakeholders?
How will you ensure the work is student-centered?

**Student-Centeredness**

The educational system reorganizes educational experiences around *all* students and their learning. Taking a student view includes consideration of issues of equity, learning-focused transfer, alternative delivery models, flexibility in offerings, integration of prior-learning assessment, ensuring stackable credentials, and building multiple pathways.
Resources


