ABSTRACT

At the heart of a successful General Education Program lies the ability to create interesting, engaging assignments that accurately measure a competency. Tuning is a class-level process that brings learning competencies explicitly into learning activities and assignments. The tuning process brings real-world understanding to the purpose of general education and can help students connect more with the curriculum in meaningful ways. This report explains a pilot process at Broward College where faculty worked collaboratively to tune a macroeconomics general education course to information literacy (IL) competencies.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether students who received intensive library research instruction and supports through the tuning process would be more proficient in the IL criteria measured.

BACKGROUND

As part of the General Education Program at Broward College, students must demonstrate six competencies across five subject areas. ECO 2013 Macroeconomics is a core general education course in the Social Sciences area, and Information Literacy is one of the college’s six General Education Competencies.

In the Spring of 2017, an economics professor and a faculty librarian teamed up to “tune” 3 ECO 2013 classes by building information literacy competencies directly into several course assignments. These tuned assignments were graded to give them value (20% of the course grade).

METHODS

Broward College hosted David Marshall, NILOA Senior Scholar, to lead a professional development workshop related to tuning and creating engaging assignments.

A quasi-experimental design was employed using 3 ECO 2013 classes as the experimental groups and 1 ECO 2013 class as the control group. The students in the control group received no library research instruction and no added supports.

The experimental groups received an intensive, scaffolded library research instruction component with the following added supports:

- Three information literacy assignments were created and mapped to three of the general education information literacy competencies.
- A 45 minute face-to-face introduction to library research and citation at the beginning of the term.
- A 1.25 hour face-to-face hands-on library research instruction session once the students had their approved topics for the final research paper.
- Students were provided with integrated instruction in the specific competency as well as with continuous feedback on their progress.
- Students were encouraged to attend a Citation Check appointment with a faculty librarian, where their work was reviewed for correct APA style. Students were taught how to correct any errors using the APA manual and online resources prior to tuning in their final draft.
- Using the assignments and the final research paper, students were assessed using the Broward College general education information literacy rubric on four information literacy criteria: locate information, evaluate sources, use information to support an argument or to solve a problem, and cite sources.

RESULTS

The IL assignments were distributed, collected, and scored using the Broward College general education information literacy rubric after each library research session. A majority of students in the experimental groups either exceeded or demonstrated competency on all three IL criteria measured: locate information, evaluate sources, and cite sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Locate Information</th>
<th>Cite Sources (Activity</th>
<th>Evaluate Sources (Activity</th>
<th>Use Information to Support an Argument or to Solve a Problem</th>
<th>Cite Sources (Final Paper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 a.m. class</td>
<td>14/17 (82%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>12/16 (75%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>9/18 (50%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>19/23 (83%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>9/23 (39%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 a.m. class</td>
<td>10/19 (53%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>11/20 (55%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>14/17 (83%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>19/23 (83%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>9/23 (39%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m. class</td>
<td>18/25 (72%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>12/21 (57%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>13/10 (68%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>19/21 (90%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
<td>9/21 (43%) exceeded or demonstrated competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: IL Results by Class

CONCLUSION

The results showed that, even with intensive interventions, a majority of students were still unable to demonstrate competency for citing sources on the final research paper.

Adjustment for fall semester: Increased time and refined focus of first library research instruction session to give more attention to APA citation style and included a hands-on in-class graded activity. Results for fall are promising! 81% of fall semester students (versus an average of 66% of spring semester students) either exceeded or demonstrated competency for citing sources on the first information literacy assignment.

The results showed our tuning initiative helped more students exceed or demonstrate competency on the 2 comparative IL criteria — use information to support an argument or to solve a problem and cite sources — as measured by a citation analysis on the final research paper.

Adjustments for fall semester: Simplified the pre-instructional preparation for students, eliminated one assignment, but increased the depth of the other two, added more flipped content and instruction for using, locating, and citing sources, and refined the requirements of the research essay.

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For the complete report and links to assignments visit: tinyurl.com/y8hdd54j

BROWARD COLLEGE