Assess This!: Measuring the Impact of Global Learning at Community Colleges
Harper College

Global Learning Outcomes

A globally competent student shall be able to...

* Evaluate issues of social justice and sustainable development.
* Recognize the interdependence and interconnectedness of world systems.
* Demonstrate competence in intercultural communication.
* Demonstrate skills of critical analysis in cross-cultural comparisons.
* Articulate an understanding of global perspectives.

Course Mapping Process

In fall 2015, the International Studies and Programs (ISP) Curriculum work group at Harper College spearheaded a course mapping endeavor to help identify courses that address global competency. The work group created a mapping spreadsheet for each department or program on campus (Figure 1). Chairs of each department and coordinators of each program were asked to assess the degree to which their courses met each of the five global learning objectives and then fill out the mapping document accordingly (Figure 2).

The ISP Curriculum work group is reviewing the responses gathered from the course maps to determine if there are sufficient opportunities at Harper College for students to acquire global competencies through existing courses. Based on the responses, each course will be assigned a score, which will be the sum total of all scores for all objectives. Courses will be ranked as high global competency, moderate global competency and low global competency based on their total score. Courses will also be partitioned into categories based upon which objectives they meet; the ISP curriculum work group is currently reviewing how to categorize courses in this manner.

Our goal is to graduate globally-competent students.

But what exactly is a globally-competent student?

Global competence refers to...

* The acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of international issues,
* An appreciation of and ability to learn from and work with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds,
* Proficiency in a foreign language, and
* Skills to function productively in an interdependent world community.

So, a globally-competent student has developed the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to grapple with complex global issues and function in a workforce marked by difference.

So, how do you measure global competence?

**Design a list of Global Learning Outcomes to be integrated across the college’s curricula.**

For the past two years, a work group of the International Studies and Programs shared governance committee has compiled, vetted, and created a list of 5 Harper-appropriate global learning outcomes.

Assessment

Indirect (low-impact) assessment:

Common examples are survey instruments, interviews, focus groups or self-assessments that measure attitudes or perceptions.

Key to success is multiple methods of assessment:

Methods that pair direct and indirect methods are most valuable because... 

* research indicates that students are not always able to accurately self-assess their learning, so the use of indirect measures alone may be inaccurate;
* some outcomes (e.g., attitudes) can be assessed only through surveys, interviews or focus groups; and
* indirect measures (e.g., student dissatisfaction with some aspect of their learning experience) can help explain results seen through collection of direct measures (e.g., low student performance on a key learning outcome).

Direct (high-impact) assessment:

Includes writing assignments, projects, and exam questions which allow assessment of how well students are meeting the expected level of proficiency for skills or knowledge.

At Harper College, the ISP curriculum work group is developing a direct assessment tool that can be utilized across disciplines to assess student mastery of global learning objectives in high, moderate, and low impact courses. Such a standardized assessment for global learning outcomes does not seem to exist at the community college level. Some examples of direct assessments of global learning that are currently used at Harper College follow:

World Languages: Students in a first year German class study a unit on nationality and origins. At the end of the unit, students take a quiz on European geography. The quiz consists of three parts, in which students 1) identify 10 European countries randomly selected by their instructor and provide the German name for that country, 2) identify the six European countries that have German as an official language and 3) name capital cities of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the U.S. (Assesses GLO #4: Articulate understanding of global perspectives)

Botany: Students write an essay in response to the following prompt: The production and consumption of genetically modified crops (GM crops) has been a controversial topic in both the United States and abroad. Should we continue to invest in the production and distribution of GM crops? When formulating your response, you should describe what GM crops are and how they are produced, provide concrete details to support your viewpoint, and address any counterarguments to your viewpoint. (Assesses GLO #1: Evaluate issues of sustainable development)

Chemistry: Students produce a web-based final project on climate change that includes 3 content pages: Current Data on carbon emissions; Future Projections of the consequences of drastic changes in carbon levels; and an Outlook page where students describe the overall effects of the proposed change by answering the following questions: How would this change affect overall CO2 emissions and general warming trends? Does it have any impact at all? Small impact? Large? Would you recommend it? (Assesses GLO #2: Recognize the interconnectedness of word systems)