

Assessment Day Focus Group Report – Assessment Day 2013 (April 3)

Topic

What Makes a Good Classroom Learning Experience?

Format

Two Focus Groups (one consisting of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors and the other consisting of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors) were held. The total number of participants was 18 (4 freshmen, 4 sophomores, 5 juniors, and 5 seniors; 11 females and 7 males; 1 Board of Regents, 4 College of Business, 4 College of Education, 2 College of Health Professions, 3 College of Liberal Arts, 3 College of Science, and 1 College of Information Technology and Engineering).

Major Themes that Emerged from the Groups

Question: "What Makes a Good Classroom Learning Experience?"

1. Active Learning

- Discussion/questions/small class size
- Application, "hands-on" learning
- Connection to the "real-world," e.g. job students will have in future
- Interaction with peers and professors
- Opportunities to practice, including clinical experiences and internships
- Project based/team based learning
- Group projects – can learn from each other, but it can be stressful when one member does not pull his/her weight – on the other hand one learns how to deal with different types of people and is better off in the long run if he/she participates fully in the group project.

2. Connections

- Major concepts (program's learning outcomes?) should be reinforced in many classes
- Real-life applications

3. Assessment

- In addition to opportunities to practice, students must receive formative assessment.
- Students need to know what is expected of them, i.e. outcomes and rubrics should be provided.

4. Professors

- Should be prepared to teach
- Should be passionate about their subjects
- Should have practical experience with their field
- Should be responsive to, and collaborative with, students
- Should have good classroom management skills
- Should have and enforce attendance policies
- Should not just read from PowerPoints

Issues Specific to First Year Seminar (FYS)

- Recommended more uniform structure
- Realized its value a year after taking the course
- Said that Metacognitive Reflection is an important part of this class – helped students to “learn how to learn”

Thoughts

Data were last collected on this topic during Assessment Day in 2011. At that time 67 students participated in the Focus Groups and all academic colleges were represented. The number this year was only 18 and the College of Fine Arts and the School of Journalism and Mass Communications were not represented. However, major themes (Active Learning, Caring and Engaged Professors, and Effective Use of Formative Assessment) remained the same. However, one theme that emerged this year, the need to connect important information across multiple courses within a major, did not emerge in 2011. This finding points to the importance of program and university outcomes.