

Reflections

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Educational Research SLOs - Friend or Foe?

I used to be a SLO resister. In a two-person department with nearly 40 courses, how could I find enough time to convert the curriculum and begin to do department-wide assessment of our students' learning? Besides, I knew how well my program was doing and whether my students were successful—even if I couldn't document it. I know my rights fairly well. Under California Ed. Code §53200 and Title V, I have academic freedom. The tasks of my job are clearly defined and academic and professional matters must be negotiated with faculty.

However, the college itself has rules to follow. The new accreditation standards focus on what students take away with them from their college experience. In fact, the new standards mandate that the COLLEGE will assess student learning by defining and evaluating course, degree and program-level Student Learning Outcomes. The good news is that we get to define what students are supposed to take away from their experience and how we will measure whether that has happened (as opposed to our K-12 colleagues).

Clearly this issue is an academic and professional matter, so the process by which the college engages in SLO assessment must be negotiated, which has indeed been the practice here. [OATF and LODS were the result.] However, accomplishing the required SLO tasks is *not* negotiable. The Los Rios Board of Trustees, through the Chancellor and the College President, will not allow the college to lose its accreditation.

Continued on page 3

In this Issue:

SLOs - Friend or Foe? By Gary Martin ...p.1

Thoughts on the CRC Honor Code by Sonya Reichel...p.2

Notes from CASL...p. 2

Faculty/Staff Profile: Dr. Michael Marion...p. 3

Summary of Faculty recipients of CASL Innovation Grants...p.4

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Teaching & Learning Reflections

Thoughts on the CRC Honor Code

Sonya Reichel

The Quadratic Equation lost its thrill for me a while ago. I know that's a shocking statement for the masses enthralled by the seductive plus or minus square root and charming coefficients. But it's true. And it's not just the Quadratic Equation. I don't experience the same sense of satisfaction in teaching the content of my discipline as I used to. On most days I still enjoy puzzling with a good problem, helping students to think critically and creatively, tending to the myriad dynamics of interaction and simply trying to assist them in reaching their goals. But as the years pass, I increasingly want to participate more directly in nurturing the evolution of their characters. And I recognize the importance of this as I see what I believe is blind pursuit of individual freedom with limited regard for community.

In some disciplines it seems fairly natural to weave social issues and discussion of values into course content. In other disciplines, like mathematics, this can be more challenging.

When I began serving on the Academic Integrity Committee several years ago, I discovered that the CRC Honor Code is a very helpful tool. The more I thoughtfully reflect on this simple, yet deep document, the more I see that the universal values of honesty, fairness, respect and responsibility expressed in the Honor Code form a solid foundation for growing and maintaining a well-functioning community. In some instances, due to cultural contexts, it is possible that the values might be interpreted and/or applied differently. But in general it appears that academic cultures are highly consistent around the world. And when there are differences, the discussion of various interpretations and/or applications is highly beneficial. The Honor Code provides a framework for many such discussions.

I distribute copies of the Honor Code to my students at the beginning of the semester and also expound on it in my syllabus. Each unit's suggested homework assignment sheet focuses on one of the four focal points of the Honor Code: honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. There is a great deal of discussion about academic integrity on the CRC campus and campuses across the country. I find this discussion usually focuses on honesty or the lack thereof. There are many suggestions about how to prevent "cheating" and how to rehabilitate and/or punish offenders. It is very important to discuss this aspect of academic integrity, to make the expectations around behavior clear, along with consequences for violating these expectations. But I think we are missing rich opportunity if we stop there.

The CRC Honor Code, in a form that students can sign, is available at

<http://www.crc.losrios.edu/Documents/resourceguide/CRC-HonorCodeForm.pdf>

Continued on page 5

Notes from CASSL

Resources for incorporating technology into your teaching

The following books, journals and websites were selected because they are all excellent resources for utilizing technology across a broad spectrum of learning. The information outlines both the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating *technology* into *teaching* and offer practical tips on *using technology*.

- **www.merlot.org**
- ***The Social Life of Information* by Brown & Duguid
ISBN 0-87584-762-5**
- ***Teaching As a Subversive Activity* by Charles Weingartner
ISBN-10: 0385290098**
- ***Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* by David Buckingham
ISBN: 0745628303**
- ***Journal of Educational Technology & Society*
<http://www.ifets.info/>**
- ***TechEdge Community College*
<http://ccctechedge.org/>**
- ***Greg Beyrer's D2L site*
<http://web.crc.losrios.edu/dems/d2l/>**



SLOs - Friend or Foe (cont.)

Therefore, in order to protect academic freedom, all faculty need to complete the process of getting SLOs into curriculum and need to design, implement and participate in a process of routine assessment and reporting. Rather than allow administrators or outside policy-makers to determine the SLOs for the programs and courses in my discipline, as a faculty member, I would prefer to develop and assess SLOs and come up with my own authentic assessment model that is accurate and reasonable for my discipline and area of study. I want to ensure that SLO assessment is focused on issues of teaching and student learning that are meaningful to my profession and student success.

This year when one CRC program examined the student learning outcomes for their degree, they found one outcome that was NOT addressed in any of the courses required for that degree. *Imagine.* Important departmental discussion followed. Another program discovered a prerequisite course was doing a poor job of teaching a skill required in the next course, which meant the following course had to commit too much time to remediation. *What to do?* Faculty modified instruction in the prerequisite course. These are **SLO success stories.**

So how are we doing with SLO development and assessment? There are 829 courses finished! However, 30% of CRC's courses are without SLOs, which means we have **359 to go by this time next year.** In addition, the structure for program-level SLO assessment during convocation is in place, but in Fall 2009 only 28 out of 45 academic programs submitted assessment dialog forms.

If your department still has courses without SLOs, or if you are struggling with designing meaningful assessments, plan to attend an SLO workshop during FLEX or schedule a personal or departmental training. Also, please participate in the convocation assessment dialogs. For many of us, these dialogs provide the only structured opportunity to focus on improving student learning. Engaging this opportunity will document how well we are doing and will help us implement ways of doing even better. Our students deserve the best, and we as faculty are the perfect ones to determine if that's exactly what they are getting.

Faculty/Staff Profile:

Dr. Michael Marion
Dean of Counseling and Student Services

Academic career: Dr. Marion's journey in higher education started as a student athlete at a community college in Eastern Utah. From there Michael was able to transfer to San Diego State University on an athletic scholarship where he earned a Bachelors degree in Public Administration. After graduating he returned to San Diego State as a Master's student where he earned a degree in Multicultural Counseling. His educational journey then led him to the University of Southern California where he later earned his doctorate degree.

A brief outline of Michael's career: Dr. Marion has worked in a variety of areas in the field of education, including working as a career counselor at San Diego State University and at a variety of community colleges in the Los Angeles area, including LA City and Compton Community Center. Dr. Marion relocated from southern California to Radford University in Virginia where he served as the Associate Dean of Students. His duties there also included serving as the Interim Director for the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. While at Radford, Michael provided leadership in cultural competence, student support services and the Universities Study Abroad program.

Impressions of CRC so far: Dr. Marion reflects, "Everyone has been supportive, warm and welcoming to me during my first few weeks here." He also commented that he is very committed to listening and working with his staff and the rest of the campus in continuing the superior level of service currently being provided by our counseling and student services area.



CRC Honor Code (cont.)

Most of my Honor Code discussions result from very mundane, disruptive classroom behaviors. These are the behaviors that are easy to dismiss one at a time but injure the well-being of the classroom community in the long-run. These are also the behaviors that are easy to respond to punitively without any depth of conversation regarding underlying values. For example, habitually coming late or leaving early is a source of distraction and violates fairness, respect and responsibility. So does texting during class. So does being unprepared or disengaged in class. Each occurrence of any item on the lengthy list of such behaviors is an opportunity to initiate a conversation. At the beginning of the semester I find there are many such opportunities!

When I choose to initiate a conversation with the whole class rather than with only an individual, it is not my intention to shame the individual. Rather, it is my intention to hold that individual accountable for the effect of their behavior on our community, to increase everyone's sensitivity and to open up a more general conversation about shared responsibility for the well-being of the community.

Aside from addressing behaviors when they occur, I find opportunity to address the values of the CRC Honor Code when I teach more applied courses. For example, in my Statistics classes we discuss what constitutes ethical research and we identify common ways to intentionally or unintentionally distort the presentation of information to support a particular agenda.

In my Modern Business Mathematics course, we solve problems that involve trying to maximize profit or minimize production cost. Beyond the specifics that can be captured in an equation of some sort, we consider the less quantifiable elements. Is it good practice to seek some particular level of profit if we suspect that individuals may experience a great deal of stress under the conditions required to generate this profit? Is it truly beneficial to seek a level of minimal production cost if it means that some of the people involved are not compensated fairly? A discussion of ethics that arises from applied mathematics can easily be tied back to the four values expressed in the CRC Honor Code. The Code then becomes a useful tool beyond the classroom. The resulting maturing of values, for me and others, is a meaningful and satisfying pursuit. No offense to the Quadratic Equation.

CASSL Innovation Grant Projects

Mentoring Relationships – Colette L. Harris-Mathews

Overview: Mentoring relationships have been touted as effective teaching and professional development methods to develop new faculty and faculty campus leaders. Yet, there has not been research completed on our campus to assess faculty mentor relationships. This research will explore informal and formal mentoring interpersonal relationships at CRC. The research will also analyze psychosocial and career development functions of mentoring relationships.

Mini-Lectures – Edwin D. Fagin

Overview: Economics is technical in nature and many students struggle with the technical aspects as well as the critical thinking aspect of the subject. Dr. Fagin intends to record and provide access to mini lectures on key economics topics in order to increase retention, access and success in these courses.

Click It!: Alternative Technology Strategies - Shannon Mills, Anastasia Panagakos and Amanda Wolcott Paskey

Overview: This team is researching the effectiveness of using clickers to increase student engagement, particularly in large lecture formats. They are going to assess whether this will address students' disconnect that occurs over the course of the class session despite their attempts to include individuals in discussion events. They will also be investigating whether this technology can be used to evaluate the individual student comprehension of the materials being presented at the time the information is being disseminated.

Measuring Course-Level ESL Writing Strand SLO Attainment- Lisa Marchand and Jenna Francisco

Overview: During the Fall 2009 semester, in a Type B sabbatical project by Lisa Marchand, assessment instruments that include an objective test and a scoring guide for analyzing writing samples will have been created and piloted for all the ESL writing strand courses. This project will perform an analysis of the outcomes of these tests during the spring 2010 semester.

Addressing Diversity in Accounting - Janis Caston, Norval Wellsfry, Patrick Rogan, and Margaret Parilo

Overview: This proposal is designed to provide the opportunity for focused study and dialog about how the Accounting department can modify their curriculum and/or teaching methods to better address and support the Accounting Program's diversity-related SLO, which states: "Upon completion of the accounting program, students will demonstrate the ability to relate and interact effectively in teams consisting of individuals with different interests, gender, backgrounds, and professions."