Civic Engagement in the Classroom

January 10, 2019

LRC 203

Questions for Discussion

- What does it mean to be a responsible member of your community?

- What communities are you part of, and how do you participate in them?

- Can you think of any course or assignment that you've taught at COS that was related to a civic topic, or informed students' civic activity?
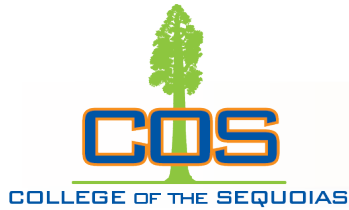
Institutional Learning Outcomes

Communication: Students will communicate coherently and effectively, orally and in writing, adjusting to a variety of audiences and purposes, while synthesizing their positions and ideas with the thinking and writing of others.

Research and Decision Making: Students will locate and evaluate information, including diverse perspectives, to make informed and ethical decisions.

Civic Engagement: Students, informed by their academic experience, will assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving/Analysis: Students will apply quantitative and qualitative reasoning skills to obtain solutions to problems or equations through the use of creative and analytical methods.

Life/Interpersonal Skills: Students will take responsibility for their own well-being through effective self-management practices, as well as developing respect for diverse practices of others.

Outcomes Mapping

ILO: *Civic Engagement* Students, informed by their academic experience, will assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

PLO (Philosophy AA-T): *Argument Paper Writing* Given primary and secondary source philosophical essays, students will write an argument paper with a focus on an important question, accurately describing ideas, and concluding appropriate to those ideas

SLO (HIST 004): *Constructive Diversity of Viewpoints*
In a written assignment, students will engage a diversity of viewpoints in a civil and constructive fashion.

Outcomes Mapping

ILO: *Civic Engagement* Students, informed by their academic experience, will assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

PLO (AUTO Air Conditioning Skill Cert): *Estimate* Prepare a written estimate of needed system repairs and estimate the related costs.

SLO (AUTO 130): Students will be able to write service and repair orders correctly.

- What does it mean for students to be "informed by their academic experience" and "assume the responsibilities of citizenship"?

- Research in this area is wide-ranging, and often includes "civic knowledge" and "engagement," including both classroom and extra-curricular learning.

Civic Engagement Assessment

- Two survey items related to the outcomes were included in the 2016-2017 student support services survey.

- Outcomes Assessment Committee drafted and refined a series of questions designed to solicit students' own understanding of the ILO.

- Questions were designed to focus on both the academic and engagement models of understanding the outcome.

- Students were selected to participate based on:
  - Their number of units completed (30+)
  - Their enrollment in at least one course with an outcome mapped to the ILO.

Survey Results

- *My experiences at COS encouraged me to participate as a responsible citizen in my community (volunteering, political advocacy, and/or community-based activities)*
  - 82% Agree; N = 1892
- *I am aware of issues that effect my community*
  - 87% Agree; N = 1897
- Of the 5 ILO's, these two items have the lowest aggregate agreement (84.5%).

Civic Engagement Assessment

- A random sample of ~500 students meeting the selection criteria were contacted via email and invited to attend one of three scheduled focus group sessions.

- In November 2018, two focus group sessions were held, with three students in attendance at each session. The sessions were moderated by two faculty members who led the discussion using the OAC instrument and took detailed notes. Sessions were two hours in length.

- The following are some preliminary highlights from those discussions—a full report will be completed by the O&A committee and released later this Spring.

- Students referenced a variety of courses and assignments: A speech class, with an assignment to give a speech on a civic topic; an ASL/ Deaf culture assignment; a paper assignment on a social problem; interviews, case studies, and volunteer/ internship work, including assignments to attend civic events (such as a city council); and classes like information literacy and statistics.

Focus Groups

- Students discussed some of the ways group work in different classes added to their understanding of engagement:

- S3: "The dynamic to forming a group is a cycle. [At the] beginning, middle, end people might interact differently. Groups help a lot; I'm outspoken, not shy. It's important to speak out about things you feel are right or wrong, but I have a tendency to overbear. Groups help a lot [with that], because [they] help me remember that it is good to sit back and let others lead or have time to share or speak."

- "Any group if we really thought about it, it doesn't have to be a class that has to do with [civic topics]. What if you had a group project in statistics."

- S1: "I never thought about that (what happens if someone doesn't participate)."

- S3: "And how you deal with it the first time, can inform the next time."

- One student was later able to tie the above discussion back to a desire to do more political volunteering "if I knock doors or do phonebanking, group experience will help."

- Students were able to make strong connections between their more traditional coursework and civic engagement, but when asked about jobs, internships, or work experience the connection was not as strong:
  - "Not really a connection to civic engagement [in work experience]."
  - Students described volunteer and work experience focused on interaction in health care settings, in prisons, tutoring, and at a food bank. They wrote outcomes for the work and completed a lot of interactive work with different kinds of people, but most did not make a direct connection to the outcome as they did with their course work.

Focus Groups

- Some preliminary recommendations:
  - Students we spoke with were very motivated and engaged. They had a strong understanding of the outcome and a desire to be active members of their communities, including the campus community.
  - However, life challenges sometimes made that engagement difficult, including the need to work, care for children, and the challenges of illness and disability.
  - Students suggested a need for a clear point-of-contact; a student liaison who might organize outreach on campus and bring their concerns to faculty, staff, and/or administration.

Focus Groups

- Some preliminary recommendations:
    - More clear and timely communication might help students locate and contact existing resources.
    - Though faculty have not always mapped courses to this outcome, students see clear connections across their coursework.
    - More work is needed to embed the outcome clearly in work experience and related contexts. The connections are there; students may need them to be highlighted more explicitly.

Breakout Activity!

- Now that you've heard more about how students see this outcome, can you think of ways it is connected to or highlighted in courses you teach?

- In small groups, craft a strong SLO for one of your courses (or reference/revise an existing outcome) that can be mapped to our "Civic Engagement" institutional learning outcome:

- *"Students, informed by their academic experience, will assume the responsibilities of citizenship."*
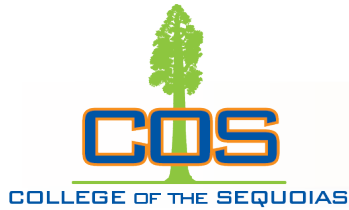
How do I assess these outcomes?

- Formative assessment: There are many classroom tools teachers can use to check-in on students' learning in the classroom, called "Classroom Assessment Techniques," or CAT.
  - In-class writing/ reflections/ minute-papers
  - Surveys/ Questionnaires
  - What do you do in your classes to check-in on student progress?
- Summative Assessment: Tools you use to measure student learning at the end of a significant course milestone.
  - Related Quiz or Exam Questions
  - Major assignments: papers, projects, portfolios
  - Rubrics to analyze and scale your results

Using Backward Design

- Backward design is an approach to teaching and curriculum design. It is most often attributed to the 1998 book, *Understanding By Design* (Wiggins & McTighe).

- Most instructional design starts with the content, i.e. what will be taught. Backward design instead begins with learning goals, then moves backward to assessment and content selection.

Learning Outcomes ➤ Assignment/ Assessment Design ➤ Content Selection

Using Backward Design

- Consider your civic engagement outcome: how could you revise or create course work to help students work toward it?

- Use the worksheet to break the outcome down into stages. What steps will students need to take before they achieve mastery of this outcome?

- What kinds of assignments will help you assess mastery of each step?

- What are some formative assessment tools you might use to check in on students' progress as they work toward completing the assignment/s?

Discussion

- What are some of the engagement activities you already use in your classroom?

- How might you revise or update an existing assignment to highlight civically engaged learning?

- What, if anything, will you take away from today's session?

ILO Assessment

Institutional Learning Outcomes

**CRITICAL THINKING
PROBLEM SOLVING
ANALYSIS**

Further Reading

- Jones, L. (2016). "Bridging the Workforce and Civic Missions of Community Colleges." *New Directions for Community Colleges, 173,* 121 – 129.

- Musil, C.M. (2015). *Civic Prompts: Making Civic Learning Routine Across the Disciplines.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

- Wiggins, G., & McTighe J. (2005). *Understanding by Design* (2nd ed.) Assoc. for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

- Contact Me!

Dr. Sarah E. Harris, Curriculum & Outcomes Assessment Coordinator

Sarahha at cos.edu