

KU Student Learning Symposium  
April 18, 2015

Notes

*KU Core Workshop @ 10:30a*

(NB: Not enough handouts on the four Core goals; instead possibly include these in folders next time?)

Opening comments by Ann Cudd: 13 – 1400 in the KU Core; hundreds reviewed each year; Core Review is about assessing learning outcomes; Critical Thinking is the most flexible. We are asking departments to do the assessment and submit reports to the UCCC (University Core Curriculum Committee). This allows disciplinary expertise to be part of the in-house review process. Core Review consists of recertification and assessment. Each Core Goal has criteria that each course must meet. Recertification is a check that the course(s) in question are doing what they are supposed to do. Explains how to report the information. Things to be reported on: evidence, which is then analyzed.

Question on Goal 3—that it is largely collapsed at points into other goals, esp. Goal 1.

AC: There will be a “very quick review process” for this goal, which is basically intended to cover breadth. “Don’t worry about Goal 3.”

Question about the schedule and expedited courses and when they will be reviewed.

Sarah Crawford Parker presents example. “177”-courses are first-year seminars offered across the university. Tells a story about her daughter who wrote a parenting rubric. Rubrics are about expectations, performance, and achievement. Draws attention to data charts. First-Year seminars are only certified for some goals. Written communication is also assessed. Goal from the beginning to make clear what is being looked for. A sample assignment is required for showing how the course will attain the goal. Many of these 177-courses relate to faculty members’ research.

SCP draws attention to 2013 data. Talks about capstone assignments from Geology and Linguistics.

*Table discussion about what is being assessed for the KU Core follows.*

Participant 1: Discussion begins with online courses and assessment. Electronic data easy to assess. Writing is being assessed in Spanish and Portuguese. Core 2.1 part of this, but S&P did not map to the Core but this may happen. Brings up example of capstone from Linguistics—doesn’t see it as critical thinking. Discussion on this commences. Concern that students already know the answer that is expected for this question.

Participant 2: Mentions recent analysis of Core Goal 2.1 in HWC. Student data collected BB. But everything must be submitted via BB. Core goals aligned on rubric with BB.

Participant 1: Advanced grad students used to grade on rubric.

Participant 3: Problem does with this, esp. on writing assessment, was hit or miss. Grading that happens on these sorts of assignments are end-of-semester. Person only has so much time.

Participant 1: And feedback not used/returned to student.

Participant 3: External reviewer did a good job; first graders, however, offered little to no data of worth.

Participant 1: BB workshop given for faculty. This helped but BB not user-friendly. Feedback for S&P the hard part. How many professors do you have?

Participant 4: 22.5. We already had this fight. We were all forced some years ago to do work for engineering-related accreditation (not KU-related), so this is not entirely new.

*SCP brings us back together and asks about conversations: What is or isn't working?*

Someone brings up the issue of scores. Which are good?

Ann Cudd says that rubrics and grades may not align. This happens sometimes. It is important to explain this to UCCC.

Someone brings up the fact that it may not be helpful to expect that students all reach the final endpoint in a course. Profs. need to set their own goals. There should not necessarily be a correspondence between grade and goal.

It is hard to disengage rubrics from grades. BB can aggregate and generate numbers which is good, but if we are looking from 0 – 4/A – F scale, we are still matching scoring and grading. Complains about not receiving feedback yet. Is a D basic achievement?

SCP sidesteps (by her own admission) the question. Suggests talking with CTE.

Participant 5: How do we measure how students are doing after the course because of the course?

SCP hands this to Stacy (sp.? Surname n/a). Stacy points out that perceived learning is perhaps the key. Mentions creating an assessment in the course.

SCP points out that some people build in assessments into courses. When students self-report, it correlates with assessments of student learning. Brings up making data visible. Wonders what people took away from pie charts of 2013 data. No one says anything. She then brings up bar charts on critical thinking.

There seems to be general dissatisfaction with the data provided. The assessments on the bar charts are seen as problematic. It is agreed that reflection is good, but this form of assessment is seen as wrong. It is recognized that assessment exams for entry into certain kinds of courses might be a very good thing. This has been a point of discussion in other programs, like having pre-tests for exams to reflect on what is learned from previous course. It is pointed out that this can be very disappointing; it is also pointed out that this is built into programs (e.g., if students gets a C in calculus, this will eventually catch up with them in Engineering).

Question is asked about whether departments should report cumulative data (thus 2 years worth after 2 years; 4 years worth after 4 years; etc.).

AC says that data should be collected every time a course is taught. But for courses where there are dozens of sections each semester, find a sampling method. Departments are not going to be assessed each year, though.

*12:00p Session*

Q: Across degree programs, what are some of the factors that prevent or delay students in progressing towards graduation?

Table-wide discussion on student starts.

More general discussion: Timely major selection; finding the right advisors (wide agreement with this); money (wide agreement with this); a sense of belonging; intellectual curiosity; difficult job market; 4-year degree arbitrary; intentional delay; may lack key skills when they come in; student abroad.

What is the university doing about it?—7 points on slide. At my table, some consternation over the plug for online and flipped courses.

Analysis of Milestone Course: chart of correlation between graduation rates and performance in ENGL 101.

Analysis of Milestone Course: chart of correlation between Nursing graduation rates and performance in BIOL 101.

Q: How are students progressing through your degree program(s)? What are the challenges for students in your program? What are some of the conditions that seem to prevent or delay students in earning degrees in your programs.

Change in hours required in Environmental Studies—but no stats available.

Early challenge for students is to recognize what they want to do. Problem with advising sometimes.

Some delays in graduation due to being international students.

Point brought up that some students are double majors. Such students are often high performing, but the double major can require more time.

MySuccess brought up. Discussion of how to use the program and what it does—emails students and advisor. Flag raised. But there is not always a response.

More general discussion: prerequisite courses across majors don't always transfer well; some students would rather take a W than a B—hence they take the course multiple times.

Doug Ward: instructors should state expectations at the beginning; flexibility—the Core is flexible but departments are not; faculty don't always realize that students are people, too; lots of classes seem to have no point—ergo, we need to explain the point, and what students will get out of it; small classes in the freshman year are important for making connections; students realize that education changes them and their relationships with family and friends, esp. for those who are first generation college students.

Q: How small is “small”?

Ann Cudd: 19 – 25 students.

*12:45p Session*

“Identifying Milestones, Opportunities, and Solutions for Improved Progress to Degree”

Three graphs given that correlate performance in a Gateway course with graduation in said degree.

Qs:

1. What is a milestone or foundation course for?
2. What might be going on if: performance in a foundational course does not relate to progress to degree; students who pass through with Cs and Ds are very unlikely to complete the degree?
3. Is there anything else you would want to know?

What is the relationship of learning to the grade in a course? Distinction made between self-motivated students and those that are not. Foundational course described as roadblock. Or, does it generate preparation necessary for making decisions, or into the next course (which some majors don't)? In some depts., students who get Cs and Ds are for students who don't complete the work. But is this because they are bad students or something else (e.g., not passionate about the topic)?

Yet, do we care if they didn't complete a particular degree after completing a Gateway course? Perhaps this isn't a good thing. And yet, a large number of students who get As in these courses don't go on to get the degree.

More general discussion: Some courses aren't equally foundational in seemingly related degree programs; there may be a problem with grade inflation; self-selection may also be an issue (how students perceive their grades and/or their courses may result in leaving or changing the major);

New graph correlating performance in first class with performance in second class.

Some students just fall through the cracks. Can you take those C students and provide some additional help (e.g., tutorials or remedial activities) that might turn them around? It is hard to know. Some students suddenly do better after a period of struggle or idiosyncratic performance. What changes? Sometimes just taking a course that gets students interested. Yet, sometimes students should do something different.

New graph on C&PE 211. Professor was bothered by the number of students who did not finish after not doing well in this course. Second new graph on subsequent performance. Professor

changed her grading scale—2.0 needed to pass. Other changes made. Third new graph on subsequent performance after these changes. Remarkable change, esp. among “D”-level students.

Q: How can you learn about milestones and barriers in student progress to your degree(s)?

1. Sketch out the ideal pathway or typical pathway to degree in your program (via handout)
2. Next come up with some criteria for identifying barriers—what would be some indicators that the milestone is serving as a roadblock, exist ramp. Or sinkhole instead?
3. Assume one piece of your pathway is an opportunity for improvement. What could you assess to diagnose what is going on, and identify a solution? Make a plan.

People break up into groups; some leave to go to other tables to work with their own colleagues. Some concern about the relation of the Core to the map drawn of the major. How do students integrate information? Various teaching styles and tools—e.g., team-based learning—may be more important for making certain Gateway courses more effective at both retaining students and preparing them for other, later courses in the major. There needs to be, within majors, a clearer articulation of what works for each course, at each level. One benefit of this would be helping students come to better know their own gaps in knowledge and understanding.