Academic Affairs

Academic Experience

First Year Experience

Program Improvement Summary

Summary of assessment results with focus on program improvement (to be shared publicly)

FYE Abroad: We used a qualitative research approach to examine our spring 2013 FYE Abroad cohort’s experience in two of our courses – History and Sociology of English Football and Biomedical Ethics and Genetics in Berlin. We ran a series of focus groups that captured 50% of course participants and then followed up with these two groups using an online questionnaire (n= 14 of 24). Our analysis of the transcripts from our focus group interviews revealed four general data categories that best represent the student narratives that we captured: Student Development, Trip Experiences, Study Abroad Preparation, and Course Reflection. Our assessment demonstrated that the academic course that students take prior to travel is an essential component of their learning experience. In addition, our work indicated that the FYE abroad courses were important experiences for students that helped shape their future study abroad plans. Finally, the use of critical reflection through out the course and in the final assignment is an essential pedagogical tool to help students develop intercultural competencies. In support of our first learning outcome, we are going to continue to collect data about FYE Abroad participants and their future study abroad participation. Moving forward we are also developing a final reflective assignment that can capture student progress in thinking about intercultural differences and values. The goal is create a framework that can be employed in courses with any subject matter or locale. This last assignment or reflection will be examined with a rubric that has been modified from the AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge Rubric. We believe this culminating assignment would provide a perfect opportunity for ongoing assessment of learning objectives two and three.

Portfolio Pilot: In the Summer of 2013, we invited participation from FYE Writing Fellows that had been a part of our week long Writing Across the Curriculum workshops in either 2012 or 2013. Interested faculty were prepared for the pilot through a half day workshop on the theory and use of teaching portfolios in the classroom. At the end of the fall semester, all the assignments, rubrics, and examples of reflective writing were collected from each faculty and posted to OAKs to share with the group. The findings of our Portfolio Assessment Pilot project suggested that critical reflection was an important tool for faculty and students in the FYE classroom. Given this finding, we incorporated a new section on the use of critical reflection in the classroom for the New Faculty FYE workshop in May 2014. In the coming academic year, we are going to continue considering how to use student critical reflection writing as a tool for programmatic assessment.