

Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning – 2006 Discussion

Drake became a part of the inaugural group of colleges and universities in the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. *Achieving Mission Learning Outcomes through the Drake Curriculum* served as the basis for development of Drake's Academy Proposal. Primary changes from the earlier report included:

1) Adoption of an active learning pedagogy for the Drake Curriculum. The core elements of active learning desired in Drake Curriculum courses are:

- active exchange of ideas among students and instructors;
 - engaging students in inquiry and problem solving;
 - connecting and applying learning to real world experiences;
 - collaborative and small group work;
 - peer critique and faculty-student conferences;
 - methods of classroom assessment that provide instructors with early feedback on student comprehension of material and acquisition of skills.
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2) Adoption of a common model of reasoned analysis to guide teaching of critical thinking in the Drake Curriculum. Students will learn to:

- clearly define a question or problem;
 - gather information that is relevant to that problem;
 - rigorously identify assumptions and preconceptions, including their own, that influence analysis of that problem;
 - organize and prioritize the information to develop a rational argument that states a clear claim or thesis, provides reasons for holding that claim, provides relevant evidence to support each reason, and considers alternative explanations in reaching a conclusion;
 - communicate that reasoned argument effectively in speech, writing, or other medium as appropriate;
 - realize that results are tentative and open to revision.
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3) Revision of the Engaged Citizen Area of Inquiry in the Drake Curriculum, to a course that requires sophomore standing and above, and emphasizing these outcomes.

Students will:

- Learn to evaluate the mix of diverse values and interests that influence democratic decision-making;
- Establish skills, knowledge, or dispositions that will lead them to be active stewards for the common good;
- Critically reflect on the social, economic, or political issues that they will face as citizens;
- Learn democratic practices or public engagement through participatory activities organized in the classroom and/or in the community.

4) Creation of the Engaged Citizen Experience to enhance learning by linking co-curricular programming to the redesigned Engaged Citizen courses. The Engaged Citizen Experience will focus the campus community on the discussion of a significant public issue or theme each spring semester.

5) Revision of senior capstones. Senior capstone will be revised to address three elements: experiential learning, reflection, and the integration of general education abilities with disciplinary knowledge and skills. The University Curriculum Committee will work with academic programs in 2008 to flexibly implement the new criteria. Academic programs should experiment with innovative and creative ways to incorporate these elements into their capstones:

- Experiential learning: The capstone includes an active, hands-on/minds-on concrete project or experience. The experience — research, practice, performance — allows students an opportunity to work independently, make decisions, develop an idea, and/or demonstrate creativity.
- Reflection: Students are required to reflect on their capstone project and its implications. Both in framing and executing the capstone project, students are encouraged to view it within a larger professional, disciplinary and cultural context.
- General education: The capstone integrates the general education abilities — for example, writing and speaking, critical thinking, ethics and the qualities of an engaged citizen – with the major.

Drake University also has moved to create an institutional structure to implement these revisions and to plan for the continued assessment and planning for the Drake Curriculum. The Drake Curriculum and Analysis Committee was created by the Provost for these purposes in 2006, and the University created the position of Associate Provost for Curriculum, Faculty Development, and Assessment in 2007 to help lead and coordinate efforts to achieve the mission learning outcomes and achieve an exceptional learning environment.