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A Tale of Two Courses: Renovating Courses for Significant Learning

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A Tale of Two Courses: Renovating Courses for Significant Learning
Denise P. Domizi, Rebecca Mullis, Paul S. Quick, The University of Georgia

Using L. Dee Fink’s model of backward course design for integrated learning (2003), nine members of a year-long faculty learning community (FLC) designed a course. Participants initially focused on critically examining what they wanted students to know, do, think and feel five years after taking their respective classes. Once participants established and refined course goals, they designed teaching and learning activities and assessments to help students meet those goals.

Fink’s model of course design and development provided the framework for creating and implementing these two redesigned courses across disciplines. This model integrates the relationships between learning goals, assessment, feedback, and teaching and learning activities to ensure that these components are integrated and support the others. Fink’s conceptual model includes a taxonomy of “significant learning” that expands the definition of learning outcomes (for example, those traditionally championed by Bloom) to include goals of foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn. This poster presents the results of two of the (re)designed courses, one on American literature and one on nutrition education, highlighting the goals of the (re)designed courses with an example of teaching and learning activities, and feedback and assessment that support those learning goals.

Paul Quick, CTL/English
American Literature from 1865-Present
Purpose: Years after graduating, when my students walk into a bookstore, I want them to turn left to the fiction section instead of immediately turning right to the magazine racks.

Most significant changes:
- R streamlined and broadened learning goals
- Included, increased, and redefined learning activities for Fink’s significant learning goals
- Increased critical reflection as part of the portfolio project as a means of assessing student progress
- Provided additional and more systematic peer review process for formative to improve learning to learn goals
- Decreased overall reading load to focus on closer, more sustained learning activities

Rebecca Mullis, Foods & Nutrition
Course: Nutrition Education Methods
Purpose: This course is designed to provide students with a strong preparation for their future role as nutrition educators for individuals, groups and populations. The purpose of the redesign was to integrate more applied activities into the course materials.

Most significant changes:
- More student involvement in every class session through class activities, short papers, class presentations, and the use of rubrics to assist students in evaluating their own and others’ work

Summary: Course evaluations went up from 4.185 before the redesign to 4.97 (out of 5) after the redesign. Sample student comments from end of term evaluations:
This class has been one of the most difficult classes I’ve taken in my academic career, but by challenging me to think in a way I’m not used to, I’ve learned the most out of any course I’ve taken.

This was a fun and interesting class. Having professionals that work in several different fields helped to show the real-life aspect of these jobs and let us see what working in the field is like. Also, class discussions helped to make us think in different ways. It opened up new ideas and discussions.

I had that the entire semester’s work led to one big final project. It gave us something to work toward and I looked forward to seeing everything together.