

Faculty Institute on Research Based-Learning in High Impact Courses

Background

In Spring 2009, the Library Advisory Board agreed to fund a proposal for the Libraries to collaborate with campus partners to provide support to faculty who were faced with several initiatives that impact the way faculty deliver their course content, develop their assignments and assess their success. These initiatives include the movement to large enrollment classes, especially for large impact, core courses; the redesign of the general education requirements around universal learning outcomes; and, enhancing the first-year experience for incoming students. There is no single entity on campus in a position to provide the faculty support and development needed.

The Libraries collaborated with several campus partners, OIT, Office of Academic Assessment, Teaching and Learning Center, and the Provost's Office to create an Institute for faculty who are teaching large enrollment, first-year courses. Particular courses were targeted, a brochure was created, and a committee began working on the curriculum of the Institute. A primary goal of the Institute was to embed library resources into research-based learning, so Liaison Librarians were included as full participants in the Institute. Sixteen faculty members and 8 Liaison Librarians participated in the Institute, which was held January 4-6, 2010. Two follow-up, half day sessions are scheduled for Spring semester 2010.

Potential Student Impact

The sixteen faculty accepted into the Institute teach the following courses. As the chart indicates, there is a potential impact on a significant number of students through the courses they teach.

Course*	Student Count		Total
	Spring 2009	Fall 2009	
Anthropology 101	432	591	1023
Business 101 (103)	518	724	1242
English 102	1406	1294	2700
History 100	143	416	559
History 102	403	397	800
Music 125	656	853	1509
Philosophy 101	281	298	579
Philosophy 102	1530	1217	2747
Psychology 101	884	1158	2042

Science 101	173	328	501
Total			13,742

*Data presented on 10 of 12 courses. Additional courses are Women's Studies 101 and Interdisciplinary Studies 201, a new course.

Curriculum

The curriculum was designed to specifically address the following goals:

- To understand how research-based learning approaches support student success.
- To articulate goals and learning outcomes for research assignments in order to communicate expectations to students and form the basis for assessment of student work.
- To analyze elements of successful research assignments and to develop alternatives to "the research paper".
- To investigate research-based learning activities that integrate library and information resources.
- To explore student learning assessment strategies for large enrollment courses.
- To discover technology options that support scalability and sustainability of research-based learning.
- To share strategies and discuss resources to help faculty you mentor GTAs/PTIs to support the integrated research assignment.

Specific sessions during the three day Institute began with an Opening Address from Patricia Iannuzzi, Dean of Libraries. The first day was devoted to exploring what research-based learning meant to participants and discussing the challenges of scale. A picture of college students in general, and UNLV students in particular concluded the first day.

The second day of the Institute addressed assignment development. An interactive session reminded faculty of what it was like to experience research for the first time. They were given an actual assignment outside their discipline to research. Discussions on designing effective, authentic assignments, evaluating an existing assignment, approaches that scale, and assignment re-design tasks comprised the remainder of the second day.

On the third day of the Institute, assessment strategies for large enrollment classes were presented by Bea Babbitt, Director, Office of Academic Assessment, in the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Lori Temple, Vice Provost, Office of Information Technology, then discussed technology tools for large enrollment classes. As an Institute partner, OIT is providing special support to members of the cohort to experiment with emerging technology not yet available to the campus in general. The Institute concluded with small group discussions by topic and class enrollment on assessment and technology topics. Finally, there was a brainstorming session on providing support to GTAs/PTIs.

Two follow-up sessions are scheduled for Spring 2010 semester. The first elaborates on assessment and the design of effective rubrics. The second will emphasize learning from faculty peers, with concrete examples of assignments that work.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the Institute experience consists of several elements that will continue until after the semester that the faculty participants' projects have been implemented (for most, this will be Fall 2010). During the three-day Institute, feedback was gathered each day on all participants' understanding of the material and what concepts were/were not useful or needed further reinforcement. Teaching faculty were asked to complete a survey after the three-day Institute and will be asked to complete similar surveys at the end of the Spring and Fall 2010 semesters. Finally, a comparison of the faculty members' course syllabi at the time of application along with those at the time of implementation will also be undertaken to examine which concepts from the Institute were integrated.

Below is an overview of some of the evaluation data that has been collected to date.

Please let us know how well the Faculty Institute met each of the following objectives. Use the following scale to rate the extent to which you agree the Institute has prepared you to:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
*Fine tune your syllabus to integrate research-based assignments	50.0% (6)	50.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
*Make effective use of a variety of strategies to facilitate development of competent student research	66.7% (8)	25.0% (3)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
*Identify effective research-based learning activities appropriate for large enrollment classes	58.3% (7)	25.0% (3)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
*Design research-based assignments that are easily managed with large numbers of students	25.0% (3)	50.0% (6)	25.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
*Guide your students in developing independent research projects that incorporate relevant library collections	41.7% (5)	50.0% (6)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
*Effectively and efficiently evaluate whether students are learning what you teach	16.7% (2)	66.7% (8)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)
*Use technology to improve student learning	75.0% (9)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)

Please rate the following:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The structure of the Faculty Institute was effective for my learning.	33.3% (4)	58.3% (7)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
There was sufficient time given during the Institute to work on my own project.	33.3% (4)	58.3% (7)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
The collaboration with my librarian partner during the Institute was beneficial.	83.3% (10)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
I would recommend this Institute to my colleagues.	66.7% (8)	25.0% (3)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
Overall, the Faculty Institute was a valuable learning experience.	66.7% (8)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

General themes from preliminary analysis of faculty comments:

- A realization by participants of the “need for the earliest possible interventions in students’ university careers to move them in the direction of greater skills and competence.”
- One of the key concepts in the Institute was breaking down the research assignment into smaller pieces (scaffolding) so that students can learn and practice these basic skills.
- Faculty wanted to see more concrete examples (and have more time to explore these) of research-based assignments.
- More time needs to be built in for the free flowing exchange of ideas between faculty members.
- A mix of appreciation for pedagogical training (e.g. “I have a clearer idea/notion what is going on – I had gotten lazy as a teacher – I am good – but this session will make me better” as opposed to “most of the rest seemed to assume I had never taught before or considered the needs or profile of my students.”
- The challenge of meeting the varying needs of multiple section courses AND large enrollment courses, both of which are high impact.
- Overwhelming agreement that the collaboration with the library liaison was beneficial, and even “one of the best things about the entire Institute.”

The Institute Cohort

On the third day of the Institute, the participants discussed their concerns that initiatives such as the Faculty Institute are sustainable and have institutional impact. During that discussion, and because of their positions in reaching large numbers of undergraduate students, we realized just how powerful members of this cohort can be as change agents in educational reform and innovation in teaching practice. Many of the teaching faculty in the cohort are tenured faculty and are considered accomplished teachers by their peers. Future plans for the cohort, in addition to the already-planned work of the

Institute, include utilizing the faculty to provide feedback on and even to pilot courses in the proposed undergraduate education reform initiatives.

Name	Department	Rank/Title
Michelle Carro	Psychology	Assistant Professor
Lynn Comella	Women's Studies	Assistant Professor
Ian Dove	Philosophy	Associate Professor
Ruby Fowler	English	Asst. Composition Director
Liam Frink	Anthropology	Associate Professor
Marcia Gallo	History	Assistant Professor
Timothy Gauthier	College of Liberal Arts	Director, Interdisciplinary Studies Program
Christopher Heavey	Psychology	Associate Professor
William Jankowiak	Anthropology	Professor
Timothy Jones	Music	Lecturer
William Ramsey	Philosophy	Associate Professor
Todd Robinson	History	Assistant Professor

Alicia Simon	College of Sciences	Director, Science 101
Al Smith	College of Business	Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Programs
Michelle Tusan	History	Associate Professor
Paul Werth	History	Associate Professor