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Chapter VIII

Assessing Diversity Issues in Instructional Technology: Strategies that Enhance Student Learning and Generate Outcomes Assessment Data

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Abstract

Assessment is a major focus in higher education; IT faculties and departments are being asked to document quantitatively what students have learned in relation to goal-oriented expectations. Although “students will value diversity in the academy and the workplace” is a common course, general education or institutional goal, we often know little about

*how well students achieve this goal because we do **not** assess it. This chapter describes how to construct Student Learning Outcomes consistent with valuing diversity, how to design tests/assignments to see if student have achieved those outcomes and how to use that information to inform and enhance student learning in our IT courses, departments or institutions. The chapter reviews key assessment principles and practices. Then, we examine four strategies to document how students' cognitive perceptions, attitudes, values and social actions in regard to diversity issues may be impacted and assessed. Assessment action scenarios elucidate the effective use of rubrics, Primary Trait Analysis, portfolios and affective behavioral checklists.*

Introduction

If you are reading this chapter, you believe that diversity issues are important. You endorse aspects on multiculturalism and undoubtedly model many teaching behaviors that foster a respect for all learners. You work hard to cover the all the Instructional Technology (IT) information, skill sets, concepts, software applications and research protocols inherent to your course. At the same time, you do not ignore related societal, legal and ethical issues in your approach. You endorse global perspectives and discredit ethnic stereotypes. Your faculty engagement is exemplary, but let there be no mistake; the primary focus in higher education today is the ASSESSMENT of STUDENT LEARNING.

Since the mid 1990s, community colleges, colleges and universities, alike, have been reeling from and responding to a paradigm shift. Higher education has changed from a culture of teaching to a culture of learning, from the examination of faculty delivery to the documentation of student performance as chronicled in *Learning from Change: Landmarks in Teaching and Learning from Change Magazine (1969-1999)* (DeZure, 2000). State offices, local governments and accrediting agencies are no longer satisfied with knowing what the curricula and faculty will “cover”; public shareholders are increasingly intent upon seeing tangible evidence of what graduates can know and do (Suskie, 2004). It is the “Age of Accountability” of student learning and assessment (Walvoord & Anderson, 1998).

So, before we address how to assess diversity issues, let's look at assessment in practice. *Academic assessment is the systematic gathering and analyz-*

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