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LEARNING LOG

Persistence Pays, Disciplinary Distinctions

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DETAILS

MAKING IT WORK, UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS, AND SHARING WHAT WORKS

TITLE

Persistence Pays, Disciplinary Distinctions


SOLUTION

Developmental Education Reform and Supports for Learning

CAPACITIES

Leadership & Culture

Owner


[Isis Artze-Vega \(/education/s/profile/00536000003Bic9AAC/\)](/education/s/profile/00536000003Bic9AAC/)


Record Type

Monthly-Current 2017



INSTITUTION

Florida International University

REFLECTION

SITE INITIATIVE

FIU's primary Collaborating for Change initiative is our gateway course redesign project, in which we are supporting teams of faculty members who teach critical gateway courses. We also have advising, technology, and pathways student success initiatives in place.

PROGRESS TOWARD STUDENT SUCCESS

My colleagues and I have made progress by finally securing the opportunity to work with Economics, the gateway department that has been the most difficult to reach!! And given that ~ 1500 students take these our Micro and Macroeconomics courses in the Fall term alone, with pass rates ranging from 60-80%, we know course improvements could have a significant impact on student learning and performance.

As the department chair said to me, "Isis, you've finally worn me down." (Only slightly humorously) Thus the "persistence pays" title of this log. How did we do it?

I've been "courting" them for a while now, inviting them to working lunches, sharing research, inviting them to campus events... A turning point appears to be that we recently helped the department gain an instructor line, one dedicated to teaching gateway courses. We recently supported some of their Teaching Assistants asked to teach these Introductory courses, and the TAs seemed to have advocated for us.

All of this has opened the door to a Summer Course Design Institute scheduled for this June. We are cautiously optimistic!

IMPACT

Again, with ~ 1500 students taking our Micro and Macroeconomics courses every Fall term alone, with pass rates ranging from 60-80%, we know that the impact could be considerable. Importantly, one of our Directors of Analysis and Information Management has devised a way to isolate the unique contribution of improved student performance in a given course to student retention. So we will share these data points, as well as her methodology, in a future log.

INTERNAL/EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Our expanded Center for the Advancement of Teaching has been invaluable, as it allows us to tailor our efforts to departmental needs and differences. In this case, 3 CAT staff members joined the Economics TAs in a learning community that was powerful for all parties involved. As one TA shared, I did not realize I had a responsibility to student success. That's not what he had seen or experienced during his studies, and this changed perspective motivated him to spend more time on his teaching and on supporting students.

External resources that proved invaluable here are articles written by Economics, as it appears they have a distinct, discipline-specific way of thinking about teaching. For instance, some of the articles suggest that Economics faculty don't spend time on their teaching because there's little-to-no ROI. The cost/benefit analysis just doesn't pan out.

Also, one of my colleagues also referred me to the Center for Teaching and Learning in Economics:
<https://ctale.org/> (<https://ctale.org/>)

As we plan our Summer Institute, this disciplinary way of thinking will serve us well.

NEXT CRITICAL STEPS❶

Designing and facilitating the Econ Summer Institute, and helping the faculty develop an evaluation plan for the redesign.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES❶

One opportunity is that we have thousands of first-year student responses to our gateway survey, such that this group will be able to use this information to inform their redesign to a much greater extent than the other gateway courses.

An ongoing challenge is that there is limited research about the teaching of Economics, and the existing studies have only shown moderate improvement. This may continue to limit buy-in and trust.

QUESTIONS/REQUESTS❶

If anyone else has noted a salient disciplinary distinction when working with faculty, it would be incredibly useful to compile these. I'll ask the faculty development community about this too, though the POD listserv.

STATUS

Final

Completion Date❶

5/31/2017

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