Forum Notes for February 26: Documenting Your Work

Speakers: Justina Brown, Instructional Designer for the Center for Instructional Innovation and Assessment

Travis Tennessen – Introduction

There are multiple ways and audiences for documenting your work, some within the university community and some external. This forum will address documentation primarily for internal audiences, but an article went out to Fellows this week to help people think about the language we use to communicate our work to external audiences. Five takeaways from *Do University Communications About Campus-Community Partnerships Reflect Core Engagement Principles?* By Christy Kayser Arrazattee, Marybeth Lima, and Lisa Lundy of *Louisiana State University:*

1. *Develop a centralized campus website with resources for community partners*.
2. *Whenever possible, identify community partners.*
3. *Pay attention to the language you use to describe campus-community collaborations*.
4. *Tell the story from both the university and community perspectives*.
5. *Represent all aspects of the project as a joint effort*.

Justina Brown

The big question we need to be asking ourselves as we approach documentation is "what are we doing, how, and why".

Documentation starts by revisiting your learning objectives, keeping the following things in mind:

- Clarity for all audiences you will be addressing
- Identifying and articulating objectives in a measurable way
- The "big ideas" in your course or program
- Ensuring you have created achievable outcomes

Communication is the next step to documenting your work. There are many ways to communicate what you have done in a course: creating an infographic, sharing testimonials, a clear syllabus, planning your documentation around the needs of your community partners.

The final step is making room for improvement. Through data collection and in process assessment, gather feedback from all relevant stakeholders, such as students, partners, colleagues, and supporting offices so you can improve the course the next time you teach it.

Comments:

Linnea Broker: Working on grant funded projects means that all data must be reported, and sent up the reporting ladder. The words "service-learning" are no longer used in reporting because it is not seen as contributing to the community in a meaningful way.

Travis Tennessen: The Geography department he was previously in had two sets of faculty, those focused on geography from a science-based background and those approaching it from humanities/social sciences. The scientists were often working in the field, making mistakes, learning from those mistakes, and sharing what they learned. Those in humanities/social science tract didn't work in the field, and had less of an opportunity to make mistakes, and seemed to grow less.

Doug Banner: Has approached data gathering from multiple angles. Student interns create their own learning objectives as they build their internships, which helps them understand their learning better. At the end of the quarter, the supervisor and faculty member do an oral evaluation with the intern. The faculty member also meets with the supervisor to assess the project. It does require a lot of communication to meet with each separate group at the end of the quarter.

Setsuko Buckley: Shared about the Japanese Studies seminars she is coordinating as part of her project for the CEF program.

Justina Brown: Program assessment is one way Setsuko can gather feedback on the events she is hosting. Formative assessment is another option available to faculty. Mid-quarter assessment is one way to see how you are doing partway through a quarter and adjusting to student feedback.

One goal for faculty throughout the quarter should be to get everything down in writing. Record what you do in a way that will benefit multiple audiences later, when you have time to look at it again. Think of it as creating a recipe for your course, so it could be replicated by someone else in the future.