



Student Support and Equity Programs Renaissance Scholars First Year Seminar Assessment Report

Sara I. Gamez, Coordinator
Makeda D. Bostic, Educational Counselor

Assessment Type: Learning Outcome Assessment

Date of Assessment Implementation: June 2011

Date of Report: July 2011

Purpose of Assessment

The First Year Seminar (FYS) is designed to support the academic and personal transition process of incoming Renaissance Scholars by providing opportunities that challenge them to begin developing a positive sense of self identity in order to become successful students. The purpose of the assessment is to see whether students have experienced a positive transition into the university, both personally and academically. Our hope is that by the end of their first year students will be connected to the university and with Renaissance Scholars, thus helping to sustain them through graduation.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Participants in the FYS will be able to:

- Identify and discuss his or her personal characteristics (including Interests, abilities, and strengths) in relation to self identity.
- Identify and discuss practices which contribute to emotional health and overall wellness
- Demonstrate financial management skills
- Demonstrate time management skills
- Develop and set realistic goals

Assessment Methodology

Evidence of Learning Outcomes were gathered by collecting the following: 1.) In-class and out of class assignments including a reflective journal, 2.) A three (3) page written paper articulating each student's life journey throughout their first year at Cal Poly Pomona. Students were asked to reflect on their understanding of who they are based on their engagement in activities and discussions in the seminar. Students were to include their experiences and the lessons they had learned that have shaped who they are and who they aspire to become, 3.) A poster collage that visually documents their experience as a first year Renaissance Scholar at Cal Poly Pomona, and, 4.) A five-minute oral presentation based on the poster collage and personal journey paper.

Results

Over the course of the year, the students' availability to attend the FYS sessions varied each quarter depending on student's class schedules. During Fall Quarter 93% of the students were available to attend the seminar. Winter Quarter seemed to be the most challenging quarter with only 79% student availability. Fortunately, Spring Quarter proved better with 100% of the students available to attend the sessions.

After reviewing the in-class FYS assignments, journals, final projects, and SLO's, results for the first three learning outcomes showed:

- ❖ 100% of FYS participants completed the oral portion of the final project, 93% completed the written paper and 86% completed the poster collage.

- ❖ 100% of FYS participants identified and discussed his or her personal characteristics (including interests, abilities, and strengths) in relation to self-identity and discussed practices which contribute to emotional health and overall wellness.
- ❖ 100% of FYS participants submitted a Summer Budget Projection Sheet and were able to demonstrate some level of financial management skill. Of those only 79% had made adequate progress towards their financial plan for summer 2011 to cover food and or housing needs. 21% of the FYS participants required additional follow-up and assistance to create a successful summer plan.

The most challenging student learning outcomes that were difficult to gather information for included 1.) ***Demonstrate time management skills and, 2.) Develop and set realistic goals.*** With regard time management skills, all students reviewed and discussed time management skills during individual advising sessions. 86% of participants had to complete a time management form according to their Academic Performance Agreement (APA). However, 14% of FYS participants were not expected to complete an APA, so they were not required to complete a time management sheet during an advising session. Unfortunately, neither RS staff member was able to be present during the Time Management Session provided by CAPS.

For the developing and setting realistic goals SLO, only 21% of the participants attended the session in which the SMART (*Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely*) Goals strategy was presented. Consequently, only these students in attendance completed the SMART Goals worksheet.

The journals section of the FYS assignments did not work as effectively as was hoped. Most students would forget to write in their journal and would complete it last minute just for the sake of turning it in when requested. That defeated the purpose of it being a reflective journal that would provide them an avenue for debriefing after each session.

Conclusion

Through the FYS, students were able to identify areas of both growth and weakness either through their final paper or during their oral presentations. It was great to hear and read the changes and realizations students have made over the course of the year. Overall, the First Year Seminar pilot year was a success.

Some of the student comments for seminar improvement included: "Leave as is"; "I think everything done was excellent"; "This program is great support"; "I just need to improve myself further"; and, "We should have a sophomore seminar".

Implication for Practice

The following are implications for practice to improve the FYS for 2011-12:

- ▶ Synthesize the remaining data collected for a programmatic assessment report.
- ▶ Reassess the time and day of the seminars in an effort to increase student attendance and avoid conflict with student classes.
- ▶ Create a pre and post assessment to help measure student learning outcomes more effectively.
- ▶ Restructure the journal assignments and have students write in journals before each session is over.
- ▶ Survey new cohort on the topics covered in 2010-11 to assess whether we should change topics based on their specific needs for self development.
- ▶ Add a session topic for the Health Center to discuss the importance of sleep, healthy eating, and exercise.
- ▶ Add a session topic for the Credit Union to discuss financial literacy in regards to credit cards and loans.