

E-Poster Session for the Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning

Title: Utilizing the Student Portfolio for Programmatic Assessment

Key Words:

1. Student portfolio
2. Program Competencies
3. Outcomes Assessment
4. Artifacts
5. Student Performance
6. Program Evaluation

Presentation Format: Poster

Audience: Administrators, faculty and evaluators

Promotional Summary: The student portfolio has become an accepted capstone experience that demonstrates academic performance. This case study describes how an online Master of Science program in nutrition has integrated the assessment of student learning outcomes in core competency areas as demonstrated in the student portfolio with the assessment of programmatic outcomes for an online Master of Science in Nutrition degree program.

Objectives:

This presentation aims to:

1. Describe how the artifacts contained in the student portfolio demonstrate student achievement of the degree program core competencies
2. Outline a comprehensive program assessment that uses the student portfolio outcomes to assess programmatic outcomes.
3. Highlight a single artifact as a sample for how the artifact measures individual student performance within a core competency area and how that translates to program outcomes and performance.
4. Use the findings of the program assessment as a feedback system to improve the program

Description:

This case study describes the process whereby an online Master of Science in nutrition degree program utilized the student portfolio as a central component of programmatic assessment. The department's need for programmatic assessment coincided with the need for a better means of appraising student performance than the previous capstone assessment process, which was the comprehensive examination. This led to the simultaneous adoption of the student portfolio and programmatic outcomes assessment processes. The previous capstone assessment method was not meeting assessment needs for a number of reasons, but primarily because of the length of time it took students to complete the comprehensive examination, which was very much tied to the degree of student independence in the examination process. These factors led to students dropping

out of the program in greater numbers than desired due to non-completion of the comprehensive examination.

The artifacts that are contained in the student portfolio are projects that are completed as part of course requirements. The artifacts demonstrate student achievement of program competencies in the areas of nutrition knowledge, teaching, critical inquiry and research, technology and communication. Each student is required to meet core competencies prior to graduation and these are identified as central concepts, knowledge and skills in each core competency area. Upon completion of all coursework, students prepare and then present a compilation of their course projects as portfolio artifacts in a course entitled "Portfolio Evaluation". Within this course, students, refine, compile and reflect upon the artifacts which have been completed throughout their course of study. This is done under the guidance of course faculty and an assigned portfolio advisor. When the portfolio development process is completed, students prepare a PowerPoint presentation summary of their portfolio describing their own story of learning. Reflections on their personal and professional growth throughout their educational process are a key component of the portfolio evaluation.

Nutrition faculty designed the framework for a program assessment that includes specific learning objectives and defines required projects, methods of assessment, identification of those responsible for the assessment, reporting structure and schedule, outcome data analysis, outcome actions taken and follow-up on actions taken. Each assigned portfolio course requirement is linked to one primary and one at least one secondary core competency area. In this case study, a single artifact, a nutrition education teaching outline, will be highlighted as an example of how an artifact can demonstrate both individual student achievement and program goals. Student reflections are also used as a gauge of how well the student perceives the program. The outcomes are used as a feedback loop to revise the courses and teaching methods in an effort to improve the student experience in achieving the program competencies.