Service Learning Across Disciplines
Dr. Lindsay Anderson, Behavioral Sciences (Sociology)
Dr. Emalee Buttrey, Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources (Agriculture)
Ms. Amy McLean, Behavioral Sciences, (Social Work)
Dr. Anderson Starling, Accounting, Finance, Economics, & Political Science (Political Science)

Service learning (SL) is becoming increasingly popular in university curricula. However very few studies are available demonstrating the effectiveness SL has on student learning and retention and subsequent community involvement. The objective of the current study is to determine if there is a relationship between SL and student retention, as well as measure the impact that SL has on a student’s feeling of connection to their university and the local community. By encouraging SL, universities seek to engage students outside of the classroom setting and increase their community ties and involvement, thus increasing the university’s retention of students. There is not sufficient empirical evidence that SL increases students’ sense of community to a level that encourages remaining at the university. By administering an online two-wave survey in courses across multiple disciplines at a southern regional state university, the researchers will collect self-reported data from students about their participation in SL and their subsequent understanding of their role within their major, local community, and university. Results of the study will either support or refute the assumption that SL increases student learning, retention, and sense of community. Additionally, university administrators and faculty may use the data to assess the effectiveness of SL on university retention rates. This study is currently in progress with the first round of surveys already completed. Our hypothesis, methods, and data up until that point will be briefly presented and then we will facilitate an open discussion concerning their work with service learning in their various disciplines, infrastructure for SL on their campuses, and efforts towards assessment Based on the responses, presenters will refer back to the input from the audience as they make the presentation to engage the audience and to foster dialogue.

Are Traditional Teaching Techniques Effective in the Distance Learning Classroom Setting?
Dr. Justin Martin, Behavioral Sciences (Sociology)

Previous research has concluded that distance learning classrooms are just as effective as traditional, face-to-face learning environments. During the spring semester of 2016, the researcher set out to test this conclusion in his introductory level social problems courses, which consisted of four sections of traditional, face-to-face instruction and one section of distance learning classes. The distance learning course was facilitated through a live lecture transmitted via closed-circuit television to four satellite campuses. Having found in a previous semester that test scores in the distance classes were on average four percent lower than test scores in the traditional classes, the researcher set out to investigate previous findings and test whether learning gains varied by a similar extent. Using a pre-test/post-test design, the findings indicate no significant differences in learning gains over the course of the semester between the two instructional settings; however, there was a large and significant effect of the course on
these learning gains. The researcher will discuss the variation in the exam scores in light of the lack of significant differences in overall learning gains. This study is being replicated with sections of introductory sociology taught by another professor.

Study Attitudes and Habits of Online Students: Deepening the Study Process
Dr. Terry Silver, Educational Studies

In order to understand the link between study habits of online students and their approaches to learning, the researcher deployed the Revised Two Factor Study Process Questionnaire: R-SPQ-2F in graduate online courses. The R-SPQ-2F Questionnaire is a tool used to ensure high quality teaching and learning occurs in the online environment. The process level is at the heart of the teaching and learning environment, where the learning related activity either produces or does not produce the desired outcome. Therefore, the teacher’s fundamental task is to engage the students in learning activities that will likely result in achieving desired outcomes. It is imperative that teachers take responsibility for ensuring assessment and other contextual components in the teaching and learning environment are constructively aligned to promote deep approaches to learning by the student. This study compared the study processes of online students in dimensions, motives and strategies across three levels: Surface, Deep and Achieving. Results from the R-SPQ-2F were analyzed and specific teaching and learning strategies interventions were implemented into the online teaching and learning environment.

Abstracts in progress.
Dr. Cindy Boyles, Behavioral Sciences (Criminal Justice)
Dr. Keith Dooley, Family and Consumer Science
Dr. Kate Ericson, Computer Science

COHORT II (2016-2017)

Application of Real-life Data to Reduce Students’ Anxiety in Data Analysis Courses
Dr. Christie Chen, Accounting, Finance, Economics, & Political Science (Management)

At many U.S. universities, business students are required to enroll in advanced statistics courses such as Data Analysis or quantitative research methodology courses. However, these students often face high levels of statistics anxiety which negatively affects their academic performance. On a positive note, several research studies have found that using real-life data during class lessons tends to improve students’ engagement and learning (Libman, 2010; Neumann et al., 2013). In this present study, we investigate the application of real-life data in a college-level Data Analysis course in order to reduce statistics anxiety. Students in a Data Analysis course were surveyed in Fall 2016 with pre-test and post-test questionnaires. The survey included the Statistics Anxiety Measure (SAM) assessing six domains: anxiety factor, fearful-behavior factor, attitude factor, expectation factor, history and self-concept factor, and performance factor (Earp, 2007) along with the students’ perception of applying the real-life data (Neumann et al., 2010) in the course. The results of this present study indicate that real-life data can reduce student anxiety in Data Analysis courses based on pre-test and post-test comparative analysis.
Assessing Student Learning Outcomes to Achieve Assurance of Learning Standards in an AACSB-accredited Business School

Dr. Christie Chen, Accounting, Finance, Economics, & Political Science (Management)

AACSB-accredited business schools must demonstrate continuous improvement in teaching. As such, most accredited business schools have developed student learning objectives or goals for their undergraduate programs. Part of the business school’s accreditation process involves demonstrating student achievement with regard to each learning objective. Hence, AACSB-accredited business schools utilize direct assessment for the assurance of learning (AoL) in order to meet each learning goal. By assessing program learning goals, the assessment data can assist business schools to close the loop by improving student learning. Two of the student learning objectives for our business school are: (1) students will demonstrate competence in their major and (2) students will demonstrate effective verbal and written communication skills. This present study seeks to identify whether our business school evaluates these two objectives with the appropriate direct measurements for student achievement. Graduating students take their major field exam in their final semester to assess “competence in their major.” Also, graduating students have group oral presentations in their capstone course to assess “verbal communication skills.” In our study, the assessment outcomes of each student are compared with his/her GPA to determine if correlations exist between the assessment outcomes and cumulative GPA, given that the major field exam and the oral presentation are intended to reflect business knowledge. For this present research study, the results indicate that our business school is properly assessing student learning outcomes with the correct direct measurement tests.

Student Perceptions of Collaboration and Team Interaction Impacting Overall Learning Experience: How Effective Is Team Work?

Rachna Tewari, Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources (Agriculture)

*Additional research team members: Joey Mehlhorn, Ross Pruitt, Scott Parrott, Jessica Crews Garcia from UT Martin & Garcia Kishor Luitel, Department of Agriculture, Angelo State University

Instructors often make use of group projects to promote student participation, inculcate team working skills, and to enhance students’ soft skills for service related jobs in the agricultural industry. Student groups work on project milestones followed by instructor feedback for improvement, and project completion is marked by student teams’ engagement in interactive group activities such as presentations, debates, and sales pitches. The overarching goal of this study is to evaluate the use of group or team projects for enhancing student learning in agribusiness courses using survey data. Specifically, this study examines the use of group projects such as policy debate, farm business plan, market simulation, market plan, and sales pitch in an array of lower and upper level agribusiness courses using an online five point Likert scale survey tool. Results indicate that students find value in these interactive projects, which facilitates a higher level of learning. Students also feel confident about their soft skills, and can better enunciate and express their viewpoints among an audience. In addition to the survey, peer evaluation results highlighted some issues with group work, such as the existence of the free-rider problem. Students suggested the need for a team leader to keep everyone on track through the different stages of the project. Instructor feedback at various stages of group work was perceived useful by the students, however class size can significantly affect the amount of time and individual attention provided by the instructor to the groups.
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Dr. Melanie Bruce, Accounting, Finance, Economics, & Political Science (Marketing) TBD
Ms. Heidi Busch, Meek Library TBD
Dr. Barb Darroch, Agriculture, Geosciences, and Natural Resources (Agriculture) TBD
Dr. Will Kang, Management, Marketing, and Information Systems (Management) TBD
Dr. Ty Perry, Accounting, Finance, Economics, & Political Science (Finance) TBD
Dr. Aaron Rowland, Behavioral Sciences (Sociology) TBD
Dr. Clinton Smith, Educational Studies TBD