

THE ASSESSMENT CHRONICLES

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JACQUELINE BURGESS, DANCE INSTRUCTOR AND ASSESSMENT CHEERLEADER

by David Mitchell

About two weeks ago, Cheli and I ran into Jacqueline Burgess, one of the fantastic part-time dance instructors here at Laney. Those of you who've worked with Jacque know her as a passionate, energetic and gregarious colleague and teacher. Jacque approached us in F-170 that day and couldn't stop singing the praises of learning assessment, talking about all the SLO/ILO assessment she was doing in her classes and the improvements that she was making as a result of assessment. To be honest, this is NOT the reaction that Cheli and I usually get from instructors when the topic of SLO assessment comes up on campus. Even though we were a little taken aback by all of Jacque's positive comments about assessment, Cheli had the presence of mind to ask Jacque if she would be kind enough to share her SLO assessment experiences with the Laney community and she graciously agreed.

Jacque began teaching dance at Laney in 2008. Before she began her tenure here, she taught dance full-time at El Cerrito High, where instructors were constantly assessing their students in an effort to make sure they were successful. Jacque brought that same assessment mindset to her work here at Laney, and uses assessment to get the very best out of both her students and herself. I asked her for some examples of that. I'll let Jacque take over and speak for herself.

"I used to give my students two major assignments every semester-- a midterm and a final. I found that these two assessments didn't provide enough feedback for me as an instructor to determine what the students were truly taking away. So now I do smaller assessments throughout the semester, about one a week. These more frequent assessments keep my students on track and focused on what they're supposed to be learning, provide early detection if they are having difficulty, and help keep ME on track too. I don't stray from my syllabus schedule as much anymore."

“I have also made changes to my grading policy due to assessment. I have always included my grading criteria and policy on my syllabus. In the past, I used only three or four grading categories, period. After reviewing assessment results, I realized that those criteria categories really didn’t communicate all that I was looking for in my students’ work. While I still have four major grading criteria categories, there are several sub categories within them. Next semester I plan to list the grading criteria including all sub categories and assignments in even greater detail on my syllabus. Students will know everything from day one; what is expected and required of them throughout the semester, and how each component affects their final grade.”

Cheli and I sometimes hear complaints about TaskStream, so I asked Jacque if she sees any value in documenting all the assessment of her classes that she’s done over the past few years. Jacque replied, “Of course there is value in that! With documentation, instructors can go back and see what was working and/or not working in their class in 2010 and compare that to what is working and/or not working today. Documentation provides teachers with an educational path by which one can see where they’ve come from and where they’re going while making necessary changes, adjustments and/or improvements.”

Jacque also wanted to note that assessing course SLOs and ILOs has also benefited the Department of Dance as a whole. Last spring, faculty members incorporated ILO #4 – Global Awareness, Ethics and Civic Responsibility into their dance pieces, which were presented in the annual Spring Dance Recital. During the summer, faculty members also incorporated ILO #4 into Dance 7, the dance study abroad course, which resulted in eighteen students and community members traveling to Cuba through the lens of dance & music. With all this assessment, Jacque feels that her department’s level of communication and collaboration has increased because of meetings in which faculty have discussed rubrics, grading criteria, assessment results and future action plans. She believes the assessment process has made all the dance instructors more aware of their own and their students’ successes and challenges.

Jacque concluded our interview by stating, “Assessment is a must for all parties involved in education. And Andrea Lee, our new full-time dance instructor and chair, has asked me to further support the dance faculty’s assessment efforts moving forward by becoming the department’s *assessment go-to girl!*” Andrea couldn’t have chosen a better person for the job.

TASKSTREAM WORK SESSION THIS FRIDAY

This Friday, October 17 from 1:00 to 3:00pm, the Learning Assessment Committee is hosting a TaskStream work session in F-170C. Get those assessment plans input now for the SLOs you’re assessing this semester. Map your SLOs to ILO #1. Or finish up any reports you have left over from last semester. Do it now before the holiday rush!

