

**2007 Evaluation Study of the
University of La Verne's Course Transformation Project (2000-2003)**

**Final Report
April 2007**

**Assessing the Long Term Effects and Implications Relative to Advancing
the Understanding and Teaching of Diversity in the Classroom**

Prepared for the Academic Assessment Committee, University of La Verne

Project Coordinator: Kent H. Badger, DPA
Research Team: Leticia Arellano-Morales, PhD
Carol Morecki-Oberg, PhD

Abstract: Summary of Projects and Recommendations

Purpose of Irvine Foundation Grant

In 2000 the University of La Verne was awarded a grant by the James Irvine Foundation to initiate course transformations related to multi-cultural issues within the classroom. Full time faculty was invited to apply for the grant and receive funds to research and redesign a course in two of the following four specific areas: course content, instruction, assessment, and classroom dynamics. The Irvine Grant was distributed over three cycles (3 years) and a total of 37 full-time faculty members were awarded grants.

Evaluation of Project Effectiveness

In 2005, Dr. Kent Badger, a grant recipient and committee chair of the University Assessment Committee, initiated a follow-up study of grant recipients to determine long term effects of faculty self-selecting to participate in a grant process and initiate change in their classroom instruction, assessment, course content or classroom dynamics. The follow-up study consisted of an interview/questionnaire conducted by two researchers over a period of 18 months. Twenty faculty were contacted and either interviewed in person, over the telephone or submitted their responses by completing the nine point questionnaire without an interview.

Results of the survey indicated a number of important and interesting effects created by faculty participation in the grant. Though many grant recipients were initially inspired to participate due to the generous stipend for supplies, books, etc, many also wanted to make a change and improve their teaching skills and student outcomes.

The majority of grant recipients selected to transform classroom instruction and course content in the following ways: 1) diversified course assignments and increased amount of student interaction and feedback into their courses; 2) attempted new instructional strategies such as role playing, debates, interviews, added personal reflections; 3) balanced in-class grouping of students to increase equity in participation from students; and 4) added case studies to reading materials and texts with diverse content information related to their course content.

In addition to faculty transforming their original courses, many reported that they

continue to diversify their teaching style and methods in other courses, thereby generalizing their new teaching/instructional/ assessment techniques to other courses, as well as having become more “self-reflective” in their overall teaching.

Participants also reported positive and lasting personal impact of the cultural course transformation process in relation to understanding and awareness of personal bias, and realizing the importance of understanding student diversity within their classrooms. Community impact within ULV was reported as enhancing dialogue between faculty as well as students, and being more open for discussions on diversity and change. In addition, a majority of grant recipients reported increased student participation in class activities and positive student responses to course objectives.

It is worth noting that most of the participants reported being supported in their course transformation by other faculty members as well as attending seminars and conferences, and purchasing books and materials with grant funds. This assisted them in understanding and pursuing the course transformation process, though it was difficult for some in relation to the courses they chose and the parameters of meeting state mandates (such as education courses related to the credentialing process). Faculty was very supportive of on-going emphasis on course transformation, and affirmed the need and importance of the process. Many participants expressed gratitude for the follow-up interviews and saw them as a way to remain connected to the transformation community, and reinvigorate transformation effort.

Recommendations

Most all participants thought their course transformation efforts as a worthwhile endeavor that should be continued throughout the University in the future. Their recommendations stressed the need for financial support, professional development and shared learning communities within the University of La Verne. In addition, they recognized that administrative support is critical to sustain and enhance the course transformation process.

Specific recommendations of the evaluation study include:

1. Renew the University of La Verne’s effort to develop specific activities for the faculty intended to promote course transformation dealing with issues of diversity.
2. These activities should focus on course content, classroom instruction, assessment, and classroom dynamics

3. Share key findings of this assessment relative to the long term benefits of the Course transformation Project at the University of La Verne with the James Irvine Foundation and encourage them to conduct other long term assessments with other universities who are Irvine Grant recipients.
4. Directly encourage other Irvine Grant recipient universities to conduct similar assessments and renew their commitments to the course transformation process.
5. Develop this assessment into a report suitable for presentation at one or more national academic conferences dealing with issues of how diversity is taught and promoted as part of course content, instruction, assessment, and class dynamics.

**Course Transformation Evaluation Study
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Background and Specific Purpose of Original Course Transformation Project

In 2000, thirty-seven faculty members participated in the transformation project over a three year period of time (see Abstract for details).

In April of 2007 an evaluation study was conducted in response to a request of the ULV Academic Assessment Committee as part of its interest in assessing the long-term effect of the University's Course Transformation Project.

The specific purpose of this follow up study was to:

1. Determine the long term effects of the faculty participating in the grant and the resultant changes in their classrooms instruction, assessment, course content and classroom dynamics;
2. Determine if the project is deemed of sufficient value to extend to additional and new faculty who were not part of the initial project; and
3. If appropriate, convey to the James Irvine Foundation and other universities who were Irvine Grant recipients, the findings of this assessment relative to the long term benefits of the Course Transformation Project at the University of La Verne in hopes that those universities will conduct similar reviews.

Research Questions of Follow-up Study:

1. What motivated faculty members to participate in the course transformation initiative?
2. What courses were transformed and why?
3. What transformation took place in each of the courses?
4. How were courses transformations made?
5. What was the specific course transformation impact on the following areas:
 - a. Faculty participant (e.g., learning outcomes, pedagogy, other classes transformed, etc.)
 - b. Students (e.g., learning, participation, etc.)
 - c. Other faculty and community
6. What challenges were encountered by participants in transforming their courses?
7. What personal insights and learning did the participant have regarding course transformation?
8. What were participants' recommendations to maintain the process of course transformation?
9. What resources are needed to support the process of course transformation?

Research Approach

Thirty-seven faculty members participated in the course transformation project, twenty participated in the follow up interviews; two participants submitted their responses in writing without individual interviews.

Nine questions pertaining to the course transformation project were asked and interviews ranged between 10 to 30 minutes. Below is a summary of themes and frequencies for each specific question.

Finding to Each Research Question

Impressions and conclusions of the 2007 evaluation study are based on 20 individual interviews with course transformation recipients. Two participants submitted their responses without individual interview. Nine questions pertaining to the course transformation process were asked and interviews ranged between 10 to 30 minutes. Below is a summary of the findings by each research question.

1. Participant Motivation for Involvement in Course Transformation Project

Faculty participants indicated the following reasons for their involvement in the course transformation project. The percentage of faculty responding to each reason is indicated below. Faculty often expressed more than one reason for involvement.

- Obtain feedback or ideas on how to enrich their course by integrating diversity issues (50%)
- The opportunity to improve their teaching skills and learn about diverse learning styles (30%)
- The generous stipend that was offered (25%)
- Motivation by other faculty members who were course recipients, and were enthusiastically sharing their experiences and resources (20%)
- General interest and curiosity in the subject and/or process of course transformation (15%)
- Apparent assistance with meeting standards of program accreditation (5%)

The participant stipend enabled participants to engage in the following new teaching approaches:

- Purchase costly materials and resources
- Provide more group work, case studies, and project work for students
- Create study rewards for extra work
- Create a 'dry lab experience'
- Develop a student health fair inviting others to observe their work

The participants improved their teaching skills by:

- Incorporating different teaching methods into the classroom experience
- Changing the traditional ‘lecture method’ of their specific courses
- Incorporating more student group work
- Creating group products (such as posters, etc)

2. Courses Selected for Transformation and Reasons for Selection

The courses that were selected for course transformation included the following diverse range of course topic area: ECBU 201: Fundamentals of Accounting II; ENG 340: Shakespeare; HIST 101: World Civilization 1; LS 368: Litigation II; MSS 324: Evaluation of Assessment of Athletic Injuries-Lower Extremities; REL 100: Introduction to Religion; SOC 101: Introduction to Sociology; PSY 315: Psychological Testing; PSY 327: Health Psychology; BIO 310 Cell Biology; ECBU: Accounting Information for Decision Making; EDUC 336: Power of Language; HSM 302: Sociology of Medicine; HSM 501: Health Services Management Theory and Practice; EDUC 407: Computers in Education; EDUC 412: Theories and Methods of Educating Linguistically Diverse Students; EDUC 449: Early Childhood Literacy; EDUC 415S: Reading Comprehension, Single Subject; and EDUC 399D: Culmination Course.

Participants gave a wide range of reasons for the specific courses they selected for transformation. The percentage of participants responding to each reason is given below:

- To enhance course content (30%)
- Provide best opportunity to enhance teaching skills (15%)
- The course was at least difficult or most convenient, or most challenging to transform (10%)
- Enhanced awareness of diverse student learning styles (10%)
- Provided additional funding to purchase costly material (5%)
- Importance of a required course or the latitude of an elective course (10%)
- The course ‘provided the greatest opportunity among all courses to somehow incorporate the concepts of diversity’ (1 faculty)
- Identified as the most obvious courser in which to introduce diversity (1 faculty)
- Opportunity to demonstrate women’s contributions to highly chauvinist field (1 faculty)

3. Dimensions of Course Transformation

In order to participate in the course transformation grant, all participants were required to select two of the following four dimensions to transform: instruction, class dynamics, content, or assessment. “Instruction” referred to a variety of classroom instructional formats from, lecture, guided question and answer brainstorming techniques, homogenous and heterogeneous grouping, etc. Class dynamics was understood to mean added equity

within interpersonal exchanges between students and students, and students and instructor, such as student participation, eliciting and acceptance of different students' responses, openness to different students, prior experiences and relating those experiences to content and on-target student conversations, and other classroom behavioral dynamics, Content referred to specific course content, including the addition of multi-cultural readings, lectures, visits, etc., as well as adding content regarding gender issues, race, religion, language, and others into core syllabi. Assessment strategies reflected alternative modes of assessing students' knowledge and skills in addition to the traditional paper/pencil method.

60% of the participants elected to focus upon instruction, 45% selected content, 40% assessment, and 30% class dynamics.

4. How Courses Were Transformed

Over fifty percent of participants indicated that they diversified their courses assignments and also increased the amount of student interaction and feedback into their courses. For instance, several participants reported that their assignments reflected "alternative ways to command material." Modified assignments included:

- Site visits
- Field work
- Role-playing
- Debates
- Case studies
- Interviews
- Lab work
- Class discussions with a wide range of topic areas

Other participants indicated that they strived to achieve "equity in participation" and "more feedback from students". They modified the case study approach used in courses by:

- Creating diverse teams within classes
- Incorporating specific additional readings
- Including personal reflections
- Enhancing group discussions
- Writing critical analysis papers related to diversity and the curriculum.

Some participants created new assessment models such as a home-literacy study project as well as incorporating an anti-bias curriculum for study. Participants also changed their style of teaching, incorporated technology into their classroom to allow for applied learning. They diversified their course readings with specific texts and references that related to diversity.

In addition, one participant indicated that the transformed course was “moved from the end of the credential program to the beginning,” indicating that the transformed course affected the course sequence within the program.

5a. Personal Impact of Course Transformation on Participant

25% of participants reported that they are personally more aware of issues related to diversity and bias, and the importance of keeping this awareness in “consciousness”. Others learned the importance of increasing the amount of student interaction and communication by allowing more students the opportunity to express themselves during class, and listening to students. In addition, 20% of participants identified the importance of recognizing the diversity of student learning styles.

More open classroom communication resulted in being “in tune with students” and feeling “freer to discuss diversity issues.” One participant reported being more intentional about addressing diversity and bias issues both in the classroom as well as socially.

Other personal impacts include:

- Learning the importance of increasing the amount of student interaction and communication by allowing more people the opportunity to express themselves during class, and listening to students (20%)
- Recognizing the diversity of student learning styles. For instance, a participant indicated being “in tune with students” as a result of having open communication. Another feels “more free to discuss diversity issues” in the classroom, whereas another participant reported being more intentional about addressing diversity and bias issues both in the classroom as well as socially (20%)
- Advocacy and personal empowerment as in “feeling braver to speak out” (5%)
- Enhanced personal and professional development by becoming a “better teacher,” reflecting to “fine-tune” ones teaching and to “reinforce anti-bias curriculum and teaching attitudes” and awareness of personal and professional biases (10%)

5b. Impact Course Transformation on Students

Approximately 50% of the respondents indicated increased student participation and positive student reactions. Student’s responses indicated that:

- The diverse assignments were “fun, positive, and enjoyable”
- Students were intrigued by the readings (5%)
- Students felt supported and more comfortable discussing topics of diversity (10%)
- Students were more aware of differences and importance of seeing people as individuals and how they “receive and process information”

- Students learning increased reporting they had “never thought about these issues before” (10%)
- Exposure to the community was enhanced (5%)
- Exposure to advocate/research was enhanced (5%)
- Students were challenged their comfort zones and the diversity of student’s ethnicity (5%)
- Course readings reflected the “social dynamic” of the classroom and society, and connected research to practical ideas within the classroom
- An increase in students’ sensitivity to diversity issues, but it was identified that older students who were more set in their biases, had a more difficult time with the issues.

5c. Impact of Course Transformation on Other Courses Taught by Participant

80% of participants reported that the course transformation process enabled them to diversify their teachings styles and methods. Many used more performance based projects, and 75% provided more team work and group work with the intent of organizing the teams in a more diverse manner.

Over fifty percent of participants reported that the course transformation process enabled them to diversify their teaching style, methods, and content. As exemplified in the following ways:

- More performance based projects, more team work, and group work with intent of organizing the teams in a more diverse manner. For example, one participant reported that as a result of transforming a course, her strategy “generalized to other courses.”
- Both informal and formal. For instance, informal changes included a change in attitudes towards teaching and formal changes included the use of other types of technology.
- More awareness and consciousness of diversity issue during class time. When certain statements related to culture, race, gender, etc. were made that previously might have been ignored; faculty addressed these comments rather than ignore them.
- Classroom materials selected for a course. Reviewing textbook with intent “to bring in other voices outside the mainstream culture.”
- The order or sequence of classroom activities was altered to allow for more discussion and for students to interact more and learn from each other.
- Articles were carefully selected and class time was spent discussing articles prior to students responding in writing.
- Course took on a more “inquiry based approach”, and the instruction moved away from the “cook book, one right answer” approach.

- Selection of both teams and pairing of students, as well as selection of case studies throughout the course that reflected diverse cultures and gender issues, as well as students' cultures. This was done with a greater "sensitivity to the fact that we aren't all the same, we come from different walks of life and that can impact their (the students') experience in the classroom."
- Self reflecting on their own teaching and instruction. As one participant indicated, "I am looking at how I am meeting students' needs, am I adequately preparing students and making assignments appropriate."

Seventeen of the twenty participants transformed other course they taught. Of the three participants who did not feel they had transformed other courses, one indicated that due to state credentialing demands it was not possible to transform current courses, although the transformations process will affect new courses as they are created. A second participant identified that the process makes one more aware of how to modify syllabi in all courses.

5d. Impact of Course Transformation on Other Faculty and ULV Community

The result of transforming a course was generalized to other courses. The impact cited to

other courses was both informal and formal. Informal changes included a change in attitude toward teaching and formal changes included the use of other types of technology such as power point. 25%% of participants reported generally more awareness and consciousness of diversity issues, so that when certain statements came up in class they would attend to them, rather than ignore them.

With respect to the impact of course transformation of the ULV community, participants reported:

- Increased and shared dialogue among faculty (30%)
- Increased feelings of support (10%)
- Increased student dialogue (e.g., one participant indicated that he did not feel alone in the process and felt supported by other participants as well) (10%)
- "We are more open to discuss diversity and share information among ourselves"
- Making faculty connections with others who study gender and ethic issues
- Sharing the transformation views with adjacent faculty who also teach the course
- Two participants reported not increasing faculty connections or faculty conversations
- One participant reported that "change is hard for a lot of people" and that "territorial aspect" of teaching came out regarding transformation
- Another participant indicated, "Fellow faculty were not interested in my class or course transformation"

6. Challenges Encountered by Participants in Transforming a Course

Participants found the course transformation process challenging, including the challenges to one's mindset, and teaching approaches. For instance, one participant reported, 'I have to remind myself not to rely on CDs but other models as well' another participant indicated that it was difficult transforming a technical course, whereas another faculty had difficulty locating a text that had diversity. Another reported challenges in presenting the course material "without turning off the students so they listen." In reporting course challenges, one faculty indicated a great deal of effort "to switch thinking or even priorities...I had to recognize what was important in the course."

A few faculty reported financial challenges in finding and supporting appropriate resources for the transformation. Two participants also indicated that other faculty members were a challenge during their course transformation.

Other challenges included:

- Students did not understand the process and intent of the instructor (10%)
- The assignments were challenging (10%)
- Time constraints to dialogue with other faculty, and lack of continuous conversation with other faculty who were also transforming courses (10%)
- Delivery of information (5%)
- The malfunction of technology, such as computer crashes, made students impatient (5%)
- The challenge was in transforming the course and making it "stronger without deleting items" but that it was a stronger course now (15%)
- Two respondents indicated they had no challenges in transforming their course (10%)

7. Participant Personal Insight and Learning Regarding Course Transformation

Several participants noted the importance of diversifying one's teaching approaches and viewed the course transformation process as a continuous process. For example, a participant learned that one "can transform a course and make it interesting for students." Another recognized the importance of "Continuously diving into new areas of information and research. In the same vein faculty reported that "opportunities are everywhere "for course transformation, and the process allowed for "freedom to play with content and curriculum." That in order to transform a course that one needed to be open and willing to change, and allow one to be creative.

Observations included:

- The importance of understanding the diverse types of student learning approaches (20%)
- Reminding oneself that the course transformation is not difficult
- Incentives were helpful (5%)
- Course transformation is overpowering (5%)

The importance of increasing student involvement. For example, a participant noted that he/she learned “about the different ways of student learning.” Though one participant noted that the course transformation process “is not as difficult as I previously thought”, another faculty indicated that it was not as easy a process as it seems and “it’s a lot of work.” Another participant reported that moneys were not enough, that people needed to be trained in course transformation, whereas another faculty indicated that it needed a great deal of motivation to switch one’s thinking (10%)

7. Participants’ Recommendations to Maintain Course Transformation Process

Participants provided numerous recommendations to maintain the course transformation process including the following:

- 20% of participants noted the importance of supporting faculty in their professional development and integrating course transformation into areas of faculty evaluation, such as promotions or tenure. For example, one participant suggested that other faculty should be “challenged to transform a course to personally understand themselves and the benefits of course transformation”
- Continue shared learning process (e.g., “pulling together previous faculty who previously participated in the course transformation process for continued dialogue and shared learning”) (5%)
- Institutionalizing course transformation as well as continuing offering grant funds for new faculty and for current faculty to redo their courses, as well as offer release times
- Sponsor new guest speakers on the topic
- Initiate new open forums encouraging group participation
- Institute the use of a buddy/coaching system
- Training for course transformation using concrete examples, building a library of books and materials as a continual reference to faculty engaged or interested in course transformation (perhaps in the Mosaic Institute of ULV Library)
- More supportive follow-up of transformation resource personnel to faculty
- Conduct information sessions between programs and departments to spark ideas and encourage learning from area to area about transformation research and activities

8. Resources Needed to Support Course Transformation

Participants identified a variety of resources that felt were needed to sustain the course transformation process. Responses suggested the need for continued financial support, shared learning among faculty, and increase opportunities for professional development. However time and compensation were identified as the necessary to “compensate for time and materials.”

Additional resources needed to support course transformation included both tangible and intangible factors concentrating on the following issues:

- Course transformation should be seen as part of the professors’ development

- since' "many are unaware of the diversity of teaching approaches"
- Faculty who engage in course transformation should be acknowledged "for their time because they operate outside of the box"
 - Teaching materials (including books, CDs, DVDs, on line resources, ect.) dealing with course transformation should be centralized in the library for ease of accessibility
 - Resource people need to be available on site for personal mentoring
 - Course release time should be granted to professors to develop and incorporate transformation into their courses
 - There must be administrative commitment to institutionalizing course transformation
 - Videotaping of classes pre and post transformation would be a good learning resource
 - Graduate students should be able to review research to provide assistance wit future efforts in course transformation

Conclusions

Relative to the specific purpose of this follow up study, it may be concluded that:

1. There were long term positive effects on the faculty participating in the Transformation Project and positive changes in classroom instruction, student assessment, course content, and classroom dynamics. Essentially the Project prompted course transformation by diversification of assignments, increased student interaction, and expanded ways to re-create lessons so students could feel in "command" of the materials, and demonstrate their new knowledge and skills
2. The Project is deemed of sufficient value to expand to ULV faculty who were not a part of the initial project.
3. Results of this Assessment strongly suggest the value of sharing key findings relative to the long term benefits of the Course Transformation Project at the University of La Verne with the James Irvine Foundation and other universities who were Irvine Grant recipients. The intention of this action is to stimulate other universities to conduct similar assessments and renew their commitments to the Coarse Transformation Project.

Recommendations

Based upon the results of this assessment, three recommendations are enthusiastically made:

1. Renew the University of La Verne's effort to develop specific activities for the faculty intended to promote course transformation dealing with issues of diversity.

2. These activities should focus on course content, classroom instruction, assessment, and classroom dynamics
3. Share key findings of this assessment relative to the long term benefits of the Course transformation Project at the University of La Verne with the James Irvine Foundation and encourage them to conduct other long term assessments with other universities who are Irvine Grant recipients.
4. Directly encourage other Irvine Grant recipient universities to conduct similar assessments and renew their commitments to the course transformation process.
5. Develop this assessment into a report suitable for presentation at one or more national academic conferences dealing with issues of how diversity is taught and promoted as part of course content, instruction, assessment, and class dynamics.