SOCIAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES DEPARTMENT UNIT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT LIAISON REPORT SPRING 2019

LIAISON PROJECT START DATE: SPRING 2018

LIAISON REPORT PREPARED BY DR. DOMENICO FERRI

DEFINING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- IN *CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION*, THOMAS EHRLICH REPORTS THAT "CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MEANS WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE CIVIC LIFE OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPING THE COMBINATION OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, VALUES AND MOTIVATION TO MAKE THAT DIFFERENCE. IT MEANS PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN A COMMUNITY, THROUGH BOTH POLITICAL AND NON-POLITICAL PROCESSES" (EHRLICH VI).

- ASSESSING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT REQUIRED THE ESPOUSAL OF THIS FORMAL DEFINITION AND A MORE IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS ITS OWN COMPLEX CONCEPT.

- HAVING USED EHRLICH AS A STARTING POINT, THIS PROJECT PROCEEDED TO UNCOVER ADDITIONAL, FUNDAMENTAL INTERPRETATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SUCH THAT EXTEND WELL BEYOND THE CLASSROOM AND HIGHLIGHT FURTHER THE WAY IN WHICH SOCIAL AND APPLIED SCIENCE STUDENTS MOVE ON TO BECOME AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES, BEYOND GRADUATION.

- CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, NOTED BY ROBERT D. REASON & KEVIN HEMER IN *CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON CIVIC LEARNING, ASSESSMENT, AND INSTRUMENTS* INVOLVES SPECIFIC PHASES OF A HOLISTIC, MULTIDIMENSIONAL, AND PRAGMATIC EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVOR.

- ALL OF OUR STUDENTS ARE TASKED WITH LEARNING SOMETHING ABOUT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OR TO ACTUALLY COMPLETE ACTIVITIES THAT RELATE TO IT IN SOME MANNER.

- THE HOPE IS THAT OUR STUDENTS MAY CARRY FOR A LIFETIME THESE SPECIFIC LESSONS, IDEALLY POSITIVELY IMPACTING - SOMETIMES BEYOND MEASUREMENT - THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY WILL LATER FIND THEMSELVES.

DEPARTMENT BUY-IN AND OUTCOME DEFINITION

THIS ASSESSMENT PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO MEASURE THE EXTENT TO WHICH OUR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING ABOUT AND PERFORMING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

TO BE SURE, THE SOCIAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES DEPARTMENT UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTS THIS PROJECT WHILE IT STRIVES TO EMPHASIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT OUR COURSE OFFERINGS.

IN TERMS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES, ANY ONE OF OUR 60+ UNIQUE COURSE OFFERINGS - SPREAD ACROSS AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES, ANTHROPOLOGY, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMICS, EDUCATION, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, POLITICAL SCIENCE, PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIOLOGY, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE - ASKS STUDENTS TO:

- DEFINE AND INTERPRET CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- EVALUATE POPULAR DEPICTIONS OF IDENTITY IN ORDER TO DETERMINE THE PREVALENCE OF STEREOTYPES AND THEIR IMPACT.

- ANALYZE HOW AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT/ACTIVISM HAS LED TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE.

- ASSESS THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITHIN A COMMUNITY AND DEVISE STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT.

- IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS IN ORDER TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

THESE FIVE "DEPARTMENTAL" STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES EXTEND FROM HUNDREDS OF PRE-EXISTING COURSE SLOS

ASSESSMENT RESEARCH AND DESIGN

- THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY UTILIZED MULTIPLE INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS. THIS APPROACH WAS BOTH DELIBERATE AND PRACTICAL. IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT INDIRECT ASSESSMENT, UNDER THE PROJECT'S BROADER CIRCUMSTANCES, IS AN EXTREMELY USEFUL WAY TO ATTAIN A MORE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT OF HOW A STUDENT *FEELS* ABOUT WHAT THEY KNOW.

- INDIRECT ASSESSMENT IS CRITICAL FOR GAUGING PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL NORMS AND CONSTRUCTS, WHILE IDEAL FOR EVALUATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ASSOCIATED WITH DEPARTMENTAL SLO #5, WHEREIN STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO RANK THE EFFICACY OF THEIR SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OR OTHER STRUCTURED ENGAGEMENT WITH AN EXTERNAL COMMUNITY,

- THE SURVEY ALSO INCLUDES ONE DIRECT ASSESSMENT ASKING STUDENTS TO IDENTIFY A HISTORICAL FIGURE OF NOTE WHOSE EFFORTS LED TO POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE.

- THIS TYPE OF ASSESSMENT ALSO GIVES US CLEAR, COMPELLING, AND ACTIONABLE INFORMATION CONCERNING WHAT STUDENTS MAY HAVE LEARNED IN CLASS. THE NEW SURVEY ALSO GROUPS TRUE AND FALSE QUESTIONS IN ONE SECTION AND THOSE REQUIRING A LIKERT-SCALE RESPONSE INTO ANOTHER, SEPARATE SECTION TO DISCOURAGE GENERIC RESPONSES.

- ADDITIONALLY, A LIKERT-SCALE QUESTION FROM THE PILOT TOOL, "POPULAR DEPICTIONS OF MY RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY FOUND IN TV, MOVIES, NEWS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE ACCURATE," LED TO STUDENTS OFFERING CRITICAL COMMENTS OF SAID DEPICTIONS, BUT NOT ALWAYS CLARIFYING THEIR OWN BACKGROUNDS.

PILOT ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND PROCESSES

- OVERALL, THIS TOOL WAS INVOLVED A LARGE SAMPLING OF HWC STUDENTS WHO HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN A STRUCTURED REFLECTION ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- I'VE TAKEN ADVICE FROM TRUSTED AND EXTREMELY KNOWLEDGEABLE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHOSE ADVICE HAS LED TO A REORDERING OF THE TOOL'S QUESTIONS.

- THE SURVEY WAS RECONFIGURED WITH QUESTIONS SET IN RANDOM ORDER, SO AS TO MINIMIZE PREDICTABILITY AND RAPID-FIRE RESPONSES.

- THE NEW SURVEY GROUPS TRUE AND FALSE QUESTIONS IN ONE SECTION AND THOSE REQUIRING A LIKERT-SCALE RESPONSE INTO ANOTHER, SEPARATE SECTION TO DISCOURAGE GENERIC RESPONSES.

- ADDITIONALLY, A LIKERT-SCALE QUESTION FROM THE PILOT TOOL, "POPULAR DEPICTIONS OF MY RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY FOUND IN TV, MOVIES, NEWS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE ACCURATE," LED TO STUDENTS OFFERING CRITICAL COMMENTS OF SAID DEPICTIONS, BUT NOT ALWAYS CLARIFYING THEIR OWN BACKGROUNDS.

- WE WERE INTERESTED IN LEARNING WHETHER CERTAIN GROUPS OF STUDENTS FOUND THEIR IDENTITIES TO BE REPRESENTED ACCURATELY. AS SUCH, THE NEW SURVEY ASKED STUDENTS TO DESIGNATE HOW THEY IDENTIFY IN TERMS OF RACE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION SO THAT THE RESPONSES ARE BETTER ALIGNED WITH DEMOGRAPHICS.

- THE FINAL SURVEY WAS ORDERED RANDOMLY, WITH RESPECT TO COMMITTEE MEMBER SUGGESTIONS (APPENDIX C).

ADMINISTER SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

- USING GOOGLE FORMS TO CONSTRUCT THE SURVEY, IT REMAINED OPEN FOR STUDENTS TO COMPLETE FROM DECEMBER 9TH, 2018 TO JANUARY 9TH, 2019.

- THIS PERIOD OF TIME SPANNED FALL 2018 SEMESTER WEEKS 15 AND 16, BUT ALSO REMAINED AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS UNTIL THE END OF WINTER BREAK 2018/2019.

- AROUND 90% (230) OF THE TOTAL RESPONSES (256) ARRIVED BEFORE THE NEW YEAR, WITH THE REMAINING 26 RESPONSES TRICKLING IN FROM JANUARY 2ND TO THE 9TH.

- IT ALSO BEARS MENTIONING THAT IN ORDER TO ATTRACT AS MANY SAS STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE, I SENT AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL OF OUR INSTRUCTORS.

SURVEY RESULTS

- WE ARE HAPPY TO REPORT THAT BASED UPON THESE SURVEY RESULTS, STUDENT RESPONSES CORROBORATE THE ASSERTION THAT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS A PROMINENT THEME AND CENTRAL CONCEPT ACROSS ALL OF THE SAS COURSES REPRESENTED IN THIS SURVEY (SEE APPENDIX E, "COURSES TAKEN" FOR A COMPLETE LIST). SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE QUITE PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS AS THEY OVERWHELMINGLY CONFIRM THE CHIEF ROLE THAT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLAYS IN OUR STUDENTS LEARNING EXPERIENCE. HIGHLIGHTS CERTAINLY WORTH MENTIONING ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- 96.6% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (225 OUT OF 233) DECLARED "YES," INDICATING THAT THEIR SAS COURSES REVEALED HOW RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES VARY DRAMATICALLY FROM ONE COMMUNITY TO THE NEXT.

- 91.0% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (212 OUT OF 233) HAVE BEEN EXPOSED IN THEIR SAS COURSES TO VARIOUS MODELS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- 99.6% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (232 OUT OF 233) SUCCESSFULLY RECOGNIZED A VALID DEFINITION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- 95.1% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (222 OUT OF 233) FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THEY CAN DESCRIBE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR OWN WORDS TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

- 93.7% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (219 OUT OF 233) NOTED THAT THEORY SAS COURSES HAVE PROPOSED METHODS FOR EFFECTING CHANGE IN A GIVEN COMMUNITY.

- 91.5% OF SURVEYED SAS STUDENTS (214 OUT OF 233) DECLARED THAT THAT THEIR SAS COURSES HAVE ENABLED THEM TO IMPROVE THE STATE OF A COMMUNITY.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE BASED CHANGE (USE OF FINDINGS)

THE FIVE PRIMARY WAYS IN WHICH WE INTEND TO UTILIZE SURVEY RESULTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- REVISE OUR DEPARTMENTAL MISSION STATEMENT AND BUILD INTO IT AN EMPHASIS ON THE 5 DEPARTMENTAL SLOS DEVELOPED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS PROJECT. THIS TASK WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS A GROUP. IN OTHER WORDS, I WILL PRESENT THE FINDINGS OF BOTH THE PILOT AND FULL-SCALE SURVEY TO SAS DEPARTMENT FACULTY, AND WE WILL COMPOSE SAID REVISIONS AS A TEAM.

- IN TERMS OF INTEGRATING OUR DEPARTMENTAL SLO'S, I WILL REACH OUT TO OUR COLLEAGUES AND RELAY THAT IF THEY SO CHOOSE, THEY ARE WELCOME TO ADD THESE SLO'S TO ANY OF THEIR EXISTING COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES. THIS DOES NOT ENTAIL FORMAL REVISION OF MASTER SYLLABI, PER SE. RATHER, INTEGRATION AS NOTED WOULD REMAIN A FACULTY MEMBER'S UNIQUE PREROGATIVE.

- BRAINSTORM WITH SAS FACULTY TO DEVISE NEW ASSIGNMENTS, WORKSHOPS, OR EXTERNAL EVENTS/INITIATIVES THAT CAN FURTHER STIMULATE STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG OUR STUDENTS.

- WEAKER AREAS FOR US TO ADDRESS AS A DEPARTMENT INCLUDE A LACK OF SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION COURSEWORK. I WILL PROPOSE THAT WE ESTABLISH A KIND OF "SERVICE LEARNING DATABASE" DERIVED FROM EXISTING ACTIVITIES AND FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN LATER BE INTEGRATED INTO ANY OF OUR EXISTING COURSES.

- BASED ON THE RESULTS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL AS STRONGER AREAS (CIVIC ENGAGEMENT "SOFT SKILLS" AWARENESS NOTED BELOW), I FEEL THAT THIS REPORT AND ITS FINDINGS OFFER AN ADEQUATE BASIS UPON WHICH TO REVISE OUR DEPARTMENT'S MISSION STATEMENT.

  - THE INTENTION WILL BE TO PLACE GREATER EMPHASIS UPON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OR EMBARK ON A KIND OF "BRANDING" CAMPAIGN TO SPOTLIGHT THE CENTRAL ROLE THAT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLACES THROUGHOUT OUR COURSE OFFERINGS. THIS CAN BE CARRIED OUT THROUGH WEBSITE MODIFICATIONS, PAMPHLETS, AND THROUGH NETWORKING WITH BOTH FEEDER SCHOOLS AND 4-YEAR DESTINATIONS.

SUCCESS FACTORS

- WE CAN DEDUCE THAT SAS COURSES ARE MAKING A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT ACROSS THE BOARD HIGHLIGHTING DISPARITIES IN COMMUNITY HEALTH FOR STUDENTS TO ANALYZE, WHETHER IN A HISTORICAL OR CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT.

  - THIS MUCH ALSO IS ENCOURAGING SINCE CRITICAL SOCIAL ANALYSIS - ILLUMINATING LIVING CONDITIONS IN BOTH LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS - CERTAINLY QUALIFIES AS AN OVERARCHING DEPARTMENTAL GOAL.

- OUR STUDENTS CAN READILY IDENTIFY A COMPREHENSIVE AND VALID DEFINITION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- THIS BASIC FAMILIARITY WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S CHIEF UNIFYING CONCEPT IS AN OPTIMISTIC STARTING POINT FOR THE LONG-TERM GROWTH OF CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND, IDEALLY, EVENTUAL PUBLIC INTERACTION SUCH AS VOTING, COMMUNITY SERVICE, OR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION.

- ALSO OF NOTE IS THE IMPRESSIVE EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS ABLY NAMED AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE EFFORTS LED TO MEANINGFUL REFORMS: DR. KING WAS THE SINGLE MOST POPULAR RESPONSE (49), FOLLOWED BY PRESIDENT OBAMA (33), HAROLD WASHINGTON (14), CESAR CHAVEZ (12) AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN (11), ALL OF WHOM QUALIFY AS ICONS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- LAST BUT NOT LEAST, OUR STUDENTS HAVE DECLARED BY WAY OF THIS SURVEY THAT THEY CAN INTERPRET AND DESCRIBE/DEFINE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THEIR OWN UNIQUE MANNER.

- BEYOND COURSE AND PROGRAM COMPLETION, THIS IS A SKILL THAT WE VERY MUCH HOPE CAN ENDURE FOR A LIFETIME AND FIGURE INTO A MUCH BROADER CONTINUUM OF LEARNING, TRAINING, AND EVEN PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY BEYOND COLLEGE.

- FINALLY, THEY SURVEY RESULTS SUBSTANTIATE THE FACT THAT THE SAS DEPARTMENT ISN'T JUST HIGHLIGHTING AND DISSECTING SOCIAL PROBLEMS. RATHER, STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY OVERWHELMINGLY CONFIRM THAT THEIR COURSE EXPERIENCE DEVOTED TIME TO DEVISING METHODS TO REMEDY THOSE PROBLEMS.

- ALL TOO OFTEN, STUDENTS AREN'T JUST LOOKING FOR A RECAPITULATION OF SOCIAL ISSUES OF WHICH THEY OFTEN ARE PAINFULLY AWARE; RATHER, THEY ARE HUNGRY FOR SOLUTIONS AND WE CERTAINLY WANT TO POSITION THE SAS DEPARTMENT AS AN ALLY THAT CAN PRESCRIBE VIABLE SOLUTIONS FOR A TROUBLED WORLD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- BASED UPON THE SURVEY FINDINGS, WE ARE NOW BETTER AWARE OF THE WEAKER WAYS THAT SAS COURSES TIE INTO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

- HAVING SHOWN OUR STRENGTH WHEN IT COMES TO DEFINING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, BEING AWARE OF THE STATE OF COMMUNITIES FOR BETTER OR WORSE, AND EXPLORING THEORETICAL WAYS IN WHICH TO IMPROVE THEM, WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SAS COURSES AREN'T NECESSARILY PROVIDING THE MEANS BY WHICH TO DO SO READILY.

- APPLIED OR FIRST-HAND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, WHILE ADMITTEDLY DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT IN A CLASSROOM OR LABORATORY, REMAINS AN AREA OF GROWTH FOR THE SAS DEPARTMENT.

- ONE VENUE WHERE ACTUAL COMMUNITY INTERACTION CAN TAKE PLACE IS SERVICE LEARNING. WHILE WE HAVE A SELECT AND LONG STANDING SET OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES EMBEDDED IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION COURSES, THERE CERTAINLY IS MUCH POTENTIAL TO EXPAND BEYOND THEM.

- I FIRST WOULD CONSIDER ASSESSING SERVICE LEARNING-RELATED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND THEN MOVE ONE TO DETERMINE HOW TO PROMOTE GROWTH ACROSS OUR MANY DISCIPLINES.