

## **Signature Assignment Institutes – Summer 2017**

### **A LEAP Texas Fellows Project**

#### **Preliminary Report: Prepared by Jeanne Tunks, LEAP Texas Fellow**

##### **What**

The Signature Assignment Institutes (SAIs) are sessions that were held for two days in each of three sites in Texas, across two weeks at the end of June 2017. The SAIs employed the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Charrette model as the basis for developing signature assignments for the Texas Core Curriculum objective Social Responsibility. This LEAP Texas Fellow project used the NILOA Charrette as a starting point, adding the components implementation, communal assessment, and research.

Implementation involves participants using the designed signature assignment in courses during the immediate semester, fall 2017. Implementation will lead to the generation of student artifacts that address the Texas Core Curriculum (TCC) objective Social Responsibility (SR). Each participant will be collecting, redacting, and submitting student artifacts to a general pool of artifacts, resulting in potentially 400 artifacts. These will be gathered in the late fall 2017.

In the spring of 2018, a team of reviewers will meet to calibrate to the SR rubrics used with each signature assignment. Following calibration, two reviewers will assess each student artifact. Data will be processed and shared with participants in the form of aggregate large group results and individual results for each assignment.

Research will involve the study of the relationship between participation in the SAI and student performance in Social Responsibility, as measured by the VALUE rubrics ascribed to each assignment. It is the intent to prepare the paper and submit it for publication in an AAC&U journal, and/or a higher education journal.

##### **Where**

The SAIs were held in the following sites:

Denton, Texas – June 22-23, 2017

Houston, Texas – June 26-27, 2017

San Antonio, Texas – June 28-29, 2017

##### **Why**

Social Responsibility was chosen as the objective to consider for developing signature assignments for Core courses because it is a particularly challenging objective. This was made obvious by a 37% success rate on this objective, when scored at the University of North Texas (UNT) in spring 2015. As we considered the upcoming assessment of this objective in the fall of 2017, it seemed imperative that in order to elevate student success on this objective, we needed to support faculty members in Core Curriculum courses who were addressing Social Responsibility. In addition, scoring in multi-state collaborative projects led to similar low scores, adding to the notion that this was a difficult objective to assess across the nation. Finally, in conversations at the LEAP TX forums, it became obvious that SR was going to challenge many in the State of Texas.

## **Who**

Members of LEAP Texas were notified, via the listserve and the Fourth Annual LEAP Texas Forum, that SAIs were being held in the summer 2017, and were open for registration in February 2017. Eighty-five interested members of LEAP Texas perused the Qualtrics registration site, and 34 completed the forms. Due to scheduling conflicts, attrition, etc. nineteen faculty members from community colleges (12) and universities (7) participated in the three SAIs: Denton (8), Houston (4), and San Antonio (7). Three administrators of Core Curriculum from various campuses observed and provided valuable feedback.

## **How**

Rather than accommodate the transportation, housing, and feeding of participants, it was decided that the LEAP Texas Faculty Fellow would travel to the sites and host the two day events in locales to which faculty could easily travel. The Faculty Fellow flew or drove to all three sites, lived in hotels, and conducted the SAIs on the UNT campus in Denton and in two Hilton Garden Inns near the airports in Houston and San Antonio.

Participants were registered in the UNT Blackboard Learn (BBL) system and placed in the Organization: Signature Assignment Institute/Denton/Houston/San Antonio. Folders for initial, revised, and implemented submissions were created into which participants placed signature assignments for various Core courses. Members of the site team read each other's work, provided verbal commentary on the first day. On the second day, members returned with revisions, and received further commentary from members. The goal was to get the assignments in alignment with the three SR aspects delineated by the THECB Core Competencies: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities. The courses that were introduced by faculty members at the three SAIs were: psychology, language, philosophy, sociology, writing, history, gerontology, emergency preparedness, law, nutrition, music, and international studies.

Additional spaces in BBL were created to accommodate follow-through activity. Following the two days, members committed to the following: submitting a final version of the signature assignment to BBL by late August, a meeting during the fall to talk about the progress of the implementation, gathering of institutional permission to collect and submit student artifacts, redact and submit student artifacts in BBL by December 20, 2017.

Signature assignments will be uploaded into the LEAP Texas site following the mid-fall meetings, the last of which is November 9. Data from the study of the student success will be uploaded onto the LEAP Texas site by March 1, 2018.