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"Future Step in Counselor Education: Information Competence"

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Electronic report located at: http://www.csun.edu/edpsy/resources.html

A research grant was obtained from the California State University Information Competency Project to assess our department's current status and needs in terms of Information Competence skills of students and faculty. After forming an IC committee (ICC) of four faculty members from our department, we prepared an agenda and conducted a department-wide retreat. Pre-matriculated (students completing pre-requisite and research methods courses) and faculty were surveyed as to their reported level of Information Competence—including both computer and research skills. The results were reported out for each survey and recommendations were made for future training and other IC needs for incoming and outgoing graduate students in the Educational Psychology and Counseling department.

Purpose of Proposal

The purpose of the proposal was to incorporate the skills of information competence in the departments' student learning outcomes, so that information competence is a required learning outcome for the degree program **(Document #1)**. This enables students to successfully conduct the type of research necessary for a thesis of master's degree quality and fulfills one of the requirements for graduation, as well as provides life-long professional skills in dealing competently with information, plus thinking and reasoning.

Two core processes were identified to ensure information competence in EPC graduate students:

1. The first core process involved an initial assessment of computer skills and basic information competence of students enrolled in a required prerequisite class **(Document #12)**, followed by access to appropriate referrals and developmental resources for those who need additional support and course assignments to enhance skills, with a final assessment of skills before movement into the graduate program.

2. The second core process involved infusing ACRL competency standards into specific core classes (including EPC 602, Research Principles). A survey was designed to measure the desirable skills **(Document #10 EPC)** followed by an assessment of students' demonstrated ability of information competence before moving to the final phase of graduate study – the master's thesis/project.

Project Activities

March 2001: Identification of ICC members

The following three faculty members were identified to work with the chair (and primary investigator) to carry out the purpose of this proposal and to become members of the departmental Information Competence Committee (ICC): Gregory Jackson, Bernard Nisenholz, Rie Rogers Mitchell (chair), and Merril Simon. These members were selected because of an expressed interest and expertise in the subject and, synchronistically, represented all faculty ranks: assistant, associate, "full," and Faculty Early-Retirement Program (FERP).

March to June 2001: Meetings of ICC Committee

The ICC selected the date and site of the faculty retreat (August 20-21, 2001 at the Casa Serena Hotel, Oxnard, CA) and developed the agenda **(#2-Retreat Agenda & #6 Scripted Agenda)**.

After studying information competence skills developed by several sources (e.g., ACES Technology Interest Group, 1999; Florida International University IL, CSU-Monterey Bay), and other existing IC models **(Document #3; Document #4)**, the ICC decided to propose a model to the faculty that infused IC skills into the curriculum paired with three draft lists of competencies: Basic IC Skills, Research Skills, and Professional Skills.

The proposed model included:

1. A plan for ensuring that students would enter the master's degree programs with basic skills.
2. Research skills infused into the Educational Research course (EPC 602), a course required of all students. Students would use these skills in preparation for their comprehensive examination and/or thesis.
3. Professional skills covered in courses within each of the seven master's degree specialties (i.e., career counseling, college counseling/student services, early childhood education, educational psychology, marriage and family therapy, school counseling, and school psychology).

The ICC also identified goals for the retreat and developed a survey for faculty members to determine their IC needs **(Document #5)**.

August 20-21, 2001: EPC Faculty Retreat

All full-time faculty members (including five FERP faculty) attended the retreat, except for two faculty members who were out of the country (one was on a Fulbright scholarship in Africa; the other had not as yet returned from a trip abroad). In addition five part-time faculty members were included who were scheduled to teach the Educational Research course (EPC 605) in the Fall 2001

The goals of the retreat (as determined by the ICC) were:

1. To feel stimulated and excited about starting the new school year.
2. To come together as colleagues and friends
3. To identify information competencies for departmental master's students
4. To plan how IC skills can be infused throughout the curriculum
5. To discuss what types of assignments might be incorporated to increase IC
6. To discuss how our students' IC skills can be assessed
7. To examine how we can further develop our own IC skills

Each faculty member was given a packet that included the following materials: Agenda, Fact Sheet on Information Literacy **(Document #3)**, RFP for IC Grants (from Susan C, Curzon), departmental IC Grant Proposal **(Document #1)**, IC Assessment Methods by Learning Domains with examples (**Document #4)**, Faculty Technology Survey (**Document #5)**, and draft documents of criteria for Basic IC Skills, Research IC Skills, and Professional IC skills. The ICC members also had a "scripted" agenda of activities **(Document #6)**.

Faculty members were enthusiastic about this subject and lively discussions ensued regarding: (a) what skills are basic, research, or professional competencies; (2) how should IC be infused in the curriculum; (3) what types of assignments would increase IC; (4) how can IC be assessed, and (5) how can faculty members improve their skills.

By the end of the retreat, all goals had been met:

1. Faculty members agreed that they would join together to support the goal that EPC students would become information competent learners by graduation (Goal 2 above).
2. Criteria lists of Basic (**Document #7)**, Research **(Document #8)**, and Professional (**Document #9)** competencies were refined (Goal 3 above).
3. The ICC model was tentatively adopted with identified modifications **(Document #21)** to be discussed at the September faculty meeting (Goal 4 above).
4. Ideas were discussed regarding types of assignments that might be incorporated into the curriculum. (Goal 5 above).
    a. Beverly Cabello, EPC 602 Course Mentor, will design a course prototype that includes model assignments **(Document #11)**.
    b. More discussion will take place at future faculty meetings
5. It was decided to use a basic skills survey **(Document #12)** to assess students in the prerequisite class (EPC 451). It was recognized that a sophisticated assessment method would have to be developed in order to assess if, in fact, applicants had mastered the basic skills. The faculty agreed that, until this was accomplished, mastery of basic skills could not be used as a criterion for admission. However, 2002 applicants will be given a list of basic skills and learning resources and asked to master these skills before classes begin in the fall (Goal 6 above) **(Document #21)**.
6. Faculty identified their desired areas of growth, using the Faculty Technology Survey (Goal 7 above) **(Document #5)**.

<u>September 5, 2001: Faculty Meeting</u>

From the department retreat, a series of recommendations were drafted based on the ICC model (**Document #21**); these were discussed and revised at the faculty meeting. In addition, information competence was included as a performance outcome in the department mission statement (**Document #15).** We recognize that additional recommendations concerning assignments and assessment also needed to be developed.

<u>September – December, 2001: IC Assessment of Students in Prerequisite Classes</u>

In two sections of a required prerequisite course (i.e., EPC 451- Introduction to Counseling), basic skills of 56 students were assessed (**Document #13**). It was found that:

1. Fifty-two students had a computer at home; one did not.
2. Forty-nine students had a printer at home; two did not.
3. Forty-nine students used e-mail often or very often; 3 rarely; 4 did not respond.
4. Overall the mean of 32 skills in five technology categories (M = 2.6) were higher than the mean of 19 skills in six library information categories (M = 2.130, with the mean of 19 skills in information resource awareness was mid-way between the previous two categories (M = 2.46).

The results of the study were shared with students, and appropriate referral resources (**Documents #14 and #17**) were provided. In addition, EPC 451 instructors arranged for a library lecture for their class.

November 2001: Proposal to Present IC Competencies at the National Conference for Counselor Educators.

Three members of the departmental ICC submitted a proposal to present a program on Information Competence at the national conference of the Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES) in Park City, Utah in October 2002. A copy of the proposal is included (**Document #16)**. In May 2002, the proposal was accepted and will be presented on October 17, 2002 by Rie Rogers Mitchell, Greg Jackson, and Merril Simon.

January 2002: Department Web Pages

Department web pages www.csun.edu/edpsy/resources.html includes the proposal, activities, and deliverables (as listed as numbered documents below).

February 2002: Faculty Workshop

Based on faculty needs **(Document #5)** surveyed at the fall retreat, a SPSS workshop was given for interested faculty by Beverly Cabello. Most of the faculty attended.

February – May 2002: Discussions regarding assessment of information competency skills.

Three information competency skill sets had been identified by the faculty, i.e., Basic **(Document #7)**, Research **(Document #8)**, and Professional **(Document #9)** Competencies. Each of these skill sets need to be acquired and assessed at different times in the student's journey towards a master's degree.

- Basic Competencies – Prerequisite skills, i.e., skills that students should acquire before admittance into a departmental master's degree program.

  Students applying to the department for admittance in fall 2002 (465 applicants for 180 spaces) were apprised of this requirement and a self-assessment handout was distributed, along with a list of resources (**Document #17**). Acquisition of these prerequisite skills was not used as one of the admittance criteria, because an assessment approach had not been developed.

  During spring 2002 semester, CSUN's Executive Director of Distance learning, Tyler Blake, was contacted to discuss the possibility of offering all prerequisite courses on-line, including modules that would help students master basic competencies and assess performance. Tyler explained how this could be done and proposed that we meet with interested EPC faculty.

  Several faculty members expressed interest in developing on-line courses (including basic competencies). Tentatively this work will begin during fall 2002 for spring 2003 enrollment. Although, not all students will take prerequisites courses on-line, on-line basic competencies modules could be required of all applicants.

- Research Competencies – skills that should be acquired during a student's first year in the master's program by successfully completing EPC 602 – Research Principles – and through research requirements in other courses.

  All EPC 602 faculty members (including part-time faculty) scheduled to teach the course in fall 2001 attended the retreat and helped develop the research competencies. They agreed to include these competencies in their course outline and to arrange for a library presentation at least once during the semester to help students meet these competencies. However, no formal assessment measure was developed.

During the spring 2002 semester, Lynn Lampert, Senior Assistant Librarian, was contacted to discuss the assessment problem. Lynn suggested that two to three modules be developed by the librarians for the five sections of EPC 602 scheduled for fall 2002 that would include: (1) an on-line assessment of basic skills; results would be shared with the faculty; (2) training modules that would help students meet both basic and research competencies, and (3) a post-test assessment to determine if students acquired the required basic and research skills.

- Professional Competencies – skills necessary for students to learn before graduation. These competencies will be learned in several classes: EPC 602, courses within specific options, and during the thesis/project process (EPC 698C). We, as a faculty, need to identify in which classes the competencies are (or can be) covered and determine an assessment approach. One approach is to provide each student with a sign-off sheet **(Document 20)**. When a student masters a professional goal, it is signed-off by a faculty member. When all goals have been obtained, an Information Competence Mastery Certificate **(Document 19)**, detailing the student's skills, could be awarded to the student (and included on his/her resume).

Conclusion:

The grant has been very helpful in supporting the first step of our ultimate goal: to develop information competence in order to enhance life-long learning and professional skills for all master's degree graduates. To move towards this goal, we have developed three information competency skill sets and have begun to include these in the curricula. We are sharing the process we used to develop these competencies with our colleagues at other universities through a presentation at a conference for counselor educators. Also, we have started to develop methods for assessing student mastery of the competencies, and we have completed the deliverables promised in the grant proposal (see below).

Yet, I believe that we are just at the beginning of what I hope will be a model program. We still need to: (1) further identify in which classes information competency goals will be reached – especially professional competencies; (2) develop doable assessment approaches for each of the three skill sets; (3) infuse information competence through out the curriculum; that is, consistently apply learned skills in all courses; and (4) increase faculty skills in information competence to such an extent that it becomes natural to utilize and teach these skills.

Deliverables:

1. Assessment instrument used to assess basic computer skills (**Document #7**)
2. List of appropriate referral sources (**Document #17**)
3. Determination regarding how students will be assessed after use of referrals (See description above: February – May 2002: Discussions regarding assessment of information competency skills.)
4. Syllabi for required courses in department that specifically identify assignments that promote information competence (**Document #11**)
5. Department mission statement that includes information competence as an objective (**Document #15**)
6. Representative assignments in which students are being asked to demonstrate the various skills of information competence (**Document #11**)
7. Web pages that provide the proposal, the activities, and the deliverables. www.csun.edu/edpsy/resources.html

Complete Document List:

1. IC Grant Proposal **(Document #1)**
2. Faculty Retreat Agenda **(Document #2)**
3. Fact Sheet for IC **(Document #3)**
4. Assessment Methods **(Document #4)**
5. Faculty IC Survey Results **(Document #5)**
6. Scripted Retreat Agenda **(Document #6)**
7. Basic Skills **(Document #7)**
8. Research Skills (Intermediate and Advanced) **(Document #8)**
9. Professional Competencies **(Document #9)**
10. EPC 602 IC Survey **(Document #10)**
11. EPC 602 Research Principles Syllabus **(Document #11)**
12. EPC 451 IC Survey **(Document #12)**
13. Basic Skills Survey Data (from EPC 451) **(Document #13)**
14. EPC Survey Results **(Document #14)**
15. Department Mission and Performance **(Document #15)**
16. ACES Proposal **(Document #16)**
17. CSUN Resources **(Document #17)**
18. Final Report – Information Competency **(Document #18)**
19. Information Competency Certificate **(Document #19)**
20. List of Information Competencies for Students **(Document #20)**
21. Recommendations for Information Competence **(Document #21)**