Documenting Student Learning

At heart, FACET is an organization recognizing excellence in teaching. The basic criterion that must be met to be admitted to FACET is documentation that the nominee is an excellent teacher. Such documentation must include direct evidence of student learning as a part of a reflective feedback loop (LEARN) involving student learning goals and classroom processes. Such documentation will necessarily vary from discipline to discipline and from campus to campus. The examples should be viewed simply as illustrations of how several successful nominees conveyed their efforts to document direct evidence of student learning.

Example 1(Eckes –B):
Pre and post-tests: I give my students a pre--test asking questions about their knowledge on legal issues (e.g. may gay teachers be fired under the law?). I then gave a post-test to analyze what knowledge my students gained from the course. Based on these data, I often re-teach certain course objectives using another approach. Another goal of this survey is to learn whether my law course influenced the students' thinking on issues of social justice.

Example 2 (Eckes – B):
Focus groups with students: At the end of each of my courses, I regularly hold focus groups with several of my students to learn how the course could be improved to maximize student learning. Based on this feedback, I revise several assignments. In revising the assignments, I maintain the rigor of the course while attempting to relate the course to real world experiences. The implementation of more technology, office hours extravaganza, and project intervention were a result from past focus group feedback.

Example 3 (Ashburn-Nardo – IUPUI):
For example, in one peer review, a suggestion was made to, "Work a participation grade into the grading structure. Perhaps add some more formal classroom assessment techniques into class." I have since added participation points to the total points possible in my courses, and attendance has improved. This is important because the correlation in my courses between attendance and final grade has been as high as 0.65. Often, participation is tied to "minute papers" in which students reflect in each class on one concept that they believe they understand well and one concept that they believe requires further study. I call these "got it / didn't get it" papers, and I have been pleasantly surprised with how seriously students take these activities. They actually state things like, "I probably need to go back and review X," or "When I read the chapter, I didn't really get concept Y, but your class examples helped, thanks!" These assignments not only allow me to see what I need to review more thoroughly in class, but also give students a chance for self--reflection on their studies.

Example 4 (Shrader –SB):
Still, this made me think about the way I conducted class, and made me realize that I was not giving students enough ways to think analytically in the classroom and the more creative thinkers of the bunch were not given many opportunities to exercise that part of their brain. Beginning in the spring of 2007, I began to address this issue by instituting a set of extra credit assignments called Philosophical Puzzlers. These assignments were given on a weekly to biweekly basis and asked the students to write up a solution to a classic philosophical puzzle (for example, I asked students to see if they could identify the problem for the theist raised by the age old question "Could God make a rock so big He could not lift it?" and then offer up potential responses that the theist might give). We then discussed these puzzles in

groups the day they were due in class, and then, after ten minutes or so, volunteers were allowed to share their answers with the class for critique. I found this greatly increased class participation and got many students involved in class who were not otherwise involved.

Example 5 (Dehr -- FW):
At the end of the semester, my students write an in-class journal entry/reflection which is largely a self-evaluation and reflection of their growth as writers, researchers and students. I typically ask them four questions to complete in a computer lab session, as part of their last in-class writing. Because the department evaluations (addressed below) are more about the instructor, the course and course materials, I use these more personal reflections because they provide me with specific feedback about my students' learning and how this class has helped them meet the course outcomes, along with …. I review these final reflections before the beginning of each new semester and consider the comments, in addition to the more formal evaluations indicated in the next section.

What follows are excerpts of representative responses to this question from my W233 class:
Student #1, on Rhetorical Knowledge: When we first had to choose a topic for our semester long research, I felt adrift. However, the way the course is structured, I have learned techniques to choose broadly and then narrow until I have my idea, narrow further until I have my hypothesis and narrow further until I have my thesis. . .

Example 6 (Stanforth – E):
The most recent change I have made deals with the area of technology. A few years ago I applied for a grant for the use of PDA usage in the clinical setting. I was awarded $7500 for this project. Each student that year was given a PDA along with a detailed description/instructions on how to use the equipment. The students participated in a research study of how effective these PDA's were in enhancing knowledge, decreasing time spent researching data for patient information, and completing their clinical paperwork. A pre-survey and post-survey of comfort level with computer technology was distributed to all students. The pre-survey showed an average of 3.19/5 felt comfortable with computers/email/using a windows program/and utilizing internet accessibility vs. the post-survey average of 4.25/5.