Information Literacy Project

I. Background

This project is a result of the requirement of the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (NJCCC) to submit information regarding the status of the “integrated” course goal for General Education on Information Literacy. Research about how to collect the data needed for the state resulted from the following ideas:

1. There was no “official” and “current” collection of hard copy or electronic copy of syllabi for courses approved for GE Status.
2. Some courses address information literacy without including it in Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).
3. Some courses contain SLO’s for Information Literacy, but the assessment section does not connect to the information literacy SLO.
4. Some courses do not address Information Literacy at all.
5. We will need some sort of data base to capture the various ways in which our courses conform or do not conform to state requirements. In addition, we will need a way to keep track of the process of revision of syllabi to conform to state requirements.
6. We will need to replicate this process for the other “integrated course goal” on ethical reasoning and action next academic year, which is also required by NJCCC

II. Scope of the project

The result of the research was a project that grew into more than reporting data to the State of NJ. This project will engage all departments raising awareness about the nature and importance of Information Literacy. What we plan to do:

- Collect all Gen Ed syllabi—approximately 180 courses (To extend the project, this could be expanded to invite ALL college syllabi)
- Read over and assess the extent to which Info Lit is addressed in the course based on student learning objectives (SLOs) and evidence of assessment of these SLO’s.
- Sort syllabi into three categories:
  - **Two Stars:** Syllabi with evidence of addressing Info Lit in both the SLOs and Assessment categories;
  - **One Star:** Syllabi needed moderate revision: These syllabi might have SLOs for Info Lit, but not Assessment evidence or the reverse.
  - **No Stars:** Syllabi without any evidence of Info Lit
- Fill out State forms for each course that already fits into the “Two Stars” category above. Each form must include learning outcomes and evidence of assessment.
- Suggest revisions for the “One Star” syllabi.
- Meet with ADC’s, Deans and/or faculty to suggest the revisions. If agreeable, make changes and move syllabi to Two Star category
- Meet with ADC’s, Dean and/or faculty to suggest possibilities for including Info Lit in courses in the “No Star” category.
Create a data base through Form Site to keep track of the status of the 180 syllabi. This database will contain (1) Course info (2) Learning Outcomes for Info Lit (3) Assessment evidence (4) Info Lit progression standards addressed in the SLO (5) Current status of syllabus in the revision process.

"Formsite" is a database management system currently used by the BCC Library and it can help us report and chart the courses that conform to state standards and those that are candidates for revision. It also permits us to update forms to chart the changes that departments make to their syllabi. We also can connect an electronic copy of the most recent electronic version of the syllabus to the course form to keep an updated record of all Gen Ed Courses. This site is already licensed by the library staff, and we would be using its license for this project.

Present the results of the summer Info Lit survey at the Gen Faculty Conference in the fall of 2012. At that time we will invite and encourage faculty to understand what it is and how to address it in their classes. We will also suggest further revision of syllabi and an assessment of Information Literacy in Gen Ed classes in 2013.

III. Where the project leads BCC

Since the State is looking for the same kind of reporting next AY on the Integrated Course goal of “Ethical Reasoning in Action,” this process could be replicated. However, since one of the Information Literacy Standards is “Uses information ethically and legally,” we can start to address that goal as we work with the syllabi on Information Literacy.

We will design an assessment project about how proficient students are at information literacy. This would require the development of a simple rubric that faculty could apply to a selected assignment a designated course section. The rubric needs to be developed and the assessment project approved through the existing college policy.

When we are visited by Middle States in the fall, if appropriate, this project represents the beginning of a centralized form of assessment for the General Education program in terms of Information Literacy. It can serve as a model for an “assessment plan” for the Gen Ed Program.

IV. Rationale

This project has incredible potential for the Gen Ed Program, Library, and college as a whole:

It is a model for how to research “integrative course goals” including Writing, Communication, Critical Thinking, Ethical Reasoning in Action, among other possibilities. We can use this again and again.

It will supply data for Middle States Assessment on the Gen Ed Program and if we expand the project about student learning in general. For example, if we can learn that 75% of our syllabi have Information Literacy SLO’s and assessment evidence, we can report that and then use the anecdotal evidence supplied by assessment projects in the disciplines to support and illustrate this claim. Currently, the evidence is decentralized in the departments. This will give a centralized view to help us get a better picture of interdisciplinary and integrative course goals.
- It will help structure an assessment plan for the Gen Ed Program, which is needed for Middle States.
- It will provide data for the Library Assessment of its goals regarding Information Literacy.
- It is a collaborative project that stretches across disciplines and engages the whole college.
- It will provide a supportive and gentle hand in encouraging faculty to revise syllabi to include Information Literacy without putting an extra burden on them.
- It will raise awareness about the Gen Ed Program and the importance of Information Literacy.