

2014-16 **i2a** Assessment Plan Executive Summary

What was the purpose of this 2-year project?

In collaboration with the Office of Academic Planning and Accountability, our team developed the 2014-16 i2a Assessment Plan for the Ideas to Action (i2a) quality enhancement plan (QEP) in order to assess the level of integration of the i2a initiative in academic programs. The 2014-16 i2a Integration Plan required academic program personnel to review and update each program's undergraduate Integration Map At-a-Glance. This map articulated where critical thinking skill building is explicit and intentional in each undergraduate program. The Integration Maps also included courses designated as a Culminating Undergraduate Experience (CUE) in which students demonstrate their ability to address "real world" authentic problems within the discipline as they apply their critical thinking skills. This i2a Assessment Plan allowed us to work closely with each undergraduate program in order to 'drill down' to the learning environment at the course level so that we can strategically and pointedly address possible pedagogical gaps and provide needed resources or support. This two-year plan also allowed us to tell the story of i2a's influence on the curriculum since our program's beginning in 2007.

What did this process entail?

The i2a Assessment Plan entailed a university-wide data collection and reporting protocol that was customized to the needs and realities of each unit as we strove to assess the integration of critical thinking skill building within courses strategically identified by unit leaders and faculty members. This effort took place between Fall 2014 and Spring 2016 semesters and faculty teaching one of the courses (identified by the unit) were asked to submit the following:

- a course syllabus;
- a key student assignment(s); and
- a grading rubric/narrative.

Additionally, some faculty opted to administer the Critical Thinking Inventories (CTIs) as part of their participation in the Assessment Plan. The Critical Thinking Inventories are short, Likert-item instruments that assess a course's learning environment as it relates to critical thinking skill building. These instruments provide additional insight by comparing students' perception of critical thinking skill building and faculty's perception of their facilitation of critical thinking skill building. To see the CTI instruments, and learn more about them, go to: <http://louisville.edu/ideastoaction/about/assessment/cti>.

How many courses/programs/units were engaged in the project?

The data collection effort was university-wide and involved all nine undergraduate units. Every undergraduate program participated in the Assessment Plan, which engaged a total of faculty from over 425 course sections across over the span of 4 semesters. Over 86% (n=370) of invited courses submitted artifacts to be assessed. The College of Arts & Sciences made up 35% (n=128) of the participating courses and the College of Education & Human Development submitted 21% (n=77) of the total course artifacts assessed. Additionally, faculty from 27 courses across the campus participated in the administration of the CTIs in Fall 2014. Based on faculty input from the fall semester, the administration of the CTIs were put on hold for the following spring semester in order to refine our process. Administration of the CTIs continued in Fall 2015, with 19 courses participating. By Spring 2016, faculty from 27 courses administered the CTIs in their courses and gleaned significant insight into the learning environment in those classrooms.

What are our “takeaways” from this project?

Overall, we found that the majority of undergraduate programs have indeed integrated critical thinking skill building within their learning environment in an intentional and explicit way. Most programs could articulate their strategic and logical scaffolding of critical thinking and CUE courses in an i2a Integration Map. In some instances, there were inconsistencies between sections of the same course taught by different faculty. This led to discussions of faculty training and the importance of communication and alignment in key courses within the curriculum. The Critical Thinking Inventories also showed similar evidence of clear facilitation of critical thinking skill building in which differences and gaps between student and faculty perceptions may be due to lack of awareness or participation in explicit i2a structures.

We learned the importance of meeting units and programs “where they are” both metaphorically in terms of readiness and curricular realities, and literally by coming to their offices and departments to meet face to face at key points along the way. The importance of authentic expression within the discipline and program, rather than insisting on a standardized approach, was affirmed. A key ingredient of success and collaboration was ensuring that units and programs could demonstrate critical thinking integration that was genuine and was not artificially or superficially added to the learning content, approach, or syllabus language.

What’s Next?

When UofL launched the Ideas to Action program in 2007, a central premise of this campus-wide effort is that the enhancement of curricula would be deep and permanent. The infusion of explicit critical thinking skill building, as well as the development and designation of CUE capstone-like courses in every undergraduate program, were adopted and adapted by programs with an emphasis on a firm commitment to enhancing students’ learning for years to come, and not just to satisfy a SACS requirement.

Now that we are developing our institution’s next QEP, called *Find Your Fit*, it’s important to note that i2a services are indeed sustainable. Ongoing faculty development, curricular development support, and critical thinking and CUE resources are permanently available through the university’s Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning. The QEP staff team, housed at the Delphi Center, will provide administrative leadership for Find Your Fit while also being available to support individuals and groups with meeting i2a goals and challenges.

Questions?

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