Student Learning Outcomes
Environmental Education Major
2013

Student Learning Outcome (SLO) Assessed:

EE 2 synthesize his or her own philosophy of EE based on analysis of the field’s history, goals, theory, methods and research base, and through reflective practice.

The assessment plan for this program states that this information will be used in this way:

Summary results of analysis of student products according to rubric will be done by course instructors and presented to program faculty. This information will be discussed and acted upon by course and program faculty.

To assess SLO EE 2, end-of-course essays for 10 of the 15 majors graduating in EE in 2013 were rated on several criteria. These criteria were:

- overall why & what of EE
- awareness of history of the field and reference to founding definitions
- is a goals hierarchy of outcomes defined?
- are theories of learning employed?
- are particular methods referred to?
- identification, evaluation and use of refereed literature

For each of these criteria, each student’s paper was rated using this scale:

0= absent
1= present implicitly or unelaborated
2= explication, understanding, application
3= generalization, transfer, synthesis, evaluation

The analysis revealed the following mean scores:

- overall why & what of EE: 2.2
- awareness of history of the field and reference to founding definitions: 1.8
- is a goals hierarchy of outcomes defined?: 2.2
- are theories of learning employed?: 1.4
- are particular methods referred to?: 2.4
- identification, evaluation and use of refereed literature: 1.9

As reflected by these results and as shown by a more qualitative reading, overall tendencies were for students to focus on methods without addressing underlying purposes, justifications, contents and forms of the field. Most were more comfortable thinking about concrete examples that implicitly contained basic ideas, and to talk about their own experiences but fail to generalize these to more abstract terms. Often their thinking was diverted into conceptualizing the purpose of EE as providing more
time in nature for children, without clearly articulating what purpose is intended to serve in relation to the more ultimate personal and societal ends of the profession.

**Closing the Loop:**

The analysis of student learning outcomes lead to the following recommendations:

1. Provide scaffolding toward the purposes of EE in the form of short in-class writing prompts
2. Emphasize current and past historical context and help students make connection between present EE and important founding statements of its purpose.
3. Support students thinking beyond their personal experiences by presenting case studies that incorporate more citizenship-oriented ends of EE
4. Demonstrate using an example or method to “reverse engineer” back toward starting assumptions, and provide practice examples for students to do this with feedback.

Upon consultation with other program faculty, in the Autumn 2013 Envs 381 course, these were addressed in part by, respectively:

1. Short written responses to questions such as the place of advocacy versus person-centered development in EE, and others.
2. Emphasis in lecture and readings on Belgrade, Tbilisi, and Thessaloniki international agreements on EE, and strands of education and environmental concern that coalesced into these and other developments.
3. Use of a new text (Goleman, Bennett & Barlow 2012, *EcoLiterate*) that provides such case studies.
4. Using student groups’ presentations on regional EE programs as source of example to ‘reverse-engineer’ to basic assumptions (sometimes but not always reflected in programs’ mission statements.