

LMU
Lincoln Memorial University
QEP Newsletter

Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success

Dr. Stephanie Holyfield Receives Recognition

Visiting Associate Professor of History, Dr. Stephanie Holyfield, received an honorable mention award. Lincoln Memorial University recognizes six faculty each year for exemplary teaching and transparent instruction. Dr. Holyfield was nominated by a colleague for her detailed step-by-step instructions of her historical analysis assignment. One of the reviewers noted that Dr. Holyfield's rubrics and annotated example were exceptional.



Dr. Stephanie Holyfield
Visiting Associate Professor of History

Students, faculty and staff can nominate instructors for awards. Nominations are reviewed by a committee and scored on a number of factors. Full-time faculty as well as adjunct faculty are eligible for the awards and recognition.

Dr. Holyfield was asked a series of questions related to the process of creating transparent materials for the classroom. Below are the questions along with Dr. Holyfield's responses and her advice for others:

- Q1:** *What steps did you take to modify your assignments to align with the Transparent Instruction format?*
A After the training, I gave serious consideration to my past sets of instructions and tried to put myself in the shoes of a first-semester freshman. I broke my assignment down into small steps with straightforward instructions that followed a logical progression. I also gave some consideration to how technology and academic language have changed since I began teaching in 2005. I tried to identify areas where I might be making assumptions about students' knowledge and experience.
- Q2:** *What differences are you seeing in the student homework submissions that you are receiving now as opposed to before using the transparent Purpose/Task/Criteria (PTC) format?*
A Students are more relaxed and comfortable with the Transparent Teaching Assignments. They appreciate having examples to follow, and they seem to have less anxiety about performing well in the course.

Q3 *What was the biggest challenge in this process?*

A Thinking through things that I've done 100s of times in new ways and coming up with the best examples for students to follow.

Q4: *What advice or words of wisdom would you give to new faculty that are beginning to incorporate transparency into their assignments?*

A Pretend you have never completed the type of assignment you are working on. Then think about the best and worst sets of instructions you've had to follow and try to eliminate ambiguity. Ask for feedback from students after the first time you use an assignment. If appropriate, take it to heart and adapt.

Q5: *Any final closing thoughts?*

A This process has improved the quality of work I receive from my students. I never stop revising and trying to improve my work so I have appreciated learning this new technique.

Faculty modify at least two assignments to incorporate clear Purpose, Tasks and Criteria, which are the foundations of transparent instruction.



Award Nominations Open

Do you know a remarkable faculty member that is using transparent instruction in the classroom? If so, we are seeking nominations for faculty with clear Purpose, Tasks and Criteria (PTC) in their syllabi and assignments. We want to recognize and celebrate exemplary faculty initiatives for transparent pedagogy. The 2021-22 Award nomination period is open now and ends on June 30, 2022. Up to six faculty will be recognized in the fall. First prize will receive \$1000, followed by awards of \$750, \$500, and three awards of \$250. The nominations will close on June 30, 2022. Please submit nominations at the following link:



https://lmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2hRZOrF2Psknd8G

Document Review Success

Spring 2022 concludes our third year of our QEP, **Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success**. For the first time, we met our transparent goals for both the syllabi and assignments. Throughout our training sessions and implementation, we stress the importance of the articulating clear Purpose, Tasks, and Criteria in our syllabi as well as in two assignments for each of our qualifying classes. These three components are the main features of the Transparent Instruction framework. A team of eight faculty peer-reviewed the syllabi and assignments using 4-point rubrics to assess how transparent we are with our students. This document shares a breakdown on a question-by-question basis of our QEP syllabi and transparent assignment review results for fall 2021. Congratulations to everyone that has worked so hard to improve their materials!

Syllabi:

Congratulations! For the first time, we exceeded our syllabi goal. Our syllabi target goal is to have 80 percent with all three or four scores on a 4-point scale with a four equating to “Very Transparent”. A total of 168 syllabi were submitted and 147 scored all three or higher — an 87.5 percent. Of the 21 with low scores, here is a breakdown by the six syllabi questions:

- 1. Instructor & Course Information:** All positive scores.
- 2. Course Learning Objectives:** Two syllabi scored low here. Feedback stated that there were no learning objectives listed.
- 3. Mission Statement:** All positive scores.
- 4. Assessments/Evaluation Methods:** This is where we have the greatest room for growth. Of the 21 low scores, 16 scored below a three in this category. Most of the feedback stated that the syllabi were missing the Purpose, Tasks & Criteria (PTC) identified for two assignments.
- 5. Assignment Policies:** Five syllabi scored low for this category. Feedback indicated that the syllabi were missing assignment policies.
- 6. Attendance Policy:** All positive scores.

*There were a couple instances where syllabi had low scores in more than one category.

Transparent Assignments:

We collected 333 assignments for spring 2022. For the second time, we exceeded our goal of 85! A total of 293 assignments scored three or higher on a 4-point scale giving us an 88 percent. Keep up the great work on assignments! Here is an overview of where we stand with transparent assignments from spring 2022 broken down by question:

1. Purpose: We had 12 assignments that were either missing a purpose or the feedback indicated that it was vague, unclear, or lacked a connection to the outside world. The purpose helps students to understand the “WHY” of the assignment and helps students to connect the relevance and importance beyond the class.

2. Task: Out of 333 assignments, we had 16 that scored below a three for Task. In most cases, the feedback indicated that the assignment tasks were either unclear, not labeled, too general, or simply missing. A clear task explanation provides students with the “HOW” of the assignment. If students understand what is expected of them, they are more likely to meet our expectations.

3. Criteria: We have our greatest potential for improvement here. Out of 333 assignments, 28 assignments received low scores. The most common reviewer feedback noted that a rubric was missing, was unclear, and/or was not detailed. Additional feedback also indicated that in some cases, there were no annotated examples of exemplary work.

*There were multiple instances where assignments scored low in more than one category. In two cases, assignments had low scores for all three categories.

While we are overjoyed that we met our goals for syllabi and assignments, we also know that we should not rest on our laurels. We know that we can still do better. *For those with low scores, please review your materials and make improvements for next year.*

I hope this question-by-question analysis is helpful for how we can improve our documents in the future. Scores for each course syllabi and assignments will be shared with the deans to disseminate to their faculty. Thank you for your continued work to help support our students with transparency!



Correction to Retention Rates

In the February 2022 newsletter, we reported the 2020-21 freshmen returning to the sophomore year in fall 2021 was recorded to be 69 percent. The corrected rate is actually 70 percent. Associate degree seeking students were included in error during this calculation. Additionally, we also recorded that the first generation student retention rate from freshman to sophomore year rate was 63 percent. The corrected rate is 65 percent. These calculations should only include bachelor degree seeking students.



Important 2022 Dates

April 10-30	End-of-Semester Student Surveys Available
May 2 – 6	Final Exams
August 15	Fall 2022 Classes Begin

PURPOSE ~ TASKS ~ CRITERIA

By The Numbers . . .

838	Number of student surveys returned at the beginning of spring 2022. <i>A drop by nearly 1,000 from the prior survey deployment in the fall.</i>
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87.5	Percentage of syllabi for spring 2022 that had all scores of three or higher on a 4-point rubric. Target goal was 80 percent – exceed our goal.
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88	Percentage of assignments for spring 2022 that had all scores of three or higher on a 4-point rubric. Target goal was 80 percent – exceed our goal.
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65	Percentage of First Generation Student retention rate from freshman to sophomore years for 2020-21 – a drop from 71% in 2019-20.
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2	Number of transparent assignments that should be included in each general education and gateway course to reflect transparent instruction.
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Thank you for reading the QEP newsletter. The QEP Office is located in 118 Grant Lee. If there is something you would like added to future newsletters, please email Molly.Duggan@LMU.net.