

LMU
Lincoln Memorial University
QEP Newsletter

Transparent Instruction in General Education and Gateway Courses for Student Success

2020-21 Transparent Instruction Faculty Awards

During the second year of our QEP, faculty have continued to demonstrate their dedication to teaching. Faculty award nominations came from students, faculty and staff to highlight the important work that our faculty are doing in the classroom. We are happy to recognize the following faculty for their outstanding efforts using the transparent instruction pedagogy:

Faculty Awards	Faculty	Department
First Place - \$1,000	ISYS-100 Team: Erika Eschberger, Jason McConnell, Dr. Sheree Schneider, & Dr. Elizabeth Yagodzinski	Information Systems
Second Place - \$750	Dr. Thomas Bragg	English
Third Place - \$500	Dr. Abigail Heiniger	English
Honorable Mention - \$250	Dr. Noel Cawley Dr. Lee Gilroy Dr. Stephanie Holyfield	Environmental Science Psychology History

We thank all of the students, faculty, and staff that nominated individuals for these awards. A special “thank you” also to those that served on the award review committee.

Two Extra Weeks for Syllabi & Assignments



Part of the QEP is peer-review of syllabi and assignments for transparency utilizing rubrics. The documents have been typically due within the first two weeks of the semester. Feedback from faculty has indicated that it was stressful to submit syllabi and transparent assignments within the first two weeks of the semester when many other things are due. We are happy to provide an additional two weeks to help alleviate the stress for faculty. The fall 2021 due date was moved from August 30 to September 13. We believe this still allows us enough time to have the review team evaluate the documents, yet also allows ample time to provide feedback before the end of the semester.

Student Leadership

Undergraduate students play a vital role in helping to shape policies and programs. The QEP Steering Committee has two students that are members of the committee and help give a voice to student issues. We welcome Jasmyne Thomas as our newest member of the Steering Committee. Thomas is a junior chemistry major/pre-medicine intent and is from Baltimore, Maryland.



Jasmyne Thomas

She is currently commuting from Ewing Virginia and is involved in a number of student organizations such as the Chemistry Club, Pre-Medicine Club, and the Splitters Service Leaders organization. This fall she will also be a tutor through the Tagge Center for Academic Support. When she graduates, Thomas wants to go on to medical school. Welcome to our Steering Committee Jasmyne Thomas.

Student & Faculty Focus Group Results

We are happy that we met our target goals for this year with our focus groups. As part of our QEP Assessment Plan, we facilitated two focus groups each semester. One group is composed of students and another includes full-time and adjunct faculty. Each focus group participant responds to a series of questions regarding syllabi and transparent assignments. The target goal for our QEP is to have both the students and the faculty groups have “at least 80% of codes identified ... exhibit a perceived improvement in course assignment/instruction transparency” or “perceived improvement to course syllabi.”

The 2020-21 focus groups yielded the following results:

	Fall 2020 Student	Fall 2020 Faculty	Spring 2021 Student	Spring 2021 Faculty
Syllabi	88 %	94 %	90 %	88 %
Transparent Assignment	97 %	96 %	88 %	89 %

Both student participants and faculty participants provided some feedback regarding their experiences with transparent instruction this year. Here are some of the comments from students:

- One student explained that she was a senior and said “the QEPs really made a difference from what I’ve seen.” She further stated that she believes that it has “helped students better understand assignments and the class in general.”
- When comparing the course syllabi with classes that are not part of the General Education/Gateway, a student stated it is “more detailed” with more structure; three students stated that they prefer the structure of the gateway classes and two students explained that in comparison, the gateway classes were more specific with greater explanations
- When discussing course assignments, all students were able to relate the assignment to their own life outside of school.

Some comments shared among the faculty include the following:

- When discussing the transparency in their classes, some of the faculty mentioned the “trickle up effect” in that their upper-level class students are asking for and expecting the same details in those classes that they are getting accustomed to experiencing in their general education classes. They mentioned that they think that this is “a good thing” because it means that the students are thinking about the assignment process.
- One faculty member stated that as questions arise regarding her syllabus or assignment, that it is a sign for her that she needs to include those details in the next semester of course materials so that she can be more clear.
- One instructor mentioned that the rubrics and discussion post examples have made a “huge difference” in the quality of work received now.
- A faculty member stated that this has motivated him to “beef up” his handouts when he looks at his “weakest parts of my class.”
- Another person indicated that she added extra details like “word count” and prompts and concluded “I think we are getting much more detailed papers now.”
- After adding the purpose and explanations, a faculty member believes that students are now “taking responsibility for their learning” and that they are “taking on more accountability.”
- One individual mentioned “this made me re-examine some of my material in a different way” and that by providing more detail of the “lower-tier things” that they are getting less questions from students.
- “It’s made me more self-aware of my internalized expectations that I need to externalize,” said another faculty member.

QEP Faculty Training

Since the start of our commitment to QEP and transparent instruction at LMU, 117 full-time and adjunct faculty have participated in our training. The focus of the training is to learn about the pedagogy of transparent instruction and understand the components and importance of Purpose, Tasks and Criteria. The ultimate reason why we are committed to transparent instruction is because LMU is committed to our students and their success.

Training sessions include information regarding the demographics of LMU students, learning about formative and summative assessment, and learning how to incorporate transparency into syllabi and assignments. Faculty take a pre-test and a post-test so that we can determine if we are making an impact. Based on the results of a paired t-test of mean scores for the past five semesters, we have consistently demonstrated a positive statistical difference every semester. Way to go faculty!

Transparency in Virginia

In the May 2021 online newsletter of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), a feature story highlights the use of transparent instruction in Virginia. The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) is coordinating workshops among their public institutions to teach how to incorporate transparency in assignments through support from a Lumina grant. Faculty from Northern Virginia Community College and Longwood University share their experiences throughout the process and speak about the value of modifying their assignments to be more understandable for their students. To read the full article, go to this link:

<https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/campus-model/%E2%80%9Cridiculously-simple-and-very-successful%E2%80%9D-how-faculty-virginia-are-making-assignments>

Rubric Support & Resources

Part of the transparent instruction pedagogy includes “criteria” where faculty provide students a rubric for the class or for an assignment. There are a number of resources available for faculty to access to assist with the creation of a rubric for an assignment.

1. Rubistar is a free tool available online for instructors. Templates are available from topics such as Oral Projects, Reading, Math, Writing, and Science to name just a few. This site is available at this link: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>
2. Creative Educator has an article regarding Project-based Learning entitled “Get Started with Rubrics, Make assessment a classroom conversation”. The article explains rubrics and the components. This article is available at this link: <https://creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/2015/articles/Get-Started-with-Rubrics>
3. When creating your transparent assignment, it may be helpful to refer to Bloom’s Taxonomy of Critical Thinking as you decide and format your purpose and learning objectives. Here is a handout entitled “Bloom’s Critical Thinking Cue Questions” that you can use to help formulate your “why” or your “purpose” which can lead to your “tasks” and ultimately your “criteria”: <http://www.asainstitute.org/conference2013/handouts/20-Bloom-Question-Cues-Chart.pdf>
4. Transparency in Learning and Teaching has a handout “Transparent Assignment Template” that can be helpful when modifying an assignment to follow the transparency format. The template includes the aspects of

Purpose, Task, and Criteria. Here is the link for this template:

<https://tilthighered.com/assets/pdffiles/Transparent%20Assignment%20Template.pdf>

5. There are a number of resources available from the Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project (TILT Higher Ed). This site has example assignments from a number of classes, videos, and various tools along with a checklist for designing your transparent assignments. Many of these documents are also available through our QEP Blackboard pages: <https://tilthighered.com/tiltexamplesandresources>

6. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) developed 16 value rubrics with a team of faculty from over 100 institutions. Here is the link regarding this project as well as the link to download the rubrics: <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics>

Important 2021 Dates

August 5	QEP Steering Committee Meeting
August 16	Fall 2021 Classes Begin
August 18-Sept. 4	Student Surveys Available
September 13	Due date for fall 2021 syllabi & assignment submission

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are one of our internal assessment measures for the QEP. We are happy to report that for the fourth semester in a row we have exceeded our target goal of 80 percent. A specific question was added to course evaluations for the QEP – asking students if the course “helped them to feel like they are a member of the LMU learning community.” The intent was to determine if students felt a sense of belonging academically. With the extra challenges of the pandemic for the past three semesters, we are thankful that students feel this sense of belonging with so many activities being limited to online!

Semester	Agree/Strongly Agree
Fall 2019	83 %
Spring 2020	85 %
Fall 2020	86 %
Spring 2021	85 %



Faculty Testimony

Hear faculty testimony from Dr. Julie Hall, chairperson of the Biology Department, and Dr. Jason Fowler, biology associate professor. They speak in this video about their experiences of using transparent Instruction in their classrooms: <https://animoto.com/play/1RNSD2D4oMT0w2qqBztlcw> We plan to create another video this year featuring our 2021 faculty award recipients.

CIVX 300 – American Civics

One of our external assessment measures includes scores from the ETS Proficiency Profile Exam. This is an exam that our undergraduate students have been taking in LNCN 300, American Citizenship and Civic Life, which is typically during the students' junior year. This past year the course LNCN 300 was approved through Academic Council to be renamed CIVX 300, American Civics and was changed from a 1 credit class to a 2 credit class. This change is effective with the Fall 2021 semester. Moving forward, the ETS Proficiency Profile Exam will be administered through this new format. This exam allows us to collect more data from LMU students and gives us an avenue to compare ourselves to our peer institutions.

By The Numbers . . .

1,610	Number of student surveys returned at the end of the spring 2021 semester.
3.992	Average Score for end of the semester QEP student surveys, spring 2021 on a 5-point scale.
76.3	Percentage of spring 2021 transparent syllabi that scored all 3's and 4's on a 4-point scale. Target goal is to reach 80 percent – making progress.
84	Percentage of spring 2021 transparent instructional assignments that scored all 3's and 4's on a 4-point scale. Only one percentage point below target goal of 85 percent!
2	Number of transparent assignments that should be included in each general education and gateway course to reflect transparent instruction.

PURPOSE ~ TASKS ~ CRITERIA

Thank you for reading our 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.edu.