

Nutrition Science Showcase

Why we chose to showcase Nutrition Science:

The Nutrition Science showcase was chosen because the program engaged in a number of best practices in assessment, including use of a portfolio project, scored with a rubric that was analyzed at the dimension level. The Nutrition Science faculty used the assessment findings to make program decisions. In this case, the assessment results were used by the faculty to add a sophomore-level course to the program curriculum.

Assessment Plan:

The Nutrition Science program has five student learning outcomes measured through course projects with rubrics and major exam questions. For this showcase, they measured the outcome: "Students will develop a novel intervention to address a public health issue." This outcome was measured through a junior/senior level course using a portfolio and rubric.

Evidence of Student Learning:

This outcome was assessed in the course NTR 330: Public Health Nutrition (N=61). All students in the course created a portfolio to document their advocacy of a public health issue. Components of the portfolio op-ed article, video argument and social media posts were scored using rubrics. A 5-point rubric, used for the op-ed article, found that most students could craft creative headlines and hooks (4.43, 4.92) and could provide strong evidence (4.65). However, student's ability to engage in critical thinking within the message-clarity, depth and breadth of thought (4.31) and the score for describing the link between justification and clear action (3.71) were both lower. The 3-point scale for the video argument included ratings for narrowed topic, thesis, supporting material, organization, language, vocal variety, pronunciation, articulation, and physical behaviors. Areas in which students had the most room for improvement were related to audience appropriateness (2.02) and physical behaviors during the presentation (2.71). The 5-point scale used to assess the social media posts gave individual scores for critical thinking-related components: clarity (4.65), accuracy (4.63), depth (4.37), logic (4.76), persuasiveness (4.16), and professionalism (4.83) all strong scores. Overall, students have demonstrated strength in the areas of creativity, organization and accuracy; students can improve in the communication components of the exercises.

Use of Student Learning:

The faculty determined that the areas needed for improvement were in communication (audience appropriateness, clarity of message and physical behavior) as it relates to developing arguments for decisions. As a result, a new required sophomore-level science communication course was taught starting in Fall 2016. This course was designed to help improve students' ability in written and oral communication. As a result, students should improve their communication skills relative to both developing arguments and articulating those arguments to different audiences.