Meeting our students where they are

Sue Monahan
Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness
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100m

Flo  10.49 seconds
Yo   12.21 seconds

$100 in prize money. How do you split it up between Flo and Yo?
Why is Flo faster time than Yo?
Flo’s race
Flo’s race

Yo’s race
Florence Griffith Joyner, 100 m women’s world record holder (current)

10.49 sec

Flo’s race

Yordonka Donkova, 100 m women’s hurdles record holder (1988-2016)

12.21 sec

Yo’s race
Yo and Flo did not run the same race.
But American culture primes us to see individualistic explanations

- A function of difference between Yo and Flo
- Age, training, effort, breakfast, talent, fitness, height, experience
- You get what you earn
- Everyone has a chance
- If you want it enough, it will happen
- Your fate is within your control
We see outcomes. And we assign rewards, esteem and value based on the outcome, irrespective of the fairness or evenness of the rules.

The “rules of the game” are in the background, often unnoticed.

But we often have more control over the rules of the game than we realize.
When people criticize me for not having any respect for existing structures and institutions, I protest. I say I give institutions and structures and traditions all the respect that I think they deserve. That's usually mighty little, but there are things that I do respect. They have to earn that respect. They have to earn it by serving people. They don't earn it just by age or legality or tradition.

Myles Horton, founder, Highlander School
Student success outcomes at WOU

74% of WOU’s first-time, full-time freshman continue as sophomores (national average = 70%).

- 1 in 4 first-time, full-time students does not return for a second year

46% of WOU’s full-time undergraduate degree seekers graduate in six years (national average = 42%).

- After six years, 1 in 2 students who started at WOU as first-time, full-time students has not graduated
Why do 25% of students leave WOU after the first year?

Why do less than half of our students graduate within six years?
We tend to locate explanations in our students

– Poor preparation
– Lack of direction
– Poor study skills
– Not ready for college
– Homesickness
– Too many distractions or outside demands
Rebecca Cox reports that faculty often see:

- Students who seem to care more about grades than learning
- Students who do not complete assignments
- Students who do not seek the help they need
- Students who care most about things that are clearly linked to the job they hope for

We love our disciplines and fields, and it is disappointing when students do not share our enthusiasm.
Upon entering post-secondary education, many students, especially those not steeped in a college-going culture:

- See college as a way to improve their chances to get a good job
- Juggle work and family responsibilities and struggle financially
- Fear they will hear that they are not college material
Balancing current financial struggles with hopes of improving job prospects, many students:

- Seek the most direct route through classes and college
- Engage most when they can see the relevance of academics to their future work
Out of fear of being negatively evaluated, they often:

- Scale back their ambitions and pursue easier, more familiar courses, programs, paths, institutions
- Redefine success and failure
- Avoid evaluation

They undermine themselves.
“Being unprepared to meet certain expectations, however, is not the same as being unable to meet them.” (p 11)

“Not surprisingly, students exhibited very low tolerance for being confused or making mistakes, phenomena they could easily attribute to their own inadequacy rather than to the process of learning new skills and information.” (p 37)

They are novices at this. They don’t know the rules of our game.
We tend to locate explanations in our students

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– Too many distractions or outside demands
What is in our locus of control?

The rules of the game.
We built it. We can change it.
Transparent teaching and learning focuses on how and why students are learning course content in particular ways.

Making the process – the unspoken “rules of the game” – obvious.
Assignment: Interview two professionals in a field you are interested in going into. Compare and contrast what you learn from them about the advantages and disadvantages of the field.
Transparent Assignment Design:
Share the secret sauce with students

• **Purpose**
  – Knowledge gained, skills practiced
  – Connection to learning outcomes, relevance to student’s lives

• **Tasks**
  – What students do
  – How to do it (steps, what to avoid)

• **Criteria**
  – Guide for self-evaluation
  – Analyze what excellence looks like
Due dates:

- Draft interview questions – September 30, 2014
- Transcript of interviews – October 15, 2014
- Report - November 17, 2014

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering.

Skills: The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in school and your professional life beyond school. In this assignment you will:

- Access and collect needed information from appropriate primary and secondary sources.
- Synthesize information to develop informed views.
- Compose a well-organized, clear, concise, report to expand your knowledge on a subject in your major.

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:

- Issues facing professionals in a field
- Scholarly research formats for documenting in-text sources and creating reference pages (i.e., bibliographies).

Task: To complete this assignment you should:

1. Select two professionals in your prospective academic discipline and/or career field that are considered experts in an area in which you are interested.
2. Secure an interview with the professionals for a date and time that is convenient for both of you.
3. Prepare 8-10 questions to ask the professionals about their expertise in a particular academic discipline/career field. The questions must be based on a review of the field using 5 credible sources as defined by the librarian in our research module. Sources should be cited using APA formatting.
4. Conduct a 20 – 30 minute, face-to-face interview with each professional to gather knowledge that will help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee’s permission.
5. Prepare a typed transcript of the interviews
6. Compare and contrast the information provided by both professionals in an 8 page (1.5 spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins) report that documents the advantages and disadvantages of a career in the selected field.

Criteria for success: Please see the attached rubric.
Isn’t that just coddling, hand-holding?
Are we gatekeepers or bridge-builders?

Do we expect novices to have the same implicit knowledge we do? To know the unspoken “rules of our game”?

Do we expect them to care about the same things?

Or do we give students structured opportunities to learn and grow?

How can we level the playing field so that all students can succeed?
What else is within our locus of control?
Student-Centered

Student-centered schedules
Flexible program delivery
Student-centered schedules
Student Centered

- Flexible curriculum
- Flexible program delivery
- Student-centered schedules
Student Centered

Flexible curriculum

Supportive community

Flexible program delivery

Student-centered schedules
Student-Centered

- Flexible curriculum
- Supportive community
- Student-friendly administrative procedures
- Flexible program delivery
- Student-centered schedules
Student-Centered schedules
Flexible program delivery
Flexible curriculum
Supportive community
Student-friendly administrative procedures
Affordable
Student-Centered
Student Centered

- Flexible curriculum
- Supportive community
- Flexible program delivery
- Student-friendly administrative procedures
- Affordable
- Generous admissions standards
- Student-centered schedules
Build programs that are intentional, directional & coherent (align)

Working hypothesis, supported by research
Build programs that are intentional, directional & coherent (align)

Communicate and support (transparency)

Working hypothesis, supported by research
Working hypothesis, supported by research

1. Build programs that are intentional, directional & coherent (align)
2. Communicate and support (transparency)
3. Organize around our students’ needs (student centered)
Build programs that are intentional, directional & coherent (align)

Communicate and support (transparency)

Organize around our students’ needs (student centered)

Student Success

Working hypothesis, supported by research
Florence Griffith Joyner, 100 m women’s world record holder (current)

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