Illinois College, Jacksonville, IL

Title of Project
Civic Learning, the BLUEprint, and the Degree Qualifications Profile

Overview
Illinois College (IC) proposed a three-pronged test of the Degree Qualifications Profile: 1) Testing the Civic Engagement DQP standards through courses in the Leadership Program; 2) Testing the Master’s Level DQP standards through assessment of student performance in the Master’s in Education program; and 3) Testing most of the DQP standards through assessment of all Art courses. Along the way, our Pathways Pioneers Project Team also participated in a parallel conversation within our faculty about how to assess our new BLUEprint general education program.

Goals
- Provide opportunities for assessing the DQP, especially civic learning
- Enhance IC’s ability to provide meaningful and effective civic learning
- Engage in a comparison with other institutions testing the DQP
- Gather baseline data on the extent of students’ civic learning and other DQP outcomes

People Involved
On campus, a five-person team consisting of faculty and administrators designed and implemented our test of the DQP, and assumed primary responsibility for educating the faculty about the document. As a small liberal arts college, Illinois College employs a relatively small number of faculty members—103 members this year, including 80 full-time members and 23 part-time members. According to our calculation, forty-four (44) of our eighty full-time faculty members, or 55% of our full-time faculty, have engaged substantively with the DQP and our testing of the DQP. Some opportunities for engagement included the Opening Faculty Conference at the beginning of each academic year, the Leadership Program, the Graduate Program Committee, the Curriculum Review Committee, Rubric teams, and summer workshops.

Key Accomplishment(s) or Outcome(s)
Illinois College has been in pursuit of effective assessment practices, and the Pathways Pioneers test project occurred at an opportune time for our campus because our new general education program (the BLUEprint) was created during the 2009–2012 period and started in the Fall Semester of 2012. The Degree Qualifications Profile is one of the best solutions we have seen to the problem of creating all-campus/college-wide assessments, and our engagement will continue to expand as more rubric teams begin their work. Our faculty already has adopted assessment rubrics that were directly influenced by the DQP for all civic learning and speaking-intensive courses; a rubric for writing-intensive courses will be voted on at an upcoming faculty meeting. In the summer of 2014, our three-week summer workshop on Civic and Service-Learning will ensure that civic learning remains an expanding area of focus for our faculty and within our curriculum.

Most Important Findings
- Illinois College believes that the individual learning standards established in the DQP generally are the right ones for higher education. We conclude that the level of rigor implied by many of the objectives within the areas of learning is generally appropriate for the degree level. We do, however, see the need for a substantial dialogue between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions and for much closer cooperation between them to achieve the most ambitious learning objectives
• Rubrics for grading and assessment are necessary to operationalize the goals of the DQP
• The rubrics for different areas of learning in the DQP do not need to be identical in content and structure, but within each specific area (e.g., Civic Learning), faculty should use a common rubric
• From a faculty development standpoint, the DQP is a useful catalyst for getting faculty members to think about the rationales for their curricular and course designs
• Using the DQP areas of learning for departmental and program assessment often results in changes to and improvements of course assignments
• Informing students about the DQP framework is an important step if the DQP’s learning objectives are affecting course curricula and assessments of student learning
• In a future draft of the DQP, we would like to see more attention paid to presentation skills and communications and the inclusion of ethics