

Bush Faculty Development Grant
Area 4a
Reynold F. Nesiba
Connection Between this Project and Overall Grant Goals
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Although my grant project for developing a course in Australia was an excellent fit for area 4a of Augustana College's Faculty Development Grant—infusing “diversity” “globalism” and “international perspectives” into the curriculum—its connection to the overall goals of the grant are more tangential. The best fit is with Question 4 that asks, “In what ways have we enhanced assessment of student learning? How can we apply that to the curriculum?”

One result of this grant-funded project was that I was forced to think clearly and concretely about course objectives and ways to assess them. I'm not sure this means my assessment is “enhanced;” the course hasn't been offered yet and I regularly use effective methods of assessing student learning now. This plan is more intentional, explicit, and narrow than anything I have used in the past. Since this four-week, travel course is being offered for the first time, it was useful to develop clear learning objectives and an assessment plan at the same time as I was writing the course syllabus. Synergies exist when one is thinking not only how a particular stop/lecture/guest speaker fits into the course, but also how one will measure whether any education happened during that event. This paragraph from my course syllabus is a direct result of the assessment process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

By the end of this course, students should be able to prove their mastery of the following four learning objectives. First, describe the recent macroeconomic history of Australia (including economic growth, genuine progress, unemployment, inflation, and external balance). Second, explain Australia's place in the global economy—make reference to its origins, settlement, primary trading partners, and how all of these have changed over time. Third, demonstrate an understanding of the strategies used by the whaling, timber, education, tourism, and winemaking industries to adapt to changes in the regional/global economy and the implications of these strategies for sustainability. Fourth, demonstrate an enhanced awareness and ability to understand the forces driving globalization as well as its positive and negative consequences. The degree to which students achieve these objectives will be assessed by their oral responses to questions in class, their written journal entries, and their answers to a final examination.

With respect to the second question, I'm not certain we should apply this type of assessment plan writing to our overall curriculum. It's time consuming, intellectually limiting, and constraining to the faculty member who would like to use teachable moments as they arise in the classroom. In economics in particular, if an issue related to a particular tax policy or monetary policy is in the news, and if it is related to course material, I adjust my course to give more focus to these popular, yet important issues. An unchanging assessment plan, limits one's ability to do this. If it was determined that this type of assessment was desirable, and if the faculty concurred, then the curriculum council could require all new courses to include a one-time evaluation plan similar to the one that was prepared for this project and submitted under separate cover.