**Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy Project**

As part of the Higher Learning Commission’s model for continued accreditation, Xavier University has chosen to join the HLC's Assessment Academy and the project of piloting the assessment of Immersive learning. The project has focused on building institutional capacity to create, support, assess, and improve Immersive Learning experiences, both curricular and co-curricular, as an integral aspect of our student experience, the Road through Xavier, and rooted in our Jesuit Catholic mission. Specifically, as part of Xavier’s Academic Plan, we have defined Immersive learning asan academically based learning opportunity that incorporates an examination of social justice issues while immersing students in a community affected by systemic challenges and injustices. Prompted by observation, direct experience and reflection, students consider various worldviews and perspectives different from their own through interactions with diverse populations. Immersive learning provides students with both meaningful engagement opportunities in interactive partnership with local, domestic or international communities and academic structures for analysis, reflection on their learning, and application to future action. This project has provided an avenue for recognizing a vision for Immersive Learning, with common learning outcomes and assessment expectations.

With the pedagogical elements and student learning outcomes designed, we moved forward in assessing the Immersive Learning experience. During the spring, 2019 semester, 182 studentsenrolled in six (6) classes and four (4) co-curricular experiences participated in piloting a new Immersive Learning Canvas course. Designed by Dr. Ceo-DiFrancesco, in collaboration with faculty from across the university, this Canvas-based curriculum was developed for students preparing for and participating in domestic and international immersive experiences. Module topics include immersive learning terminology, identity and self-awareness, and an overview of frameworks that reinforce inequity. A faculty guide was developed as a resource for ease of integration and inclusion of these modules in existing courses, as well as offering a pre- and post-assessment that provides an indirect measure of students’ growth. Nine (9) faculty members and two staff members utilized this valuable resource as part of the pilot project.

Pre and post Qualtrics surveys were administered to all students that utilized the CANVAS modules during the spring 2019 semester. Initial results based on the 102 students who completed the post survey reveal several important points: 86% of the students chose the immersive learning opportunity based on its topic or theme, while 32% also chose the experience because it was tied to their major. For 53% of the students, this was their first immersive learning experience, while the remainder of the students had participated in a previous immersive learning experience at Xavier.

More importantly, preliminary data comparing the 182 respondents from the pre-survey compared to the 102 participants in the post survey demonstrates growth in student knowledge, attitudes, values and perspectives related to diverse populations. Specifically, students reported gains in self-awareness and recognizing privilege in society. Their comfort level interacting with people from different backgrounds increased. They reported increased awareness of their assumptions about those who are different, and an interest in future opportunities to learn about others, and to build new relationships. There was an increase in action plans against injustice and a marked increase in students’ commitment to oppose injustices.

In addition to the Qualtric surveys, three students were interviewed and two focus groups, consisting of five to six students each, were conducted in September, 2019. Student responses demonstrate how the Immersive Learning Experience has impacted their learning and aligned with the Student Learning Outcomes for Immersive Learning.

**SLOs 1 – Students will be able to analyze systemic challenges and the causes of injustices within the context of the immersive experience.** Student responses during interviews and focus groups demonstrated their ability to articulate how their experiences and, importantly, the pre and post projects allowed them to deepen their reflections and understanding of social justice issues. In addition, they described the impact of recognizing the issues of social justice in various immersive learning experiences. Student example: “There are a lot of health care disparities that are present because of the language barrier and because of other barriers that come with being a Spanish speaking citizens, and so after my trip that’ when I decided to double major and I also declared minors in diversity studies and peace and justice studies.”

**SLO2 – Students will be able to articulate an awareness of other perspectives and worldview and worldviews through direct contact and interaction with diverse populations**. The significant themes from the interviews for SLO 2 demonstrated how students developed an awareness and understanding of perspectives beyond their own. For many students, the dissonance and discomfort they described led to an understanding of diverse perspectives and communities beyond their own context. Student example: “I think more aware of the lives of other people, different perspectives. I think because of these experience I'm more likely to like do something different with my career than I would have before.”

**SLO3 – Students will be able to demonstrate the development of intercultural competence through engagement, discernment and reflection**. Focus group participants noted the importance of group reflection during their immersive learning experience in holding themselves and their peers accountable for understanding and respecting the lifestyles of the new cultures they experienced. “I learned that every culture, every country has their own way of living. Their own style of living and interacting with others.”

**SLO4 – Students will be able to identify personal and societal responsibilities in the promotion of social justice.**

Students expressed that, as a result of their Immersive Learning experiences, they feel their academic studies are connected to real life encounters; it has helped to direct their focus of study and determined which electives to take; they could share stories in classes to enhance the discussions; and these experiences fit with their minor or helped them to pursue another major. In addition, the transformative learning they experienced during the immersive learning program increased and their passion for advocacy for those experiencing injustice. Student example: “I also think that something that is very important to me is to use my education to better the world which sounds idealistic, but to recognize that the education that we are gaining is such a privilege and we can use it to help people who don’t have access to the same things we do. That’s been motivating and educational.”

**Team Members:** Dennis Long, Mack Mariani, Rachel Chrastil, Carol Maegly, Shannon Hughes, Sean Rhiney, Teresa Young, Diane Ceo-DiFrancesco