USING THE TOURO RUBRIC FOR ONLINE EDUCATION AS A FORMATIVE TOOL FOR IMPROVING ONLINE COURSES

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Abstract

This session will focus on the application of a new rubric, The Touro Rubric for Online Education, as a formative tool to assist faculty in improving their online course material. Faculty was introduced to the Rubric as a roadmap to improving the pedagogy in their courses. Previously, faculty had been resistant to changing their courses, indicating that pedagogy was an element of their academic freedom. It was felt that using the Rubric would enable them to feel that they controlled the pedagogy while encouraging them to use best practices to upgrade the pedagogy, when necessary. The Rubric has five evaluation categories: Course Design, Course Logic, Instructor Presence, Learner Engagement, Learner Assessment and Course Technology. Each category consists of between four and fifteen items. Items within the category are given a score of 1 (needs improvement); 3 (meets expectations); or 5 (exceeds expectations) which are clearly defined within the Rubric. For example, to get a 3 on Connections, faculty is expected to “articulate connections between weekly objectives and activities, materials and assessments in weekly folders;” whereas to receive a 5, the instructor must include “in the syllabus, a visual tool to show overarching course structure (e.g., course map, chart, table or graphic) which illustrates how activities, materials and assessments are related to weekly objectives.” Some faculty members were given the Rubric and were able to independently self-assess their courses and then used the definitions of excellence to improve their course. Other faculty worked one-on-one with the Instructional Designer who introduced the Rubric to them as tool to both evaluate their course on specific items and introduce options for course improvement. For each item included, the Rubric provides faculty with clearly articulated outlines of what is necessary to design good and great courses, so faculty might choose to add video, rather than just text-based material or they might add a short video introduction each week that references student work of the previous week or they might introduce group assignments. Faculty responded positively and were much more receptive to refreshing and changing their courses when instructional designers used the Rubric to provide guidelines for improvement. Participants in this session will learn about the Touro Rubric for Online Education and its application as a formative tool to improve teaching and learning in online classes.

Keywords: Online learning, distance education, learning and teaching, online pedagogy, instructor presence, learner engagement, learner assessment, rubric.