

Student Pilot Test/Critical Thinking Session (1-26-06)

GE 101 Strategies for Academic Success (TR, 9:30, Sp 06, D. Garrard, Instructor)

15 students, all participants in SSS Program

Schuermer set up the session and explained briefly the following:

- accreditation & its relationship to best practices & student learning
- Gen Ed competencies—what are they and why our faculty chose critical thinking—gave examples of CT—gave “water faucet” and “garage door” examples
- QEP is about student learning
- Faculty have told us they are frustrated with moving students from memorization and “right answer” behavior to higher order reasoning skills
- Students have told us they learn better when they aren’t learning alone—when they problem solve together
- QEP requires evidence that learning has improved as a result of instructional interventions—that’s why we were considering the Ca Test of CT

Then Schuermer administered the test. Questions #8 and #9, 4 minutes each question. Afterwards, tallied the answers, then conducted discussion of how they went about arriving at their answers. First reminded them that it is OK to be wrong, that it is OK to take risks, that the best kind of learning takes place when you can figure out why you were wrong and set about doing better the next time.

After they answered the questions, Schuermer opened the discussion by asking: “If you were a new student and took this test, what would you think of the experience?” Their responses:

- I was bored. I’m a type A personality and I was asking myself what is the point? There are other things I could be doing, so why am I doing this?
- I like this kind of test. I had the opposite experience. It’s fun to do it as long as it doesn’t place me in a special class.
- I wouldn’t mind taking the test if it will help me with my studies. Will teachers set up homework and lessons that help me get better at it?
- I’m OK with it as long as I see faculty using this in their classes. They need to help us.

At this point, Schuermer noted that the test was demanding and there was disagreement among faculty over some of the answers. He explained the role of scoring. Getting a high score on the test was not the goal of administering it; rather, getting a benchmark score to determine where most students are upon entry to the college was the goal, so that the college could figure out whether or not any of the instructional interventions that were implemented worked. The goal was to improve—to know where we started and where we ended so we could figure out whether all that we did in between made a difference. It would not be used as a placement or exit exam.

- I'd like to see my score and compare it to where I ended up. Knowing my score is a good thing. I want to be able to compare.
- Some of the answers to the questions seemed so subjective. There could be more than one right answer based upon your opinion of what is important.
- The test can give us a guide to what critical thinking is. (Schuermer added, "Do you mean it makes our expectation of how you need to think in college more explicit?" Her answer: yes)
- I think a few students with low self-esteem might see this as a "smart or dumb" test. If they've worked hard to finish they're GED and then they score low on the test, they might not want to go through it. (Schuermer added that we had to make sure students understood it wasn't a placement test. Individual scores are not as important as the group score. Also, where you started is not important; where you ended in relation to where you started is.)
- Wouldn't a student with low self-esteem have to take the COMPASS? I was worried myself, but I took it because I wanted to know where I was.

Distribution of answers:

#8—Nero	A	4
	B	5
	C	4
	D	3
#9—hotel fire	A	1
	B	0
	C	0
	D	1
	E	13