

Holistic Student Development, Chaffey College Courses, English 500 Objectives, and the Career Project

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“The developmental education program addresses holistic development of all aspects of the student. Attention is paid to the social and emotional development of the students as well as to their cognitive growth.” *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*

By definition, holistic student development extends beyond the classroom. Still, educators may promote holistic student development within the classroom. Although the document, *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*, focuses on best practices in foundation-level courses, holistic student development may effectively and purposefully receive attention in transfer-level courses as well. Chaffey classroom educators, interested in promoting holistic student development within the college’s transfer-level and foundation-level classrooms, should consider asking themselves the following five major questions:

1. To what extent, if any, may holistic development be integrated in ways which promote academic self-efficacy and goal mastery in the classes I teach?
2. How may the integration of attention to holistic student development be implemented in ways which help students meet specific course objectives?
3. By which specific avenues (i.e. class discussions, lectures, projects, assignments, and/or other materials) may my courses appropriately, effectively, and purposefully reflect a holistic student development philosophy without sacrificing any attention to course standards and objectives?
4. What are the limits of my professional expertise in regard to holistic student development? How may I develop partnerships, allowing students to benefit from the expertise of others on campus?
5. How may I assess the effectiveness of my professional choices? How may this evaluation promote continued professional development in regard to holistic student development?

Although I believe these questions may be asked across the disciplines, I will take my own advice and know the limits of my professional expertise. Perhaps, interested faculty may choose to answer these questions independently, over collegial cups of coffee at Starbucks, or through a Faculty Success Center inquiry group. For now, I will share a sample holistic student development project; the English 500 Career Project, in part, came out of my participation in the Faculty Summer Institute.

At Chaffey College, English 500, Preparation for College Writing, occurs three levels before transfer-level English. Although the course outline of record’s emphasis on study skills and college success suggests direct attention to holistic student development, the Career Project, based in academic rigor and course objectives, would have directly and appropriately reflected the course outline of record, regardless of whether or not attention to holistic student development was addressed in the COR.

Reflecting an emphasis on holistic student development, exploring the relationship between mastery goals and self-efficacy, Guerra and Sullivan (2007) argue that students who work toward mastery goals and possess a relatively high sense of self-efficacy are more successful in college than students who possess a relatively high level of self-efficacy but embrace performance-avoidance goals. In other words, students who believe that they will be successful and focus their attention on success at authentically meeting course challenges are more successful than students who believe that they will be successful and focus their attention on convincing others that they have met course challenges. Self-efficacy literature, published long before Guerra and Sullivan’s recent work, links a sense of high self-efficacy with success. Guerra and Sullivan argue that a sense of self-efficacy, combined with performance avoidance goals, can be problematic.

When I apply the arguments of Guerra and Sullivan, I think of academic self-efficacy, mastery goals, and English 500 in the following manner. If students see English 500 course challenges as hoops that they must jump through on the way to their true purposes for being in college, and they focus their attention on convincing me that they “get it,” rather than on actually “getting it,” they will not be as successful as if they had focused on truly “getting it” and charted the necessary figurative courses for “getting it,” including the pursuance of assistance from available campus resources.

Based on my interpretation of these perspectives, if I focus on the connections between class, college, and career goals, then I may further promote student success within the classroom. Still, some students in English 500, as well as other Chaffey College classes, express confusion and uncertainty about their college and career goals. Although the study is limited, DeWitz and Walsh (2009) discuss connections between self-efficacy levels, purpose-in-life, and college retention. A high sense of self-efficacy is correlated with a similar sense of purpose-in-life.

With a guarded confidence in the findings of Guerra and Sullivan, DeWitz and Walsh, and previous research into related areas, I designed the English 500 project with consideration of course objectives, essay writing, active reading, and introductory research skills, as well as motivation for reaching mastery goals, building senses of self-efficacy, and developing purposes in life. I considered ways in which completing each step of the Career Project would serve multiple purposes simultaneously. As for academics, the project needed to effectively introduce students to academic essay structure. Students would focus on formulating and developing main ideas. In addition, rhetorical strategies would be introduced. Opportunities for developing active reading, research, and critical thinking skills would also be provided. As for holistic student development, beyond English class skills, I considered ways in which the project could focus on career interests without requiring all students to have their career goals formulated. The project would need to engage and encourage students with a variety of perspectives on their career goals, including some, first exploring career interests, and others, firmly established in their fields.

As implemented, the final version of the project required each student to develop a collage and an essay, addressing a specific career option or a general career field. Students developed career-related collages, integrating images and quotations. The images reflected qualities, related to the selected career options or fields of interest that they had selected, and the quotations featured researched information about these subjects. The corresponding academic essays, which were the first compositions of the semester to feature introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions, required students to analyze the collages that they had developed. Through the actions of creating the career research collages and writing their essays, students further developed their writing, reading, and critical thinking skills. Through the analysis of career-related content for these collages and essays, students focused on motivation for reaching mastery goals and developing purposes in life. Through actions and content, reflecting holistic development objectives, students focused on building increased levels of self-efficacy, including but not limited to academic self-efficacy. In addition, with the privileging of self-efficacy and mastery, over self-efficacy and performance avoidance, students were introduced to campus services, including the Writing Center and the Global Career Center, designed to promote the seeking of campus assistance as an appropriate and responsible choice, further promoting success.

One particular area of concern, related to success, holistic student development, and English classes, involves the need for students to write their compositions in ways that extend far beyond the purely personal or inappropriately confessional. A danger of holistic student development in a writing class would be for the focus to be on an audience of one, the student, developing career goals and self-efficacy but not college-level writing skills. In that worst case scenario, course standards and objectives could be sacrificed.

In addition to emphasizing college-level critical thinking, reading, research, and writing skills, the English 500 project requirements focused on educating academic audiences, related to the students' selected career fields or career options. Each student did not write to an audience about "my career interest" but about "a career field or option." Still, the individual needs of the students were considered as they developed their projects; for instance, students who had trouble deciding on their collage and essay topics first reviewed career development sources and had opportunities to take interest tests. Eventually, after choosing topics and finding collage images, all students worked on the research portions of their projects, using information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other appropriate sources.

When reviewing the quality of the first implementation of the Career Project, I selected assessment measures which also reflect a holistic student development philosophy. I chose to assess the academic focus with a current English 500 Student Learning Outcome and the students' final portfolios; I used an anonymous student survey to assess aspects of holistic development, beyond academics.

Assessment Results: Part One, Student Learning Outcome/Analysis of Portfolio (ACADEMICS)

Student Learning Outcome: English 500 / Fall 09 / All sections
"Identify and model the structure of various kinds of writing"

Assessment Question: English 500 / Fall 09 / All sections
"Does the student's paragraph or essay match the intended structure of the writing assignment?"

Assessment Question Response: English 500 / Fall 09 / This section
Yes = 100% No = 0%

Assessment Results: Part Two Anonymous Student Survey / (Holistic Development, Beyond Academics)

I have a clearer understanding of my career path because of Project #2.

True: 73%

I have discovered information about one or more possible careers because of Project #2.

True: 67%

I feel more motivated to pursue my educational goals because of Project #2.

True: 93%

I see clearer connections between college and work because of Project #2.

True: 80%

I am more likely to go to the Global Career Center because of the Center presentation.

True: 73%

Overall, I was pleased with the assessment results. As for the academic portion, the excellent use of academic essay structure, demonstrated by the students in the final portfolio versions of their project essays, was complemented by their career collages, reflecting major investments of time, effort, and motivation. As for holistic student development, beyond academics, the anonymous survey results suggest positive links between the Career Project and holistic development, beyond academics.

Based on these assessment results and related observations, I will continue to include the Career Project in English 500. Earlier introductions of campus resources, limited scheduling adjustments, and a revision of project requirements tentatively will occur. Quotation requirements tentatively will be adjusted to include material from interviews with campus sources.

Individuals who are interested in seeing pictures of the students' collages and/or wish to discuss holistic student development further should consider contacting me at melissa.utsler@chaffey.edu. Also, I suggest reviewing the following resources for additional information.

[Resources: Linking Academics, Self-Efficacy, Purpose-In-Life & Goal Orientation](#)

DeWitz, S., Woolsey M., & Walsh B (2009). College Student Retention: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Purpose in Life Among College Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50, 19-34.

Guerra, N., Hsieh, P., & Sullivan, J (2007). A Closer Look at College Students: Self-Efficacy and Goal Orientation. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 18, 454-476.

Information on Self-Efficacy: A Community of Scholars. Retrieved last on February 1, 2010, from <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/self-efficacy.html>.

Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (2007). *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*.