ATTENTION

NSU
Administrators,
Faculty,
and Staff

The readings described are on reserve in the Lyman Beecher Brooks Library and are available online at www.nsu.edu/iea.
The password is: nsu

A series of brown-bag discussion sessions based on the 2009 summer readings will be held during the Fall 2009 semester. If you would like to volunteer to lead a discussion session on a particular topic or article, please send an email to reason@nsu.edu.
SUMMER READINGS for faculty and staff began in 2004. The purpose of the readings is to inform campus conversations focused on enhancing and sustaining an environment that supports student success, development of higher order reasoning skills, and achievement of intended learning outcomes. The readings for this year, organized around four themes, were selected (i) to provide an update on current issues in higher education, (ii) to enhance academic advising processes, (iii) to guide the development of reflection, metacognitive strategies, and critical thinking abilities in students, and (iv) to facilitate curricular and pedagogical innovations.

I. Current Issues in Higher Education
The author argues that if colleges and universities are to prepare changing students for a changing world, all campus constituencies must be learners who can shape higher education institutions for new tasks in new ways. Learning is change. Colleges and universities can only propagate it if they practice it by embracing an institutional culture of inquiry – a culture of intentional engagement of informed campus constituencies in the continuous processes of individual, professional, and organizational learning and innovation.


Getting serious about student retention and persistence—serious enough to significantly improve learning, success, persistence, and graduation rates for all students—requires more than an ambitious plan. Getting serious about student persistence requires that educators connect what they know about institutional retention practices with an empirically grounded sense of what works. In this article, the authors share what they have learned in two research projects that focus on institutional efforts to enhance student persistence and graduation. Together, these studies present a fuller picture of how institutions organize themselves to enhance student persistence as well as the extent and effectiveness of those efforts.

II. Advising
A convenient response to the perennial problem of student dissatisfaction with academic advising is to simply say that faculty members need to do more and better advising. In this study, faculty were surveyed about their attitudes toward and experiences with academic advising. Results showed that faculty, although generally satisfied with the advising they provide, do not necessarily feel responsible for all of the kinds of academic advising they believe are important for students to receive. These findings point to a gap in advising services that the authors suggest might best be bridged through partnerships between faculty members and academic support/student affairs professionals.


Framing academic advising as learning, and as such, part of a faculty member’s teaching responsibilities, changes the way faculty and administrators approach the task of advising students. The authors of this article propose ten organizing principles that faculty, professional advisors, and administrators can use to design effective academic advising strategies and processes. The first three principles define a curriculum for academic advising and are based on the premise that the goals and values of advising should be derived from the institutional mission statement and assist advisors in developing higher-order reasoning skills. The other principles focus on pedagogy: creating and organizing situations that assist students in meeting learning goals.

III. Critical Thinking and Cognitive Development
In this thought-provoking article, the author argues three interesting points. First, critical thinking is not a skill; there is not a set of critical thinking skills that can be required and deployed regardless of specific context. Second, there are certain metacognitive strategies that, once learned, make critical thinking more likely. Finally, the ability to think critically – to actually do what the metacognitive strategies call for – depends on subject domain knowledge and practice.


Institutional strategies for developing intended student learning outcomes, such as information literacy competencies, must be based on an understanding of patterns of student intellectual development throughout the college experience. In this article, the author argues that a student’s level of cognitive development or reflective judgment directly affects said student’s ability to learn and apply the information literacy competencies. The author provides examples of mapping information literacy competencies with cognitive development levels and discusses which competencies are appropriate for which level of cognitive development.

IV. Curricular and Pedagogical Innovations
The most important things faculty members can do to influence student learning involve designing learner-centered courses or carefully planning what students—not their teachers—will do before, during, and after each class. In this article, the author draws on literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning to summarize a framework for designing courses as “significant learning experiences” and to discuss the three key components of course design — learning outcomes, learning activities, and learning assessments.

Faculty are being called upon by many inside and outside of academia to encourage students to reflect as a means of developing critical thinking and reasoning skills. However, the research and practice show that it is often difficult for faculty to design and facilitate effective assignments that engage students in meaningful reflections. This article provides an overview of research and theoretical frameworks that have helped the author design assignments that have led to more productive, reflective papers. It also includes examples of student responses to these assignments from several courses.