

General Education Outcomes – Student Assessment Activity

Report

Spring 2018

Goal: To come up with a voluntary, structured, out-of-class student activity that would give participating faculty an insight into students' grasp of the institutional learning outcomes.

While we had organized a number of GE SLO activities, focused on faculty workshops and creation of rubrics, these were felt to be somewhat unsatisfactory. In-class work does not give a good insight into what students are taking away from the classroom, or whether they're putting together their learning to achieve institutional or general education learning outcomes. An out-of-class activity, therefore, seemed a much better way to gauge student learning.

A previous ILO activity had been cancelled, due to low student participation. To address this, the ILO discussion activity was embedded into two learning communities: the Honors Project students, and students from the Year One Promise.

Preparation:

- Meetings with Allie Fasth, coordinator of Year One Promise; Tiffany Zammett, Year One Promise / Dual Enrolment coordinator; and David Laderman, director of the Honors Project - discuss & plan out activity
- With Assessment Committee input, we created a discussion focused on a single topic with multimedia introduction and other materials. Again, the goal was to create questions that would elicit insight on how well students were putting together what they were learning in different classes, to achieve institutional / general education learning outcomes.

(Documentation below.)

The activity was scheduled for March 20 (Honors Project) and March 22 (Year One Promise).

Activity

Honors Project: Only three of the students who'd responded appeared.

As we did not have a sufficient sample to conduct a meaningful discussion, we discussed possible improvements:

- Scheduling: Again, this was an issue for students. Honors students also include a large number of students active in Student Life and Leadership – they are stretched thin, and their time needs to be pretty carefully managed.
- Discussion topics: The topic was well received; the two participants had plenty to say.

Year One Promise: Six students responded, and in fact seven showed up to participate. Faculty attending included the Student Learning Outcomes coordinator, and the director of Year One Promise.

The discussion – a lively and interesting conversation spanning some 90 minutes – was recorded for analysis.

Follow-up

The SLOAC reported out to the Assessment Committee, and to Academic Senate.

While the discussion was recorded, the Assessment Committee did not in fact analyze it; it was difficult to find the time to watch a ninety-minute recording, and the decision was made to improve on the format, and to create a more structured focus group discussion for the following year.

GOAL: To assess skills in **effective communication** skills in student populations, notably their ability to:

- Comprehend, interpret and analyze written and oral information
- Express ideas and provide supporting evidence effectively in writing and in speaking
- Communicate effectively in a group or team situation

METHOD: Structured and moderated discussion involving student populations with contrasting levels of college experience: Year One and the Honors Seminar.

TOPIC: SHOULD WE BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT SMARTPHONES?

Introductions (5 minutes).

Welcome! Let's introduce ourselves, and get some pizza.

Thank you for participating. Our goal today is simply to hold a discussion. It's the kind of discussion that might precede a writing assignment. But it's not part of an assignment, and we're not going to judge you, grade you, or give you homework. The topic is something that touches on our everyday experience, but is also something that inspires a lot of academic discussion and research in a variety of disciplines.

As students, you can use this as an opportunity to discuss an interesting and important subject *outside* of a classroom setting. As faculty, we want to eavesdrop! Our question to ourselves is, How effectively are we helping you express your ideas?

Opening (5 minutes): Do you have a smartphone? And how often do you think you check it every day?

Moderator prompt: The average person checks their phone 150 times a day, and spends about 5 hours on their phone. Does this surprise you? Does it sound like a lot?

Video (10 minutes): Tristan Harris interview, "Your smartphone is trying to control your life" (PBS) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MacJ4p0vITM>.

Moderator prompt: Here's a brief discussion on some of the issues raised by smartphone use. Please listen, and be ready to talk about it.

Question 1: Standout ideas? (10 minutes). Take a minute to pick one specific thing Harris said that stood out for you – that you connected with or disagreed with, or that just got you thinking. Then share out.

- Why did this fact or statement stand out to you?
- (in response to any claims of fact or references to evidence) Where did you come across that?

Question 2: Smartphones in the classroom (10 minutes). Most of us sneak a look at our phones in class. Do you think that dividing your attention helps you stay focused in class? Or does it get in the way?

Moderator prompts:

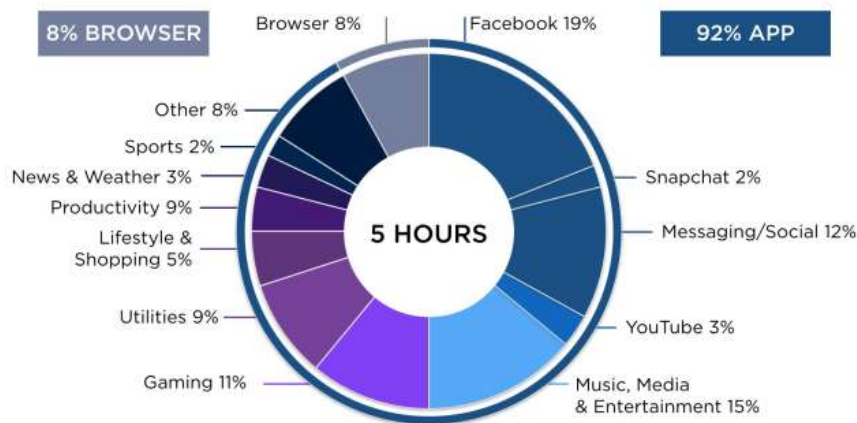
- If you do glance at your phone, what are you looking for?
- (in response to any claims of fact or references to evidence) Where did you come across that?

Question 3: Solutions (20 minutes). In pairs or threes, brainstorm some ways to make sure that smartphones don't get in our way – in the classroom, or in life generally. You could think of institutional policies, or phone design, or ways to keep ourselves disciplined. When you've discussed a few, choose the one you all like best, and present it to the group.

Mobile Media Fact Sheet

- A recent national survey conducted by Common Sense Media, which included nearly 1,800 parents of children aged eight to 18, found that parents spend an average of nine hours and 22 minutes every day in front of various screens—including smartphones, tablets, computers and televisions. Of those, nearly eight hours are for personal use, not work....
(*Scientific American*, “Most Adults Spend More Time On Their Digital Devices Than They Think,” Knavel Sheikh, 3/1/2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/most-adults-spend-more-time-on-their-digital-devices-than-they-think/>)
- The time U.S. users are spending in mobile apps is continuing to grow; according to new data released this week by analytics firm Flurry, we’re up to 5 hours per day on our mobile devices. This follows on news from January that said the time spent in mobile apps had increased 69 percent year-over-year.

US Time Spent By App Category



Source: Flurry Analytics, comScore, Facebook, NetMarketShare, Note: US, Dec 2016

(*TechCrunch*, “U.S. consumers now spend 5 hours per day on mobile devices,” Sarah Perez, 3/1/2017, <https://techcrunch.com/2017/03/03/u-s-consumers-now-spend-5-hours-per-day-on-mobile-devices/>)