Malcolm X College
Student Learning Project Overview

Identify the Project Goals
Assess Students’ Critical Thinking Skills. Identify improvements to courses and programs that enhance student development in critical thinking.

Define Critical Thinking
A student who thinks critically should be able to: identify and interpret facts; construct an argument; provide thoughtful analysis; evaluate alternatives; explain reasoning and justification; draw conclusions.

Frame the Research Questions
Do our courses enhance critical thinking? Are the students better at thinking critically at the end of our courses than they were at the start?

Do our programs enhance critical thinking? Are the students better at thinking critically after several semesters at Malcolm X College than they are when they are in their first year?

Collect Data
Students in various courses were given a discipline specific writing prompt near the beginning of the course, to be compared with another near the end of the course. Their responses were rated with a common rubric according to our operational definition of critical thinking.

Students in various first-year courses were given a standardized assessment of critical thinking, to be compared with students in various late-program courses given the same assessment.

Analyze and Reflect
Findings were summarized and reviewed by institutional researchers and a committee of faculty members. Faculty responses to findings were facilitated through discussions and written reflection activities over the course of several meetings at the college and department level.

Plan for Future Work
The goal of the project was reached through each department’s identification of ways to enhance instruction with an eye towards critical thinking. These plans were successfully captured in each department’s assessment plan, and as part of the overall strategic plan for departments and the college.