

Assessment Committee
Spring 2023
Semester report

OVERVIEW

My goal throughout this project has been to develop assessment tools for the Latin American/Latinx Studies program at Harold Washington, and perhaps for the district. One key learning outcome of the program, and multiple courses within it, focuses on understanding the diversity of the Latinx population in the United States.

The U.S. Latina/o/x population is often portrayed as a culturally homogenous group, usually as Spanish-speaking, foreign-born, and undocumented. Even when there is at least some recognition that not all speak Spanish not all are foreign-born, therefore not all are undocumented, there still lacks a recognition of the diverse heritages that people descend from. The diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean, from which most Latinx people descend, has created the various heritages of the U.S. Latinx population.

Assessing how well students understand that diversity is even more essential in Chicago, a city with such a large Latinx population. Harold Washington College as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in particular makes this outcome even more important. Understanding this diversity is equally important for Latinx and non-Latinx students because it is important for students to understand people with whom they share a city and a country.

My primary activities started Fall 2021 when I joined the HWC Assessment Committee. It was an informative time, learning the committee processes and terminology. I spent Spring 2022, conceptualizing and planning the goals of my assessment project. I decided it would be best to first approach the project narrowly and expand over time. I decided to start with two sections of my own class, *Hist 216, U.S. Latinx History*. In Fall 2022, I assigned an essay as a final evaluation that I hoped would lead students to address Latinx diversity. Only about 10% of the students did so. I decided I needed to emphasize this goal more. In Spring 2023, I introduced the essay question at the beginning of the semester and changed the essay question/prompt I gave to students.

A result of this project might be the revision and/or consolidation of the course outcomes and possibly, a revision of the program outcomes at a later time.

PROGRESS

Stage 1 – Outcome definition

Fall 2021, I began by considering key courses of the program and reviewing their learning outcomes. I also reviewed the learning outcomes of the program overall which was originally designed more than 10 years ago. I had been interested in assessing the program, these courses, and this particular outcome, since I became full-time in Fall 2018. I was happy to finally be in a position to make this inquiry. Through

my meetings with Dave Richardson, committee Vice-Chair, I determined which SLOs I was specifically interested in assessing. This is how I decided to focus only on my course, *Hist 216, U.S. Latinx History*. Because these outcomes best address the diversity of the U.S. Latinx population, I selected these for the assessment pilot:

- Recognize, describe, and analyze... diverse populations that comprise Latinos in the U.S.
- Compare and contrast the migration patterns of the various groups that comprise the Latinos in the U.S. today
- Use an interdisciplinary perspective to evaluate how Latinos are a heterogeneous group with diverse issues.
- Analyze complex interconnections of the diverse Latino people.

Stage 2 – Assessment Research and Design

Spring 2022, I met bi-weekly with the committee Vice-Chair to discuss potential assessment and project designs. At the beginning of each semester, I discuss with students the idea that the U.S. Latinx experience is having Latin American heritage + being U.S.-born or living in the United States for a long time. We discuss that Latinas/os/x are descended, or are themselves, from various Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Subsequently, I decided to give students an essay at the end of Fall 2022 that I thought would address the idea of a diverse U.S. Latinx population. I needed a specific question such as, “What is a U.S. Latinx experience and why is it important that we offer a course focused on U.S. Latinx history?” I would then rate their answers according to an assessment rubric to build a data set.

Stage 3 – Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes

Fall 2022, I gave students the essay question at the end of the semester as their final writing assessment. From those, I tried to assess if we were understanding the diversity of Latinx people. The answers were broad and did not seem to meet the goal; only two of seventeen students addressed the diversity of heritage. I knew that I needed to revise the essay question. I developed a different approach for the following semester.

Stage 4 – Administer Specific Assessment

Spring 2023, I adjusted my introduction to the class. Rather than waiting until the end of the semester, I told students at the beginning what their final writing assignment would be, and that they should keep that in mind as we went through the class modules.

After presenting my progress in our committee meeting, I received good feedback and suggestions about designing the question. I especially liked the idea of asking students to assert a position about the diversity of the Latinx population. Considering the suggestions, I decided on the following question:

“The U.S. Latinx experience could be viewed as a common/universal experience or as a variety of experiences. How would you defend each of those assertions? Use information we have covered in class throughout the semester to validate your thoughts and ideas.”

About 20% (4/19) of the students addressed diversity by heritage. However, their answers made me realize that I need to think through if rather than asking students to recognize heritage, I should reconsider how students themselves might look at the diversity of the population. Instead of asserting the U.S. Latinx experience as “having Latin American heritage + U.S.-born or living in the United States for a long time,” perhaps students are thinking about diversity in many ways, e.g. diversity based on race and class and not heritage country. Some students are addressing in their essays the intra-ethnic disparity that exists between Afro-Latinx and other Latinx, as well as between upper class and working class Latinx. This fits with another idea I assert in class, that as the population grows, for many Latinx their heritage is from more than one Latin American or Caribbean country, i.e. a parent from one country and a parent from a different country.

This is a big consideration I need to make to move forward and will do so this Fall 2023.

I need to also consider expanding the project to include another of my courses that is part of the LALS program, *Hist 215 History of Latin America*. This would be a new stage of the project.

Stage 5 – Data Analysis

This stage should occur in the next academic year. I need to consider more the results that students are not only recognizing diversity by country of heritage, but rather by experience in the United States, including especially class and race.

This should lead to a more viable assessment question and viable data from which to draw conclusions.

Stage 6 – Supporting Evidence-Based Change

For now, the evidence-based change will be primarily related to the assessment tools and processes, as well as the course and program outcomes.