Developing Culturally Relevant Rubrics to Assess General Education Learning Outcomes

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Life skills, including oral and written communication, are fostered by institutions of higher education and valued by employers. This university used the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics to develop assessment tools that evaluate student work in the General Education (GE) program. Using rubric calibration "best practices," faculty teams updated program rubrics in alignment with GE outcomes that serve the University's multicultural student population. The public speaking rubric exemplifies this inclusive process, which stands as a model for faculty engagement—while developing assessment tools that capture institutional uniqueness, facilitate instructional improvement, and yield reporting data for stakeholders.

Keywords: rubrics, rubric calibration, general education, faculty engagement, assessment, inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in general education and continuing through their major courses, students hone life skills that cut across all disciplines—including oral and written communication, teamwork and collaboration, and problem-solving. These life skills also consistently rate among the top skills valued by employers in the United States and globally (American Student Assistance, 2017; Hart Research Associates, 2018; Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd, 2019). Assessment of student learning demonstrates that students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional, accrediting body, and potential employer's goals. When assessment is based on clearly articulated outcomes which express, in observable and measurable terms, the skills that students are expected to demonstrate, all actors—students, faculty, administrators, and employers—can use such tools to learn, instruct, report competency, and compare the skills assessed to workplace needs (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2020). Recognizing

the difficulty in teaching and assessing life skills, normalized assessment tools are beneficial for providing universally agreed-upon standards to assess foundational skills across the university (Rhodes, Danaher, & Kranov, 2018). Such tools guide students and provide continuous improvement and grading assistance for faculty, consistent feedback for students, and assessment reporting for institutional leaders.

The University of the District of Columbia's (UDC) Interdisciplinary General Education (IGED) Program, redesigned from the distributive model in 2010, embraced the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) *Liberal Education and America's Promise* (LEAP) initiative and its Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs), which include life skills such as oral and written communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Association of American Colleges and Universities, n.d.a; Association of American Colleges and Universities, n.d.b). The developmentally-sequenced IGED program, designed by a cross-disciplinary committee, includes 37 credits and embraces the LEAP learning outcomes deemed necessary to prepare students for citizenship and employment in a global economy. The IGED student learning outcomes (SLOs) are standardized for each course, one of the reasons UDC transformed its General Education program into an interdisciplinary, integrative model. Distributive models, as expressed by Tanya Furman (2013), often "reflect a loosely constrained menu of course choices... compris[ing] a broad array of lower-division introductory courses that meander across wide swaths of perspective and content" (p. 132). The integrity of classes could be more readily assured by focusing on the SLOs. The committee also created IGED rubrics to function as guidelines for course development, delivery, assessment, and revision.

While UDC was redesigning its general education program in 2010, AAC&U published its VALUE rubrics—created for higher education practitioners to assess students' progressive learning across outcomes at the institutional level. VALUE, short for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, is an AAC&U project that prioritizes "authentic assessment of student work" over standardized testing (Finley & Rhodes, 2013, p. 1). AAC&U leaders collaborated with campus experts across the United States to develop the VALUE rubrics, referencing rubrics already in use to identify "essential expectations and criteria" shared within higher education (Rhodes T. L., 2010). The VALUE rubrics, which are in alignment with AAC&U's ELOs, focus on "knowledge and skills gained from a liberal education" in a progressive, "cumulative" manner (Association of American Colleges and Universities, n.d.b).

During the summer of 2019, a cross-disciplinary group of UDC faculty gathered to review the IGED rubrics in the context of AAC&U's VALUE rubrics (and a decade's worth of recommended assessment practices for higher education). Using their expertise and unique lenses, UDC faculty suggested updates to selected rubrics—keeping in mind the VALUE rubrics, UDC's institutional context, UDC's multicultural student population, and the desire to have authentic tools to assess student work across the program. In other words, faculty members at UDC made VALUE *specific to UDC*. Adaptability of rubrics to institutional context was always the intention of VALUE; AAC&U had hoped that institutions would "select the rubrics that reflect their own learning outcomes and use them to write local versions that are reflective of their own missions, cultures, and practices" (Rhodes, 2010, p. 2). These local rubrics can then be used for program-level assessment that is culturally relevant and attentive to national standards.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RUBRICS FOR ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

The purpose of having rubrics that are universal for each area of the General Education program is that they are used to assess the attainment of learning outcomes within the course and across the program. For each of UDC's 12 General Education courses, student artifacts are selected to assess specific learning outcomes. Maki (2010) suggested that campus teams create assessments that align with changing technology, which provides students the opportunity to represent their learning in expanded forms— including wikis, podcasts, blogs, simulations, presentations, reflections, and more. Maki also asserted that these teams should include a range of university representatives, such as faculty from multiple disciplines, advisory boards, students, a librarian, and a representative from institutional research. Assessments may use direct and indirect tools for foundational skills in general education (Maki, 2010; Rhodes, Danaher, & Kranov, 2018). When direct measures—such as presentations, reflections, and podcasts—are used, it is necessary to have a scoring rubric to grade the student-submitted artifact or performance. For program-

level assessment in the IGED program, student artifacts are measurement tools, and a combined team of faculty and staff worked to develop and calibrate scoring rubrics.

Because multiple graders use the rubrics, these tools need to be normed or calibrated. As the IGED program's development required an interdisciplinary team, UDC used the same standard for rubric norming. Researchers experienced in the norming process suggest that norming sessions employ a facilitator, give raters an opportunity to practice scoring sample artifacts, discuss the ratings as a group, reconcile differences, repeat the process with a new set of samples, and repeat the process until raters reach a consensus (Holmes & Oakleaf, 2013; Reitenauer & Carpenter, 2018). This process leads to rubric refinement as raters come to a common understanding of what constitutes evidence for each descriptor and scale level (Rhodes, Danaher, & Kranov, 2018). Goals of a norming session include attainment of interrater reliability and establishing consensus around the language in the rubric (Holmes & Oakleaf, 2013; Rhodes, Danaher, & Kranov, 2018). Guidelines for interrater reliability are based on consensus, e.g., a level of agreement that is 70% or higher (Rhodes, Danaher, & Kranov, 2018; Stemler, 2004). A reliable rubric tool developed by a respected and interdisciplinary team from the campus community will have a better chance of being adopted by programs across the institution and will provide a better guide for students striving for life skill proficiency.

Rubrics are meant to be both general and specific, as they are created for large-scale assessment, for course development and revision, *and* for students who are preparing for life in the twenty-first century. Rubrics are "living" documents "that must change with the times" (Griffin, 2010, p. 10), but they should also be in use long enough to gather meaningful assessment data. The updated IGED rubrics were tested and refined by UDC faculty during the fall 2019 semester to collect program-level assessment data throughout the 2019-2020 academic year and beyond.

Earlier Rubric Development at UDC

Prior to updating the IGED rubrics, UDC's English program had been conducting a timed writing exercise with common scoring for over a decade. At the end of each semester, on a reserved day on the University calendar, students sat for a three-hour writing session. Students were given a short reading and then had to craft a five-paragraph essay. There were concerns with this assessment; was UDC assessing reading and writing in a timed environment, familiarity with literary devices and aesthetics, or some other learning outcomes? However, it was a hugely generative assessment, as actions such as the adoption of writing handbooks, suggested texts, and even writing activities were discussed and incorporated into the next semester's work—all based on statistical and narrative data. There was also a firm culture of assessment and collaboration created during these assessment days in the English Department. UDC began with a rubric calibration, assessed by course, and engaged in conversation throughout the assessment day about common issues in the writing samples while sharing ideas that enabled success; the team functioned as a collective in this common assessment process.

UDC adopted the rubric and student artifact elements to form the common final process for English Composition classes and then updated the assessment process, with rubric adaptation and calibration in the General Education assessments. UDC also initiated the work from the General Education committee through faculty working sessions on SLOs, which aligns with Hanstedt's (2012) assertion that there are two critical points to assessment in general education:

1. As long as components of assessment and its protocols are determined at the top of an institution's academic structure, faculty will likely be dissatisfied with assessment for all of the reasons mentioned above [assessment lacking integrity, seen as "administrative folly"].
2. As long as the raison d'etre for an institution's assessment is to create a paper trail to please the accreditation and assessment gods, assessment will likely continue to be a bane to faculty existence (97).

UDC started with the General Education curriculum's writing courses, because the historical (and ongoing) process of assessment in the English courses. One professor had been responsible for creating the exams, finding the rooms for the timed writing days, making copies for all the exams (500+), and then collecting

and sorting all exams for the common assessment days. When that professor went on sabbatical, the IGED program picked up the process.

All of this provided an opportunity for revising the writing assessments and structuring a program assessment simultaneously. Program leaders were aware of assessment strategies that had failed, and they were also mindful of the strategic and collaborative approaches necessary for success in this work. Hanstedt (2012) outlined three essential points to consider when constructing an assessment strategy:

1. What to be assessed should be dialogic;
2. The focus should be on quality enhancement vs. quality assurance; and
3. Assessment should be aligned with work already being done (97-99).

Students were already giving and recording speeches, writing papers, making infographics, conducting soil sampling, and performing other assessments. Program leaders collaborated with faculty across the 12 IGED courses to determine where the SLOs were aligned within the courses and how the assignments could be measured with the rubrics that the program created as a collective.

Through the General Education committee, UDC previewed the assessment process that the program would undertake: students would upload a work product to UDC's Learning Management System (LMS) in a shared assignment tab. These products would be assessed by IGED faculty using a common rubric aligned with some or all of the SLOs in the course. The primary reason for the rubric's comprehensive nature was that faculty were not instructing or assessing all of the SLOs. Siefert (2012) contended that measuring our work "requires more complex assessments that rely on authentic demonstrations and detailed and well-vetted rubrics" (p. 9). This rubric creation and alignment process with SLOs in the courses provided an opportunity to find intersections with faculty development and assessment.

Thus, the early work with the writing assessments became the basis for expanding the already seeded common assessment in the writing courses to cover the IGED program. Two years later, in summer 2020, we have assessments in 10 of 12 of the IGED courses, rubrics for those assessments, and sample student artifacts. The specific process for developing the rubrics for just one of the courses, Foundation Oral Communications, is highlighted below.

Development of the Oral Communication/Public Speaking Rubric

Understanding the culture and composition of UDC helps situate the rubric creation and calibration process for the Foundation Oral Communication (FOC) course, as well as other IGED courses. UDC—a public, urban, land-grant, Historically Black Institution—is dedicated to serving the community of the District of Columbia and producing "…transformative leaders in the workforce, government, nonprofit sectors and beyond" (University of the District of Columbia, 2018, p. 6). The University's motto is, "Aspire. Accomplish. Take on the World." UDC is a unique university that serves a diverse population, including African-American students, first-generation students, adult learners, international students, and other students of color. It contains a Workforce Development Branch, a Community College, and a law school.

One of the roles of IGED is to help students develop and hone their public speaking skills as transformative leaders who must be capable of effective oral communication. As such, one goal for the IGED rubrics is that they are inclusive and reflective of the student population and the types of work students are doing in interdisciplinary settings. The IGED program aims for universal assessment language that students will recognize across courses and disciplines so that they are familiar with course and university expectations and can see growth in skills across their various pathways.

Students learn foundational oral communication skills in a first-year interdisciplinary general education course: FOC. FOC is a required course for all undergraduate students at the university, where they learn, among other skills, the basics of researching, outlining, and delivering speeches based on reasoned arguments, and utilizing verbal and non-verbal communication techniques. Students will continue to develop these skills throughout their academic paths and will eventually showcase their expertise during their interdisciplinary general education and major capstone courses.

Furthermore, FOC focuses on improving students' oral communication skills while exploring a given academic theme. The professors who teach the course come from numerous fields, including Digital Media, Communications, Law, Business, Marketing, Graphic Design, Health, and Information Literacy. Each

faculty member utilizes their areas of expertise to teach students the processes by which they can learn to engage successfully in all levels of oral communication, with a focus on public speaking. With faculty having diverse backgrounds, it is vital to have a shared tool to assess student work.

As discussed earlier, the VALUE rubrics provide a base for post-secondary institutions to create common standards. Rhodes (2010) argued that rubric adoption should be particular and not universal—"…rubric use at program, disciplinary, or even classroom levels requires adapting the rubrics with more specific language and purposes" (2010, p. 4). This is what faculty implemented at UDC—adapting the rubrics for the University's specific needs.

The original IGED rubric focused on oral communication in broad terms, e.g., types of "interactions," including (but not limited to) a presentation or a speech (see Table 1). The updated IGED rubric focuses on public speaking *specifically*—taking cues from the VALUE rubric, e.g., updating the IGED rubric to include an introduction and an intentional transition to the "body of the speech." The refinement of the oral communication rubric began during the 2018-2019 academic year when FOC faculty engaged in rubric calibration sessions and collectively reviewed data gathered through the course assessment exercise where faculty used the rubrics to score student artifacts. The calibration sessions contributed to the redesign of the assignment to be assessed, and the initial refinement of the scoring rubric. Facilitated by the Director of the General Education Program and the Director of Assessment, the FOC faculty developed a customized public speaking rubric for the UDC community—adapting the language for UDC's specific courses and student populations.

TABLE 1
UDC FACULTY UPDATES TO IGED RUBRIC (SUMMER 2019)

Oral Communication Rubric (Original IGED Rubric)	Oral Communication VALUE Rubric	Public Speaking Rubric for Oral Communication Courses (Updated IGED Rubric)
Identify the… **purpose of the interaction** (narrative, persuasion, description, etc.).	"Organizational pattern (**specific introduction** and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and **transitions**) is clearly and consistently observable…" "Delivery techniques (posture, gesture, eye contact, and vocal expressiveness) make the presentation **compelling**…"	**The introduction** uses intentional techniques that fully reveal the subject matter engagingly and **compelling**ly (e.g., draws attention). The main points of the topic are fully identified. Smooth and intentional **transition** into the body of the speech or presentation.
Recognize effective verbal and **non-verbal communication** techniques (including **eye contact**, **voice projection**, **volume**, mannerism).	"Delivery techniques (posture, **gesture**, **eye contact**, and **vocal expressiveness**) make the presentation compelling…"	**Speed, tone, and volume** used to enhance speech and hold the listener's attention… Effective **eye contact**, with eye rotation (if there is an audience). **Gesturing and other body movements** (facial, total body) enhance delivery.

Using this customized rubric, faculty and staff – led by the Director of Assessment (a trained facilitator) – participated in a norming (or calibration) session during the summer of 2019. IGED faculty from across

disciplines, the Community College Branch, and the main campus participated in a full-day activity to review and calibrate the rubric. Using best practices for norming rubrics outlined by Holmes and Oakleaf (2013), the team reviewed the rubric, practiced scoring student artifacts, reviewed individual scores as a group to discuss scoring similarities and differences, reconciled inconsistencies, and highlighted sections that needed rewording — repeating the process several times; each time determining the steps needed for the next calibration. Finley and Rhodes (2013) argued, "the goal of calibration… is to identify the two scores around which the majority cluster" (p. 9). During the calibration session, faculty participants initially scored within one point of each other in two out of four rubric criteria/rows, and during the discussion, the majority reconciled the three-point spread within the other two criteria. Further adaptations may be warranted as faculty continue to be trained and use the rubric to grade student work.

After refining the rubric to address the learning outcomes for public speaking, certain areas of the rubric were adapted to the FOC course, UDC's student population, and UDC's mission. Many of the changes were simply revisions in wording to render the rubric more appropriate for scoring. Other areas that generated the most significant discussions were related to the university's culture and the student population — and as such, wording and tone in the rubric were adjusted for inclusivity. For example, in another calibration session that focused on the critical reading/written communication IGED rubric, faculty discussed the phrase "Standard Written English" in the rubric—and decided to use "Academic English" instead. This rubric language adjustment is a more "culturally responsive" and student-centered approach to assessment (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017), since "Standard Written English" implies that there is one "correct" English dialect—that is typically grounded in Whiteness (Barnett, 2000). Because UDC's approach to assessment is interdisciplinary and collaborative, faculty channeled the right amount of "productive discomfort" (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, p. 13) and came to an agreement on changing this aspect of the critical reading/written communication IGED rubric (Malenfant & Brown, 2017). This process is also a reminder that "assessment is not… apolitical" (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, p.7), thus aligning with the recommended practice of creating "local versions" of rubrics "that are reflective" of the campus "missions, cultures, and practices" (Rhodes, 2010, p. 2). This revision also aligns with best practices in the field of communication.

As the rubric was developed for scoring use, it was imperative to eliminate ambiguous wording. For example, the Oral Communication VALUE rubric uses the word "compelling" three times in its "Capstone" (i.e., highest) level. While UDC faculty liked the term "compelling," it is only used once in UDC's adapted/updated IGED rubric because there was discussion among faculty that "compelling" might be too subjective, so more specific verbiage was applied in some areas of the rubric. Faculty also added some additional specificity to the IGED rubric, e.g., "vocal expressiveness" in the VALUE rubric became "speed, tone, and volume" in the IGED rubric (see Table 1). In addition, UDC faculty included "if there is an audience" to "eye rotation" during a speech since some speeches are recorded at home and uploaded to the course's LMS (making "eye rotation" moot). This small tweak proves timely; as of this writing, courses are primarily being taught online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another issue related to presentation skills arose during the IGED faculty discussions: the issue of "code-switching" —the practice of alternating between two or more dialects in conversation. The idea is that certain populations have an intra-group dialect, causing them to "switch" to a different dialect around other groups. Elkins and Hanke (2018) contend that "factors such as race, region, and social class status elicit code-switching behaviors as individuals learn to maneuver through multiple contexts" (Elkins & Hanke, 2018, p. 35). UDC faculty wanted to ensure that specific language in some of the standardized IGED rubrics would not come across as offensive or culturally biased to some of the University's students—who regularly practice code-switching as they move between different groups or contexts. In fact, code-switching is often seen as a strategy that students can use to navigate between their social groups of origin and the perceived social class associated with their institutions of higher education (Elkins & Hanke, 2018). This code-switching is especially relevant given the high minority population at UDC, and given, as asserted earlier from Barnett (2000)—"Whiteness" is often implicit in any reference to "Standard English."

For instance, the UDC FOC rubric included the expectation of using "appropriate language" in a speech. Faculty determined that what is considered "appropriate language" could depend on the student,

the topic, the format, and the setting. One student's speech may call for more formal language, while another's speech may call for a more conversational or vernacular approach. For example, in one FOC course, a student who delivered a speech to inform her classmates about the different types of euthanasia used formal language appropriate to the topic and context. However, another student who gave a speech to entertain, detailing a funny story from his past, was allowed to use conversational language or "slang," given his chosen topic's informal nature. As such, with faculty permission, many students have found appropriate ways to "stretch the bounds" of what may otherwise have been considered "inappropriate language," especially during that specific speech.

In another example of how UDC faculty evaluated the cultural relevance of specific terms, faculty members also discussed what could be considered "appropriate dress." They determined that what may be considered "appropriate dress" can vary from student to student and context to context. For instance, while most students are required to dress business casual while delivering speeches, a student delivering a speech about the importance of exercise might get faculty permission to wear athletic clothes, a student detailing how she started her own business might be allowed to wear a t-shirt with the company logo, and a student demonstrating ballet techniques might be allowed to don dancewear and ballet slippers instead of a business suit.

Using these, and other examples, Figure 1 shows how faculty members updated the rubrics to allow for situational differences by using the terms "…appropriate for the context," instead of "appropriate language" and "Appearance is appropriate for the occasion" instead of merely "appropriate dress."
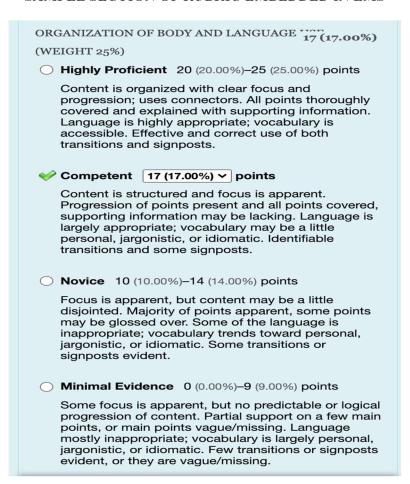
FIGURE 1
ONGOING EDITS FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION/PUBLIC SPEAKING RUBRIC

Criteria	
	Highly Proficient
Introduction & Attention (Weight 25%)	**25-20** Introduction uses intentional techniques that fully reveal the subject matter in an engaging and compelling manner. Main points of the topic are fully identified. Smooth and intentional transition into the body of the speech or presentation.
Organization of Body and Language Use (Weight 25%)	**25-20** Content is organized with clear focus, cohesion, and progression; uses connectors between points. All points thoroughly covered and explained with supporting information that is relevant. Language is highly appropriate for the context; vocabulary is accessible. Effective and correct use of both transitions and signposts, which orient the listener to the main points of the speech.
Conclusion & Recap (Weight 25%)	**25-20** Clear signal of conclusion and transitional ending for final phase of the speech. Clear summary of main ideas from each point. Closes with ideas or techniques that leave an impression.
Delivery ~~& Poise~~ (Weight 25%)	**25-20** Speed, tone, and volume used to enhance speech and hold the listener's attention. Speech ~~flow~~ is smooth, confident, and ~~articulate~~ imbued with clarity—and has purposeful vocalized and silent pauses. Effective eye contact, with eye rotation (if there is an audience). Gesturing and other body movements (facial, total body) enhance delivery. ~~Outfit is appropriate for the occasion~~ Appearance is appropriate for the occasion

USING THE RUBRICS FOR SCORING STUDENT WORK

For most of the 12 General Education courses, the University community selected a student assignment to be submitted for the course assessment exercise. Students in FOC courses are asked to upload a speaking assignment—usually a recorded speech—to the university's LMS. The standardized rubric is embedded into the LMS for each professor to use to score the student artifact. It is easy to use for grading (see Figure 2), because faculty can view the different descriptions and values, click on each one, and then adjust the numeric value accordingly. Each faculty member grades student work from other sections of the course (not their course sections). The rubric helps assess the course's overall effectiveness, including whether specific student learning outcomes are being met and the level of achievement by individual students and across the program. It is also an excellent opportunity for faculty members to see the work being done in other course sections. For instance, an individual faculty member might be able to compare areas of improvement for their students to students in other sections or courses. In a specific example, a faculty member noticed that they had been focusing on improving the speech introduction with their students, but professors in other sections had advanced to improving students' transitions between main points. It was informative and eye-opening for the faculty member and others to see how they could adjust their teaching methods. It also helps ensure that there is a standardized approach to grading so that students across multiple sections are getting equitable grades. Faculty and staff can print reports, analyze the data, use it to improve course material and assessments in the future, and improve activities and individual rubrics for every speech.

FIGURE 2
SAMPLE SECTION OF RUBRIC EMBEDDED IN LMS

CONCLUSION

IGED/assessment leaders at UDC collaborate with faculty through meaningful assessment processes. The IGED program's key aim is ensuring that students successfully complete each course—and the entire program—with life skills that prepare them to become transformative leaders and engaged citizens in the 21st-century global economy, while helping them secure meaningful employment. At the same time, stakeholders across UDC designed these assessment processes to meet the various standards set by faculty, institutional leaders, and accrediting bodies. By engaging faculty throughout the process, the IGED program has a preliminary set of assessment tools that capture UDC's cultural uniqueness, helps faculty improve their understanding and teaching of the program's SLOs, and provides the institution with reports for internal and external stakeholders.

UDC referenced AAC&U's LEAP initiative in its General Education reform. While the VALUE rubrics were also used as a basis for refining general education rubrics at UDC, the VALUE rubrics were not perfectly aligned to the IGED program's SLOs for course and program-level assessment. Through the process of rubric calibration (using best practices honed in the assessment field), UDC used modified VALUE rubric language to align with UDC students' needs, while furthering the University's culture of assessment with IGED faculty.

Throughout the process, IGED/assessment leaders at UDC recognized the importance of incentives to further the University's assessment culture. Since rubric updates and calibration sessions occurred during the summer, UDC provided faculty (who are typically on a nine-month contract) with breakfast, lunch, and a stipend, as well as recognition letters for their portfolios. Rubric updates/calibration sessions continued during the 2019-2020 academic year at UDC, helping to integrate these processes into faculty members' ongoing work (Hutchings, 2010). The literature on assessment in higher education is filled with "admonitions" (Hutchings, 2010) that call for faculty involvement in assessment processes—and rightfully so; the work is much more meaningful when it is not top-down. However, there are always challenges to faculty participation in ongoing, program-level assessment. At UDC, our challenge is not "buy-in" or commitment, so much, as it is *time*. Although the work has now been folded into course-level assessment practices, the processes themselves took time to develop and launch.

This is where incremental assessment processes are so crucial—planning the work in stages yields greater levels of success. This is also where broad stakeholder engagement is crucial—IGED/assessment leaders at UDC are deeply involved in the analysis and reporting elements of the work, so that faculty can then review course and program-level findings, and ultimately "use these results to improve student learning" (Hansen, 2019, pg. 187). And, with a full year's worth of benchmarking data in alignment with the IGED program's SLOs, the program looks forward to building upon current findings with additional, longitudinal data—while closing the loop on annual data for course and program-level improvement.

In addition, IGED/assessment leaders plan to share the rubrics with other programs at UDC, to track students' progressive learning outside of the IGED program. For example, one of the authors (Crews) has adopted language from the IGED public speaking and writing rubrics for a rubric in her geography course—as well as her IGED Capstone course. If faculty begin using common language for assessment across disciplines, the University can produce better reporting of attainment of institution-wide Student Learning Goals.

Recognizing that rubrics are living documents that need periodic review, UDC's rubric calibration process can be replicated by other colleges/universities to engage faculty in assessment processes, provide a process that supports continuous improvement, and create assessment tools that are inclusive and relevant to the cultural climate of minority-serving institutions. The importance of equitable approaches to assessment cannot be overstated. Assessment processes *and* participants should mirror both the institutions and the world we live in, so that student learning can be assessed in relation to our diverse world—while honoring students' backgrounds and experiences. And as our work demonstrates, assessment processes may not even be fully *meaningful* without a little "productive discomfort" (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, p. 13).

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