



# The Comprehensive Student Record at Dillard University

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## Introduction

College and universities are increasingly challenged to demonstrate student learning and employability to parents, students, accreditation agencies, and employers. Institutions are not merely competing for students, but are also seeking to find ways to distinguish the institution of higher education within the broad marketplace (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). At the beginning of the educational journey, parents and students must be persuaded to invest time and money. At the conclusion of the college experience, employers are presented with a similar challenge. Morley (2001) indicates some employers have expressed trepidations when hiring college graduates specifically because of the lack of preparedness for the workforce.

In 2015, Dillard University was selected as a participant in the **Comprehensive Student Record (CSR) project** funded by the Lumina Foundation and conducted jointly by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education (NASPA). Representatives began working to meet student and industry needs by developing a comprehensive student record designed to capture and assess learning that occurs outside of the classroom through student leadership experiences, community service, internships, and other co-curricular experiences. While traditional academic transcripts focuses on degree completion, the CSR would serve as a tool for students to narrate the depth and breadth of their learning to potential employers and graduate schools. The team coordinating the project sought to develop a unique and meaningful comprehensive student record for Dillard students that could be duplicated and used as a model for other institutions.

## Theoretical Framework

The coordinating team consisted of Dr. Nia Haydel, Dr. Demetrius Johnson, Ms. Sara Kent, and Mr. Robert Mitchell. Representing the Office of Student Affairs, the First Year Seminar, Career and Professional Development, and the Office of the Registrar, the team worked to develop a theoretical framework, define an evaluation rubric, monitor and approve programming, and validate data. Fundamentally, the team wanted to shift away from assessing the student experience and toward student learning. Although students have a multitude of experiences while in college, how can practitioners gauge whether belonging to an organization inspires learning? If membership or leadership produces a better educated student, should colleges define what will be learned?

# Viewpoint

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The comprehensive records project used the theoretical construct of emotional intelligence to demonstrate student growth. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand one's emotional make-up and the emotional make-up of others and to use insight from this knowledge to effectively manage and regulate one's own emotions to make good decisions and to act effectively (Goleman, 1998). A validated instrument was administered to all first-time students to establish a baseline among 15 specific skills of emotional intelligence. As students advanced through the institution, the focus shifted from "joining a club" to "learning while belonging to a club". As students had experiences such as community service, internships, participation in student activities, clubs, organizations, and study abroad programs, the focus remained on the development of skills. As an incentive, students were provided a tool to capture a comprehensive record of their college experiences and learning. For many employers, the development of soft skills, like the 15 represented in the emotional intelligence framework (Bar-On, 2000) make students more competitive and employable (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000).

### Program Overview

The Emotional Intelligence Quotient (Bar-On, 2000) for each of the 15 skills represented in the modeled provided a focal point for students seeking to gain skills. The 5 broad dimensions (Self Perception, Self-Expression, Interpersonal, Decision Making, and Stress Management) align with the types of soft skills employers are seeking from graduates (Morley, 2001; Brown, 2003; Overtoom, 2000). Each of the five dimensions are comprised of 3 specific and measurable skills. Students who achieve subject matter expertise along with social and emotional competence, develop better relationships with customers, colleagues, and supervisors (Bar-On, 2000).

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For colleges, the development of a comprehensive framework that provides students with the opportunity to strategically select programs, events, and activities that are engineered to teach specific skills advances student learning and distinguishes the institution in the marketplace. The coordinating team articulated the following as goals:

- Provide a theoretical framework to monitor and catalog student learning based on participation, involvement, and engagement in academic and non-academic activities
- Quantify student learning using the Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQi)
- Leverage technology to provide a seamless interface for students, faculty, and staff to contribute programming and validate attendance at approved activities
- Expand the academic transcript to include quantified student learning through validated attendance; participation, involvement, and engagement in academic and non-academic activities using the Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQi)

To accomplish these goals, 10 full-time faculty and staff were certified to administer and interpret the results of the Bar-On EQ-I assessment instrument. Additionally, over 100 student leaders were asked to return to campus for training two weeks prior to the beginning of fall classes. In Fall 2016, 450 first-time students were administered the EQ-I assessment while enrolled in the First Year Experience Seminar. Once complete, each student selected a 15-minute coaching session provided by a certified member of the faculty or staff. During the session, students discussed the score from the assessment relative to each of the 15 specific skills in the model. Immediately, the staff or faculty member would assist the student on planning to attend activities or join organizations to support the student learning and rehearsing specific skills. In 2016, all Dillard University first-time students began developing a map of activity to begin learning and building skills sets identified as the soft skills sought by employers. Even more important, the student leaders began to develop programs, workshops, and activities to address each area within the model. Faculty, staff, student government leaders, resident assistants all provided learning outcomes into a centralized online interface. If the outcomes aligned with a skill within the EI framework, the program was approved. Hand held devices or iPads were used for students to swipe a school ID for attendance. Once attendance was confirmed, the event/program would appear on the comprehensive student record alongside the appropriate emotional intelligence skill.

## Emerging Results

Of the 450 first-time students enrolled in the First Year Experience (FYE) Seminar, 418 (93%) completed the online EQ-I assessment instrument. The one-to-one coaching sessions were attended by 319 (71%) of those registered for FYE. Success of the program required student leaders to create programs consistent with the framework of emotional intelligence. During Fall 2016, students serving on the student activities board, as resident advisors, or as programming agents of a student organization executed 221 events approved as emotional intelligence qualifying programs. In the first semester, 109 first year students attended at least one EQ-I program.

As students have begun understanding how emotions influence decisions, they are making better choices and dealing with conflict differently. As the EI framework defined student leader training, roommate contracts, first year experience lectures and convocations, conflict among first year students has declined. When comparing the first-year cohort that participated in the online assessment and coaching sessions to upper-class students

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who did not, the rate of recidivism for first-time students was 3% lower than upper class students.

Students will continue to attend programs, events, campus speakers, etc. that have been designated and approved as emotional intelligence qualifying events. The shift from the CSR as a tool for students to a data collection effort for colleges and, more specifically, employers has endless possibilities. In addition, the EI framework approach provides a meaningful mechanism to engage students in documenting learning occurring throughout their educational experience as a part of their CSR.

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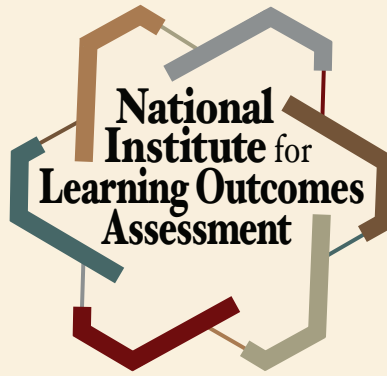
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