

# The DQP and the Creation of the Transformative Education Program at Saint Augustine's University

March 2013

Saint Augustine University

Saint Augustine's University in Raleigh, North Carolina, one of the 25 institutions in the CIC/DQP Consortium supported by a grant from the Lumina Foundation, has used the DQP to leverage a transformation of its academic programs in record time. A Transformative Education Program (TEP) for General Education and revised courses in every major were implemented in the fall semester of 2012, just 7 months after the project began. While the Saint Augustine's experience may be difficult to replicate in other institutional contexts, it does suggest how the DQP can focus and direct plans to modify the curriculum.

The project began with a challenge from Saint Augustine's president, Dr. Dianne Boardley-Suber, to transform the institution. One aspect of the DQP model that was highly valued by the University was a curriculum that would foster development of cumulative skills, leading students to higher levels of attainment over the course of their education. The General Education Committee was charged with researching other higher education institutions in order to find best practices in pedagogy and assessment that would be compatible with what Saint Augustine's was trying to do. The TEP core committee conducted surveys of workforce needs in order to map those skills with their courses. Focus groups including faculty, staff, alumni, board members, student leaders and students met and defined the Signature Saint Augustine Student (SSAS) using a set of skills and competencies. Then, faculty met in their departments and schools and as a whole to discuss how and where in the curriculum students would acquire these skills and competencies.

These activities culminated with the stakeholders identifying 10 core competencies that replaced the former general education program:

- communications
- critical thinking
- identity
- wellness
- STEM and quantitative literacy
- civic engagement
- global perspective
- servant leadership and teamwork
- innovation and creativity
- artistic literacy
- a capstone experience.

# Viewpoint

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These 10 competencies are the Saint Augustine's University version of the five domains of the DQP spider web (broad integrative learning, intellectual skills, specialized knowledge, applied learning, and civic learning) with "identity" (which includes requirements in African American history) fitting into the 6th domain on the DQP spider web, institution-specific outcomes.

During the spring and summer of 2012, including two week-long all-faculty institutes, the faculty aligned existing and new courses to the core competencies of the TEP, designating courses as T1 (directly supporting a core competency) or T2 (enhancing a core competency). They also identified assessment tools to evaluate the T1 and T2 courses and underwent training on course design, use of rubrics, and other pedagogical strategies. One of the key tactics was the creation of an Implementation Committee (IC), the members of which represented each of the areas of the project plan. The IC communicated their findings to the campus community regularly and solicited ideas from the campus for realizing the ambitious goals of the project.

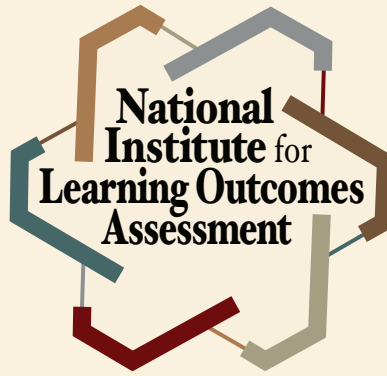
Two syllabi illustrate that the influence of the DQP is not limited to traditional general education courses. "Foundations of Computer Science" is a TEP T1 course and its syllabus clearly connects the course to the new curriculum. One of the most important DQP concepts, that academic programs should foster cumulative learning, is embodied in the fact that the 3 rubrics on the syllabus describe levels of learning (4 for technological learning and 5 for written and oral communication). Another application of an important DPQ concept, that course expectations be clearly communicated to students, is illustrated in the extensive detail in course assignments, in the clearly described assessment tools used for the assignments, and in the relationship between the course goals and assignments and the institutional mission goals and computer science program goals. For example, in order to achieve the learning objectives for technological literacy, the student must 1) "demonstrate proficient use of various foundational software applications including applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, database, and presentation software," 2) "demonstrate an understanding and use of the internet and email platforms for information acquisition and communication," 3) "trouble shoot and solve common technological problems using various programming languages including C++, Java, and Visual Basic," 4) "demonstrate the ability to design a Webpage or similar project." Two assignments that measure these 4 outcomes are the development of a web page including graphics, motions, and hyperlinks and an app called "Change Machine" using any of the programming language to divide change into different coin denominations. The Assessment Rubric for technological literacy shows four different levels for the four learning outcomes. For the "benchmark" level for information acquisition, the student does not acquire or evaluate electronic information. For "milestone 1" the student must employ one strategy to acquire and evaluate information using electronic sources to meet the standard at a minimal level. For "milestone 2" the student must use at least three strategies for acquiring information electronically and effectively evaluates the information. For the "capstone" level the student uses multiple strategies for acquiring information electronically and evaluates it effectively. The syllabus also includes a rubric describing in detail the learning outcomes that are required for an A, B, C, or D grade for the web page development assignment. The focus of the course is on developing a basic understanding of computer science and a basic level of technological literacy, but the course is also identified as "writing rich," but not "speaking rich" (even though some oral skills are developed in the course assignments). Students taking this course are reminded of the broad goals of Saint Augustine's University Transformative Education Program.

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The syllabus for “**Role of Sport in Society**” states that the course is designated as “writing rich,” “speaking rich,” and “research intensive,” but explicitly states that it is not a service learning course. The course can be used to satisfy part of the Global Perspectives requirement in the Transformative Education Program (TEP). The syllabus shows that the course assessment tools cover two of the six learning objectives for Global Perspectives: “The student can describe cultural differences using verbal and nonverbal communication and begins to negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences” and “The student can develop questions about other cultures and seek out answers to the questions.” These 2 learning objectives are assessed in the assignment to write an international sport comparison research paper and then in the assignment to do a class presentation on the paper. The rubric for Global Perspectives lists four levels of achievement for the six learning outcomes. For the learning outcome “Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks,” the benchmark level for students is “Demonstrates surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.” At Milestone 1, the student demonstrates “partial understanding” of the complexity of these elements, at Milestone 2 “adequate understanding” and at Capstone level “sophisticated understanding” of the same elements. The syllabus for this course includes the same extensive coverage of institutional goals, program goals, and course goals as the syllabus for “Foundations of Computer Science” and also exemplifies the curricular commitment to fostering increasing levels of learning and to clearly communicating expectations.

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Every TEP syllabus at Saint Augustine's University includes an assessment tool. The TEP, as the DQP model suggests, involves the entire educational program, not just a collection of general education and required courses. A major curricular revision such as that done at Saint Augustine's University requires strong leadership, campus-wide agreement on mission and focus, and faculty, staff, and student leadership willing to do the very intense work in order to meet the challenge of improving student learning; however, without the coherent structure of the DQP to provide a model for a broad and clearly articulated curricular structure grounded in extensive, interconnected, and ongoing assessment of student learning, it seems likely that the process of transformation would have taken much longer to realize.



## Please Cite As:

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# Viewpoint

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