ED 690 Course Reflection and Summary of Learning

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In ED 690, the assignment that best facilitated my learning was the annotated bibliography. My classmates and I choose a research topic (of academic or career interest) and identified five sources to concisely summarize and analyze. We were also asked to provide a rationale statement and integrative summary comparing the five sources. I choose this assignment because through it, I was able to incorporate a number of course learning outcomes (CLOs #3, #5, #8, & #9) and program learning outcomes (PLOs #9 & #10). Completing the assignment also helped me clarify my future professional pursuits and re-evaluate the facilitation of my learning during the class.

I “conduct[ed] an organized literature review” (CLO #3) prior to arriving at the five sources I utilized for my assignment. Because my topic is broad and pertinent across different disciplines (e.g. psychology and physiology), I searched multiple sources and journals (i.e. NASPA, Journal of American Health, Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research) to gain a better understanding of the current literature. While completing the synopsis, discussing the relevance, and evaluating each of my sources, I “differentiate[d] between descriptive and inferential statistical measures” (CLO #5). In my first source by English, Shutt, and Oswalt (2009); researchers made inferences over a general population. However, through “critical evaluation” of their “overall methodology,” I noted that these inferences may not have been completely accurate due to the gap between the sample population (racially homogenous and geographically bound) and overall population of college students (CLOs #5 and #9). I also learned the difference between research and program evaluation. Lewis and Thombs’ (2005) article involved an assessment which was more of a program evaluation (using qualitative approaches) where they used their data to offer suggestions and make inferences to other institutions’ current alcohol prevention policies (CLO #8).
Through this assignment, I further explored the service area of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) and applied the knowledge to practice (PLO #9). Common through multiple studies was a stronger prevalence for alcohol consumption among peer groups. In a study of alcohol patterns between college students and their non-college peers, it was found that regardless of their alcohol consumption as adolescents, once students were in the college environment, they tended to consume more alcohol (Timberlake, Hopfer, & Rhee, 2007). If it is the case that the college environment and social groups are the cause (not just correlation) for increased alcohol consumption, this has implications for practice around what student affairs professionals can do to shift the campus norms around drinking. In my relevance and evaluation sections of my annotated bibliography, I “communicated these ideas and concepts effectively in written word” (PLO #10) (ARPE, 2010, para. 3).

One of my professional goals within the two years in this program is to identify at least three areas in student affairs to further explore. I explored ATOD and have come to the conclusion that it is not an area I am completely passionate about. However, I have reconfirmed my commitment to continue learning about other service areas. In order to be an effective professional, I need to be an ally to many other departments (e.g. mental health and career counseling) outside of the primary service area I will be working in.

As for the specific class dynamics, there was a big discrepancy between students’ levels of familiarity and comfort level with the material in class. Perhaps it would be more beneficial to all students if there was an informal pre-evaluation. That way, we can gage how quickly or slowly the class can move. The possibility of waving the class if there is prior coursework that would cover the same material is another suggestion. Lastly, if there was a particular class session offered only to Postsecondary Education and Student Affairs students (there are enough
of us), maybe the class experience would be richer and include more examples related to educational research.

Although I did not incorporate as much of my learning (i.e. definitions and methods) into my research bibliography as I much as I had the potential to do so, the research bibliography still best illustrates my learning in this course. Thinking actively about the articles I read forced me to place myself in the position of a researcher. Before I began the program, I was convinced that I was a practitioner and that my education was going to be complete at the master’s level. However, after taking this class, I saw how possible it would be for me to move further as a researcher and possible obtain an Ed.D or Ph.D.
References


