

Part I. Phases of Research and Engagement

A. Overall Vision:

Goal: I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (subject, audience, purpose).

Did well: I was able to convey the key factors and statistics of the subject matter I investigated. I was able to identify my audience (student population and educational practitioners) and isolate the vital importance of my audience's involvement with the subject.

To be improved: Work in process; I am challenged with how to convey the complexity of the plight of Low-Income, First-Generation Student. For this reason, I am still extremely intrigued with numerous characteristics and learning models to support these students effectively.

B. Background Information:

Goal: I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

Did well: The examination of identifying the plight of Low-Income, First-Generation college students and the necessary supportive services to fostering their degree attainment is a rich subject and a study in which I will continue to research. The publication on the subject is vast

To be improved: I was overwhelmed and energized by the wealth of information and insight I attained through the process of my synthesis. From my research involvement I will enhance my approach and methodology of servicing first-generation learners in a different matter. Furthermore, a great number of individuals in the displaced families I worked with do not have family members in college so it is a hard sell to convince them to embrace vocational advancement by participating in college enrollment, embracing the long term commitment (persistence) and financial burden in attaining a college degree. Ultimately, I hope that the tools and insights I gained will guide my practice to support students' process of investing in advancing their education.

C. Possible Directions and Priorities:

Goal: I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

Did well: My exploration of the literature of the plight of low-income, first-generation college students and the best practices of serving them helped me to distinguish the unique distinctive characteristics that affect their success.

Fortunately, my participation in the Process of Research and Engagement course enabled me to attain useful techniques that allowed me to isolate and determine the most essential areas of investigation. For example, composing a governing statement, using an interviewing guide when I spoke with educational practitioners aided in exposing areas of interests that were not obvious in some of the literature. In addition, the use of annotated bibliography allowed me to digest the full meaning of each article, which helped in comparing practices from the interviews along with the theory of the research. In turn I was able to utilize class discussion, peer discussion and the professor's guidance, which ultimately allow me to crystalize the specific categories' of clustering the meaningful themes to constructively formulate a systematic way in which I wanted to address my research.

To be improved: Interesting, my passion about this population of student motivated me in learning all I could, and I did not realize I needed to be more selective to my topic focus. This is definitely an area of improvement I need to work on.

This being my third and final capstone course I have benefited from the process of critically engaging in many areas of my vocational improvement which has empowered my ability to critically apply techniques and numerous approaches of expanding my knowledge. My specific motivation to explore how my personal development would be advanced through the principles and process of each capstone course enabled me to explore different opportunities of honing in on my research. Nevertheless, shaping a research plan is a work in progress

D. Component Propositions:

Goal: I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

Did well: My exploration of the plight of low-income first-generation college students as it relate to supportive services which enables students to obtain their college degree has fueled much controversy in the literature. One of the premises is that students statistically do better in four-year universities of attaining their bachelor degrees than they do in two-year colleges. My synthesis discovered this proposition in its examination of subject, however, my synthesis proposals were that low-income, first-generation college students should go to community colleges as the assumption is the historically community colleges were design to serve the social- economically, first-generation students, unprepared, prepared and delayed (attending college years after going to high school) students alike with an alternative educational pathway other than attending a four year college.

I was able to favorable identify the component propositions of the literature and express the counter-propositions as well as aspects of the literature that had counter-counter propositions.

To be improved: As I mentioned, the research I attained data was favorable to low-income first-generation students going to four-year universities. What I did not master well was addressing the areas of controversy from the beginning of formulating my research. Therefore, it was not until the process and design of my report that I began to come upon literature that challenged the legitimacy of higher graduation rate in four-year college, and controversy arose about whether or not development educational was legitimate, useful, or harmful. I believe if I identify the component propositions by using the tool of writing out the opposing side (counter-proposition and the counter-counter) I would be in a better position to address research different proposition more thoroughly ultimately addressing opposite positions better.

E. Design of Future Research and Engagement

Goal: I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

Did well: I was able to identify relatively quickly the general area in which I wanted to concentrate on my research. After looking at my general survey, it made it simpler to modify my focus to an exact research interest. In addition, my previous research in other capstone courses helped me to formulate my research. Ultimately, through the use of my journey, and the tool of strategic planning I was able to narrow my research interest.

To be improved: As I moved forward with the exact research topic, throughout the process of my synthesis to obtain a medium scope of the plight of low-income first-generation college student and its many components. I courageously strived to include what I deemed important block building of the research, to discovering, I bit off more than I could handle. In retrospect, there was an area of my research I could have separated and done my entire research within this area. For example, I could have done my entire research on the historical factors of community colleges as these factors relate to first-generation students or on the factors of developmental education on first-generation college students success; in addition I could have done my entire research on the best practices of TRIO or the developmental and practice of how Achieve the Dreams is effectively supporting first-generation college students. Throughout my synthesis (which averaged 20 pages per chapter) I took notice of this mishap in my process, thinking critically of how I would handle my research process differently for my PhD process.

F. Direct Information, Model and Experience

Goal: I have gained direct information, models and experience not readily available from other sources.

Did well: The conclusion of my synthesis has me thinking deeply about how I might create my own agency in which I could specialize in support students at-risk. Aside

from my deep contemplations the basis of establishing my enterprise, the experience of my synthesis energized me to think about reconsidering another perspective of how to serve low-income, first-generation student.

To be improved: Given another opportunity to review the predicament of low-income, first-generation students I would like to explore a narrowed perspective of student success strictly from a case study scenario. I am especially interested in exploring the journey of a student from my sub-population from the start to the finish of their educational process similar to the six-year longitudinal studies. In fact, I would like to do a documentary of the educational development in America as it relates to low-income, minority, first-generation learners (considering these students experiences from middle school, to high school, college, and their first year vocational experience.

G. Clarification Through Communication

Goal: I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

Did well: Throughout my engagement of my synthesis progress, there was a sense of being overcome by the massive publications of research dedicated to exploring the plight of first-generation college students. I believe in my attempt to reveal (from research, case study, integrated with my ten plus years of experience) the basis challenges of this sub population (characteristics) along with exploring an established (and a current initiative) best practice that addressing the specific characteristics of these students to increasing their success of attaining their college degree. My report addressed many areas of which an educational practitioner would want to be advised.

To be improved: I would like to explore an additional practical way of better conveying how the research results and case study findings might be applied to educational practitioners and administrators to utilizing all the necessary tools to serving students well. Moreover, given an opportunity to explore another study of this population, I would like to focus solely on students' impressions and evaluations of the educational process and progression through the form of case studies.

H. Compelling Communication

Goal: My writing and other products grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciated the Position I've led them to.

Did well: I was able to organize my research toward guiding my readers to my interest of better understanding who are first-generation students, their plight, and service attempts of supporting students' abilities to attain their bachelor's degrees.

To be improved: In another attempt I would narrow my interest to one or two concerns and do an in-depth investigation. For example, the information about developmental education and its effects still has me intrigued.

I. Engagement with Others

Goal: I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

Did well: The subject has motivated me to explore new avenues of engagement, for instance, my interview with the director at BHCC is incomplete. I would like to follow up with the unasked questions. I have previously facilitated workshops for this population and with the insight of my research I am motivated to fine-tune my approach to how I engage students and especially how I might encourage and support my colleagues who are also dedicated in serving students in reaching their educational goals.

To be improved: I will continue to explore new avenues of which to facilitate the use and effectiveness of the best practices I was exposed to from the literature. My desire to learn and grow in the use of serving others better is long standing; this would include my personal, educational and vocational growth.

J. Taking Stock

Goal: To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

Did well: It is fair to say that my future learning is still a work in process, however, in my present stage of development I am especially looking at furthering my research of evaluating students' impressions of their educational journey along with exploring methods in which I can service students at risk within my own business.

To be improved: My future learning on the subject of supporting students' development at some point needs to shift to my personal development of how I will establish an entity in which I can affect the development (a brand or method) of servicing student educational needs alternatively (from working as a practitioner within a college setting) yet within my established organization in which I foster the leadership necessary to effect change.

Part II. Developing as a Reflective Practitioner

Goals

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from my current and past courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

Did well: With each course I have developed a deeper appreciation of my maturity and growth. I have learned how to think critically about the how my intention within each research; I have learned to face my professional and personal challenges with efficient solution. Completing 692 has helped me to look at all the useful tools of organizing my research, which I was able to utilize in 694.

To be improved: I will continue to reflect on my experience in 694 by refocusing my attention on doing an independent research to a business plan. I have started by using

my Facebook account and engaging with other business owners. I have set up numerous interviews to explore each interviewee's experience and process to obtain their business. This will be a longstanding process of my personal goal of striving to establish functioning services within the next five years.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

Did well: Although still a work in process, this course helped me to start the practice of working through my coursework from a forward thinking method or at least learning how to institute a route in which I can think forward in concert with thinking with an end at mind to the usefulness of my research effects.

To be improved: My participation in 692, 693 and 694 have been especially challenging for me. For some reason the facilitation of the coursework has not always been clear and I have seemingly spent a large portion of semester feeling confused, which has affected my motivation. My current experience in 694 has had its share of challenges, but was tremendously refreshing. The constructive facilitation of the coursework at times meeker, however, being always eager to learn I strived to attain whatever I could get via asking meaningful questions, engagement with other present and past classmates, and arranging time to meet with professors.

In contrast my educational experience from 692 and 693 was vastly different in 694. The example of this class variance was demonstrative in the instructive and supportive element to a smaller class setting, the professor's individual support and constant guidance. Ironically, the subject matter of how to support low-income, first-generation college student is rooted in practitioners' commitment to support students; however one thing the literature does not speak directly about is the students' rapport with educational facilitators. Although I have always been a student who remains persistent, I have experienced times in which I waver in my persistence out of pure frustration and disillusionment with the educational environment and how the educational space within the classroom (along with the professor's attitude) did not always feel conducive to learning, supportive and attentive to the need of the student.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

Did well: My exposure of 692, 693 and 694 provided me with effective tools to develop my scholarship. I am presently conducting a personal investigation on how I might start my own business; I have integrated tools from these courses to assist in my research.

To be improved: I will continue to learn how to utilize the many applications of research effectively especially organizing my time to best applying myself to concluding my personal and continuous educational research projects.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

Did well: I did well at trying to obtain relevant articles; I work well at developing a timeline and strived to keep to it; I work well at remaining focus and engaged with the revolving changes of my research; and I did well at asking for help and seeking out support. However, I was not able to master all the research tools, nor did I use all of them.

To be improved: I need to learn how to organize the tools that are benefits within the difference stages of the research process.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present and past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

Did well: I am still learning how to stay consist with learning new ways and methods of new course of action of adjusting to the demands of research and examinational practice, no matter the difficulty. Sometimes I have lacked in motivation to see a project through because I feel some degree of defeat. However, I never stay in defeat; after some reflection I am always able to get back on track. My synthesis experience at times seemed surmountable and impossible to complete in the timeline allowed. However, I mastered it and I feel a sense of accomplishment.

To be improved: I need to learn how to ask more constructive questions about my progress and develop a better understanding to what is expected within the research method. I believe I might save time and obtain meaningful insights, which would allow for less frustration.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

Did well: I am open and willing to turn to peer support and input. On many occasions I have formalized strong partnerships with classmate to help assist with coursework process. Interesting enough, my experience at UMB has been less favorable on that account; students' were pretentious, seemingly uninterested in supporting other students within the community. However, I wondered at times whether students most likely were just as confused as I was and unwilling to share and support outside of their chosen circles. I was at times disheartened by this atmosphere. However, I strived to stay positive and open. I learned to seek out like-minded students I could form alliances with, who would be honest and helpful.

To be improved: I will remain open to fostering stronger collaborative relationship with my class peers along with instructors if they deem me worthy of my insight and expertise.

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for the them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I

didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

Did well: I remained proactive in relationship to my synthesis development throughout the course to ensure my success. Although I did not reach my initial goal of completion of my project for June graduation, with a renewed determination and focus I was able to complete my synthesis by my second defined deadline.

To be improved: I will utilize the wealth of experience I attained in 694 to continue my independent research in my future works.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

Did well: This is still a work in progress; however, I understand the process of revising is really a process of teasing out a deeper understanding or clarity of the writing method and developing research arguments. Revising is not my biggest challenge; the main challenge in revising is the art of understanding exactly what is being requested or expected to be changed. I must admit in both capstones other than 694 (still some degree of struggle) I felt able to navigate with a better degree of ease, as the request for numerous changes was at time unbearable but understandable. Nevertheless, I found the communication of suggested change was delivered in a matter so that I could effectively address areas in context so that readers could better understand the progressive development of my research. I am grateful I was able to have that breakthrough, as I feared I would not be able to master the process of doing my research. Facing my fear, I located a deep determination to master my synthesis process (completing research in time allotted) and dedicate the time necessary to see my goal through.

To be improved: Regardless of the educational environment, I will remain steadfast to attain the meaningful knowledge and process of what the course objective offers. I will continue to strive for effective communication methods of expressing my concerns, and expressing my needs to accomplish the objective of the course.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work--criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

Did well: My learning is meaningful to me and each course I have taken is not about just getting the master's degree or getting the desired grade, in fact it is extremely more meaningful than that; it is more about my growth and development and the benefit, is I enjoy the process. What has horrified me in my process in CCT, is the grading process appears subjective, and the instructor deems you as disagreeable, uncontrollable, and unpredictable, most likely your grade will reflect less than your actual abilities.

To be improved: I will continue to work effectively at learning and understanding the psychological process of the intent of the instructor so I might better remain in good standing within class.

10. I have approached this course and the program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

Did well: I am open to improvement in my process of learning within each course experience. I strived to do so with each course opportunity to advance my understanding (work in process).

To be improved: To take advantage of the insights of the professor's expertise in the coursework to enhance my development.