Inquiry Group: Education Department
Reflection Statement AY 2007-2008

Group Contributors: Gina Cicco (Inquiry Group Leader), Christine Mangino (Chairperson), Carlos Acevedo, America Trinidad, Sarah Church, Iris Mercado

Thematic Foci within General Education: Academic Literacy & Inquiry Skills

- Item 15... Utilize higher-level critical and analytical skills in reading and in personal and professional settings.
- Principle Three... Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation
- Principle Five... Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action
- Principle Seven... Assess Students' Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems

Goals: Our goal for the Spring 2008 semester was to increase departmental participation in the Inquiry Group. By scheduling regular meetings and receiving time to address the department at each department meeting, the group solidified its role as a vehicle for addressing questions pertinent to the principles of excellence in General Education. The group successfully developed a checklist for assessing use of higher order thinking skills in teaching and learning. The future goals of the Inquiry Group include a continuation of this self-assessment practice on faculty and student levels. A checklist will be developed for a similar student assessment. The information collected will help faculty and students increase understanding of how critical thinking and analytical skills are defined and how they can be improved among faculty and student practices. A long-term goal of the group is to develop a rubric that may be used more generally, across various college departments, in assessing levels of teaching and learning of higher order thinking skills.

Questions to be answered: How can we expand our students' understanding and application of higher order thinking skills? What can we do as a department and as a college to involve our students in the assessment of use and dissemination of information on higher order thinking skills? How can we improve upon our current assessment measures?

Schedule of meetings: Spring 2008 semester... February 14, February 28, March 31, April 28, May 14

Expected Outcomes: We hope to continue our ongoing assessment and improvement of use of higher order thinking skills. Our department members will have more defined roles in our overall efforts. The Inquiry Group hopes to maintain its informal, welcoming, and encouraging
setup to maintain faculty involvement in a pleasant, reflective, and productive exercise. The
dialogue among faculty will expand to include further participation from students. We hope to
further our role as a departmental group integrated in a college-wide effort by considering
further dialogue with other departments.

Progress to this point: This was a critical semester for our group. As leader of the group, I can
honestly say that the participation from department members has been very impressive. The
dedication of the group's contributors from its beginning with members Gina Cicco, America
Trinidad, and Damien Byas, has far outreached our expectations. We received valuable input
from other faculty members, especially Christine Mangino, Carlos Acevedo, America Trinidad,
and Sarah Church. We recently welcomed the participation of Iris Mercado. At the suggestion
of Christine Mangino, the Inquiry Group began using Bloom's Taxonomy as a model to develop
our assessment tool. This was a leap for our group as it provided a theoretical foundation for
defining key concepts in critical thinking. Involvement in the college-wide Inquiry Group also
allowed for faculty development with our group members participating in a COBI retreat, an
in-depth syllabus revision workshop with Prof. Randy Bass of Georgetown University, and a
visit to our department from nationally recognized consultants Judy Patton and Candise
Reynolds. Our group benefited from the ideas of such expert educators on assessment and
revision. We are currently using the checklist we developed to assess teaching and learning of
higher order thinking skills to revise our practices, to expand student involvement in our
discussion, and to revise syllabi across various courses. This intense working relationship has
brought our Inquiry Group beyond our hopes at the semester's onset. We have addressed
important questions on a regular basis and brought the ideas discussed to the entire
department for support and suggestion. It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience.
We created large laminated department mission statement posters to increase the visibility of
our mission in our classrooms. We also set up brown bag lunches to unify faculty and student
efforts in our overall goals. Faculty and students will discuss further questions at these
informal meetings. We also hope to distribute our mission statements to students in business
cards, bookmarks, and other creative modalities. Our focus is ultimately on improving teaching
and learning and we plan to keep that goal at the center of our group. We hope that our
Inquiry Group will work with other departmental groups to further understanding of higher
order thinking skills across Hostos. Assessment, revision, and consultation have been the foci
of this productive semester. Again, many thanks to our Chair and to all group members for
their hard work and dedication to this effort. I will be presenting our group's work at the
General Education Conference in May. We also thank the Office of Academic Affairs for
providing us with refreshments at each of our meetings. It helped to develop the character of
our meetings and we greatly appreciate it. Special thanks to Prof. Bernal-Carlo and Sarah
Brennan for continued support and guidance.

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