Revisiting the Plan B Capstone for the Master of Early Childhood Education Program

The Program

- Students: 20-30 students per cohort (203 graduates)
- Staff: 1 faculty coordinator, .30 FTE APT, cooperating faculty on summer overloads
- Interdisciplinary (CS, SPED and FamR)
- Format: 3 intensive summer sessions and once a month on-line seminars during the year
- Develop leadership for programs serving children (birth – 5 yrs.) and their families

Inquiry Process

Data

- Enrollment Records
  - Entry and Exit Surveys
  - Applications
  - Program Records

- Plan B Evidence
  - Faculty Steering Committee Meeting Notes
  - Professional Portfolio
  - Drafts and Student Exemplars
  - Advisor and Plan B Second Reader Comments & Email

- Student Reflection
  - 3rd Summer Survey & Exit Survey

Analysis

- The Director compiled demographic information and examined the change in students over time. Faculty Steering Committee reviewed results.
- Director conferred via phone or in person with each second reader several times during the Plan B process.
- Faculty Steering Committee met monthly to de-brief information on student progress and to identify student challenges in selecting exemplars and writing narratives. We identified common issues in Plan B revision and writing process and exceptions to the process.
- Faculty Steering Team compared each student’s samples to observe how academic voice was demonstrated in exemplars and narratives and how it evolved over the cohort experience.
- Director and Faculty Steering Committee analyzed student survey items that focused on Plan B Portfolio and triangulated with other data sources.

Findings

- Demographic Changes
  - Decrease in state representation. (Cohort I - 24% or 4 neighbor islands • Cohort IV - 5% or 1 neighbor island)
  - Increase in mainland US and International students Cohort I - 4% • Cohort IV - 9%

Challenges with Current Plan B – Professional Portfolio

- Less experienced students had gaps in their knowledge base and were more likely to connect theory to personal experiences rather than examples from professional practice. Less experienced students found it more difficult to generalize how research findings could be applied across the multiple roles, settings, situations.
- Indigenous and “second chance” or non-traditional students sometimes found it difficult to conform to the standards driven format inherent in a Professional Portfolio.
- Many students required explicit modeling on use of academic vocabulary and writing for a formal, scholarly audience.

Needed Supports

- Students relied on multiple forms of support - samples, one-on-one conferencing and feedback, modeling, experiential learning opportunities, comments and questions to provoke critical reflection. Cohort “buddies” were essential to morale. Students desired additional instructor probing and feedback to help them refine critical reflection skills.

Why revisit the Plan B Capstone? Faculty observed that student demographics were changing. We were concerned that Plan B Professional Portfolio was effective as a capstone assessment for only some of the current students.