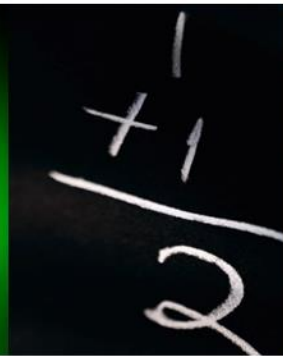# Best Practices for Syllabi Development: A Review of BSU General Education Course Syllabi

Faculty Institute
Bowie State University
Dr. Becky Verzinski
Assistant Vice President for Assessment
Office of the Provost
and
Dr. Ayanna Lynch
Department of Psychology and GEC Chairperson

August 2015

# TRAINING OR LEARNING OUTCOMES

Session participants will:

- Understand the review process & lessons learned

- Interpret results of GE syllabi review

- Articulate strengths & weaknesses of process

- Identify syllabi development best practices

- Revise syllabus checklist template

- Review and provide feedback on various syllabi

WHY take on such a huge task?

- MSCHE PRR
- First-time for everything!
- Modeling best practices
- Promoting use of technology to work smarter!
- Assessment guiding practice
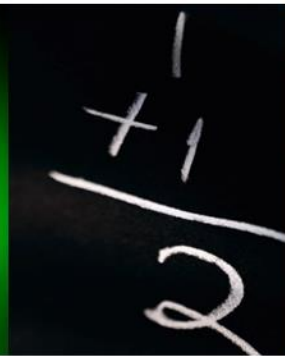
HOW did we do this?

- GEC task
- Syllabus evaluation rubric
- Survey Monkey!
- Faculty Senate/Committee/GEC
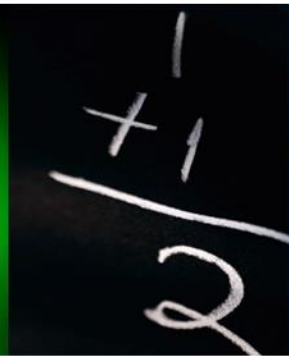- Random assignments
- Spring 2015/Summer 2015

What we accomplished…

- 24 GEC members
- 65 GE syllabi collected (ALL)
- 206 reviews completed
- Minimally 3 reviews completed per syllabus
- Each person had a minimum of 6 to complete
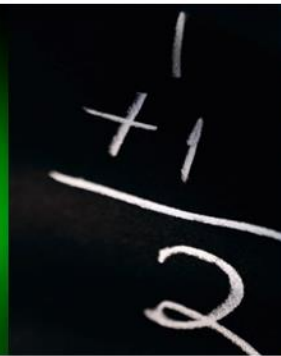- 70% benchmark for exemplary & emerging rating

https://bsuonline.blackboard.com/
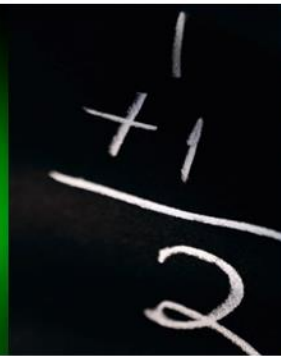
TAKING A CLOSER LOOK
at the data

Advantages and Challenges of Process

Challenges

- Labor intensive collection of syllabi
- Timelines/deadlines (Aug-Aug)
- Some Bb training needed for GEC members
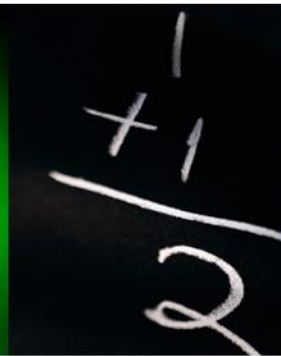- Attendance at GEC meetings and timely feedback on process/rubric/reviews

Advantages and Challenges of Process

Advantages

- Significant time saving w/ meetings
- Significant time saved with data analysis
- Paperless process (GREEN!) & cost effective
- Archive for MSCHE
- Self-paced; mobile; 24-7

Summary of Lessons Learned

- GE syllabi repository needed

- Course catalog updates/removals

- *Common* syllabi for large sections

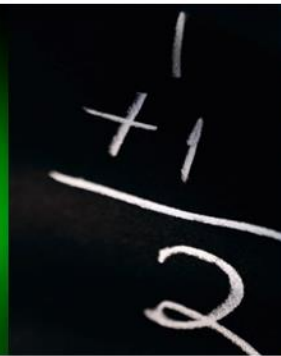- Another review of GE syllabi in 2 yrs to ensure consistent SLOs in same GE
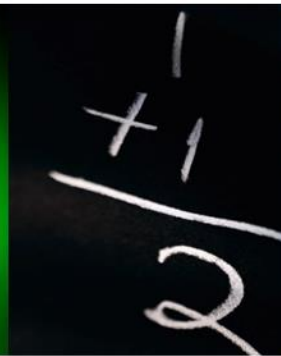
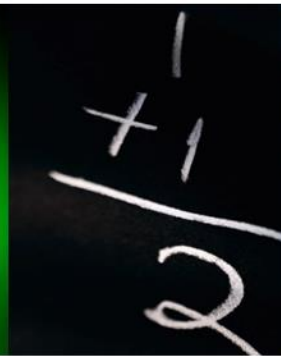# Summary of Lessons Learned

Areas less than 70% benchmark

- **Clarify tone/beliefs/relevance of course**

- ***Assessments aligned w/ SLOs**

- ***DSS location corrected**

- ***Academic policies included for all**

*Areas to improve for self-study

A GAME OF FACULTY FEUD

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS OF A COURSE SYLLABUS?
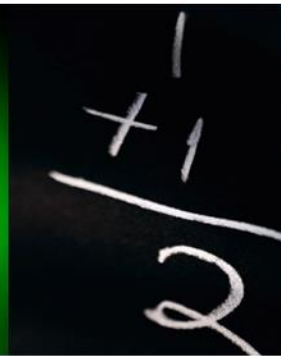
SURVEY SAYS….

- Can serve as a learning contract
- Defines student responsibilities for course
- Describes active learning
- Helps students assess their course readiness
- Helps set the tone for your course
- Describes available learning resources
- Acquaints students with course logistics
- Communicates role of technology in course

* Additional info in packet

Best Practices for Syllabi Development

- Twelve best practices to include in every syllabus
- Using a rubric to assess your syllabus (see handout)

Sharing What We Know

- Developing a BSU syllabus template or checklist
- GEC and CAPA initiative to be available online for faculty and at new faculty training

- GROUP EXERCISE: Review handouts in packet
- What is best for BSU? All Best practices? Additional items? Convocation? EPE? Graduation application? Syllabus Quiz?
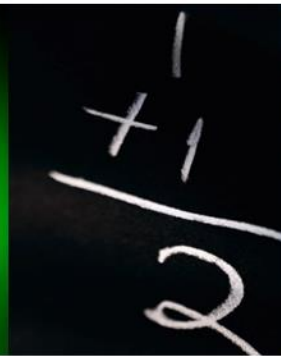
Peer to Peer Feedback

Did anyone bring a syllabus and would like suggestions or a best practices review?
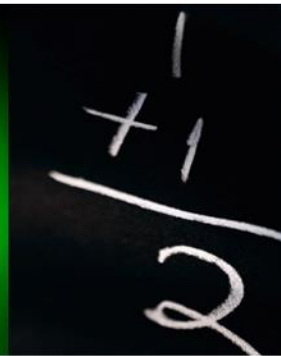
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS…
Thank you for Participating!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Dr. Becky Verzinski
Assistant Vice President for Assessment
Office of the Provost
bverzinski@bowiestate.edu
301-860-3501

Website Resources

- http://ctal.udel.edu/enhancing-teaching/course-design/learning-goals/

- http://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/assessing-student-learning/using-rubrics.html#resources

- http://syllabusinstitute.org/best-practices/building-a-better-syllabus/

- http://www.assessment.uconn.edu/primer/goals1.html

- http://ctal.udel.edu/enhancing-teaching/course-design/

- http://chronicle.com (section: Chronicle Careers, vol. 53, issue 2, pg. C2)

- http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/sheridan-center/teaching-learning/course-design/creating-syllabus/basic-headings