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Needs Assessment Report: Ethnobotany: Indigenous Cultures and Healing Plants

Southern New Hampshire University

IDT 650 Learning Design III

March 11, 2016

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Instructional Situation

The goals of The Ethnobotany Department at Koleamoku College are to offer a broad range of quality, relevant courses in ethnobotany. To meet this goal, a needs assessment was performed to identify the needs for a new course that focuses on the use of healing plants by Indigenous Cultures around the world. The needs assessment revealed a gap in the current curriculum, indicating a need for a course that focuses on the use of botanicals in healing practices. This course will provide learning that is specific to the use of plants by global traditional indigenous cultures for healing and use in healing ceremony. Upon completion of the pilot course, it will be offered as a second year level course which will be required as part of the curriculum in the college's Bachelor of Science in Ethnobotany degree program. The course pilot test needs to be in place before August 2016 so that the course materials can be prepared in time for the fall term.

Learner's Characteristics

The target learners for this course are students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science Ethnobotany degree program at Koleamoku College, Lahaina, Hawaii. The students are male and female adult learners, ages eighteen and up, from a diverse ethnic and cultural background. They are all proficient in both written and spoken English language and all have demonstrated proficiency with research methods and computer technology. This *Indigenous Cultures and Healing Plants* course will be part of the 300 level curriculum required for the BS in Ethnobotany degree program with the prerequisites of coursework in Anthropology 101, Biology 101, Botany 105, Introductory Ethnobotany 105, Botany Plant Evolutionary Diversity 201, and Plant Ecology in the Hawaiian Islands 202. These prerequisites have prepared learners with the foundation needed to support further learning about indigenous cultures and their use of specific botanical

specimens for healing and ceremony. This course will also be available as an elective for the BS in Anthropology and Botany degree majors.

Delivery Method

This course will be a hybrid class that will be delivered online using web facilitated coursework within the Blackboard Learning Management System. It will include video, audio and reading assignments with the addition of class visits to traditional Hawaiian Healing practitioners in the islands. Each module of the course will focus on a different region of the world, and the use of plants for healing practices by the indigenous people of that region. A blended solution using web-facilitated coursework that students can access through the Blackboard LMS provides lesson practice. Class trips and group research projects support social cognitive learning theory and will enable adult learners to build upon their learning from previous coursework. According to corenetglobal.org, Knowles' first andragogy principle is, "Learning is fundamentally social. Knowledge is integrated in the life of communities and the connections we maintain. Learning is an act of participation." Learning is enabled when learners can reflect, debate, and support their new knowledge within a social context.

Measurable Learning Goals

This course will adhere to standards set forth by the Hawaii state policy that governs higher education. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

Demonstrate knowledge about the use of healing plants by Indigenous Cultures around the world by:

- Successfully researching, identifying, explaining, and applying knowledge about indigenous societies.

- Successfully researching, identifying, explaining, and applying knowledge about the plants used by each indigenous society in their traditional healing practices.
- Demonstrating learning throughout the course progression, through the use of rubrics, formative performance and summative assessment strategies.

Conclusion

The needs assessment shows that the addition of course content that focuses on indigenous societies and their use of plants in healing practices is a crucial part of the study of ethnobotany. The addition of this course will add significant value to the existing curriculum of The Ethnobotany Department at Koleamoku College. A hybrid course will provide adult learners in the college's Bachelor of Science in Ethnobotany degree program with the opportunity to be self-directed, yet find deeper meaning to the learning by participating with others in a social learning context. This course will provide learners with a unique learning experience that embraces the basic concepts of Ethnobotany, which botanicaldimensions.org (2013) define as, "The observation of the human-plant relationship in places where it is visible and may be either experienced and/or documented, in stories and images."

References

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