

## Resource Guide

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### Assessing Affective Learning

Instructional communication scholars Katherine Thweatt and Jason Wrench (2015) define affective learning as “an individual’s positive disposition toward a particular subject matter, which changes an individual’s operational framework and value system thus guiding decision making and behavioral choices in all aspects of life” (p. 498). How do we know whether we are achieving this goal in our teaching? What methods can we use to assess affective learning?

Below are a few ideas for ways to assess the lasting internalization of disciplinary content among our students (e.g., Fink, 2013; Witt, 2015):

- **Personal Reflections:** Ask students to reflect on the impact of course content and activities for their learning. Consider designing multiple opportunities for personal reflection in different forms (e.g., face-to-face and online discussions, formal and informal writing assignments, in-class collaborations and group work).
- **Standardized Questionnaires:** Ask students to respond to standardized questions about their “interests, attitudes, or values” (Fink, 2013, p. 190) relating to various components of the course. Consider doing this as a pre-test/post-test activity to show changes in a student’s operational framework and value system.
- **Learning Portfolios:** Ask students to “document and reflect on challenges and understandings that emerge over time” (Fink, 2013, p. 132). Consider designing a learning portfolio assignment that asks students to reflect on the *content*, *context*, and *process* of their learning (see Wlodkowski (1999) for learning portfolio examples).

#### Resources

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Thweatt, K. S., & Wrench, J. S. (2015). Affective learning: Evolving from values and planned behaviors to internalization and pervasive behavioral change. *Communication Education*, 64, 497-499.

Witt, P. L. (2015). Pursuing and measuring affective learning objectives. *Communication Education*, 64, 505-507.

Wlodowski, R. J. (1999). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

*For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at [ctl@slu.edu](mailto:ctl@slu.edu).*