

Michener's Unique Continual Improvement



WIDS provides framework to benefit teaching, learning, collaboration and campus-wide efficiency.



It isn't easy to enhance courses and programs based on evidence derived from program assessments, course evaluations, faculty input, grade point averages, focus groups, exit exams, clinical reviews and input from advisory boards.

Evidence-informed curriculum improvement would be impossible without a consistent organizational framework for developing and improving courses and programs. That's why WIDS Software is at the center of a new initiative at The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences (Michener), in Toronto.

Moving Toward Dynamic, Evidence-informed Curriculum Improvement

Through the use of WIDS Software – and its Program Design and Analyzer features – Michener is working to achieve dynamic, evidence-informed curriculum improvement, and simultaneously, simplify the generation of accreditation reports. Key to this endeavor, in addition to WIDS Software, is Michener's new CurriculumBank Web site, which will serve as a central storage area for final curriculum documents, related learning objects, lesson plans, and teaching notes. The new site will also provide a virtual collaboration space where instructors can work to revise, improve, and develop courses and programs online.

ment Commitment

Piloting Diagnostic Cytology

Taking it one step at a time, Michener will first work with its Diagnostic Cytology program to establish processes for dynamic, evidence-informed curriculum improvement. Ultimately, the Diagnostic Cytology improvement process will serve as a model for future programs.

The Role of Program Design & Analyzer

“Our first step is to perform a baseline assessment of the program to get a sense of the integrity of the courses and whether they need more work or not,” says Dr. Ann Russell, Director of Michener’s Center for Learning and Innovation. “That way, we can see the connections between the courses and identify any gaps or duplications and areas for improvement.”



Dr. Ann Russell, Director of Michener Center for Learning and Innovation

In essence, according to Russell, Michener is adopting a framework of progressive curriculum development and viewing the curriculum as a dynamic organism that needs constant enhancement. “WIDS Program Design and Analyzer tools help us to achieve our goal of continually assessing and improving the curriculum where needed,” she adds.

Using Program Design, Michener will develop solid documentation at the program level where institutional and program outcomes meet, and where outcomes are assessed and measured. The process delivers a clear picture of where curriculum may need to change and creates documentation supports for accreditation, according to Russell. So, by using the Program Design module in WIDS Software, Michener can effectively define program outcomes and assessment measures and criteria, link institutional and program outcomes to courses, and document those connections in an Analyzer matrix report.

That Analyzer report then offers a visual snapshot of where and how competencies, core abilities and

standards are being met and taught throughout several courses or programs. This can be critical during accreditation, and is yet another reason Michener likes WIDS. “Accrediting bodies are looking for the data provided by Analyzer and evidence that the program’s evaluation process results in continuous quality improvement,” says Russell.

Evidence-centered Change

At the center of this Program Design process is evidence, according to Russell. She points out that course and program evaluations, graduate key performance indicators, clinician reviews, chair evaluations, exit exams, etc., have limited value if they aren’t feeding into program improvement. “Ideally, we’d like evidence to be embedded into the curriculum’s revision history,” says Russell. “We want to record our rationale for improvement in a WIDS file and continuously improve upon it.”

But, in order to dynamically improve, Russell maintains Michener needed more than just curriculum revision and evidence. The institution needed a virtual storage and collaboration tool – CurriculumBank. “We estimate that approximately 50 percent of our courses are in WIDS and there are thousands of copies of course files scattered around Michener’s computer network,” says Russell. “Due to inconsistent storage practices, courses and best practices can’t be shared across programs. Right now, there’s an unsystematic curriculum storage and retrieval process that inhibits curricular development, collaboration and innovation. We think Curriculum Bank will help with centralizing the curricula across programs. The virtual collaboration possibilities will improve efficiency by reducing the need for face-to-face meetings,” according to Russell. “With CurriculumBank, there will be a central repository for curriculum and a place where people can share and improve ideas and develop and approve courses online.”

In its infancy, Michener’s new initiative will take time to carry out, but ultimately Russell feels it will greatly benefit teaching, learning, collaboration, organization and efficiency campus wide.●