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Sports Nutrition Project Based Learning Assignment Reflection

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Integrating group projects into the classroom can seem to be a daunting task. If the project lacks planning, structure, and scaffolding, it can become a nuisance for the students as well as the instructor. Despite the potential drawbacks of integrating a group project into the class, it is a high impact learning practice that can help students develop necessary soft skills such verbal communication, oral communication, accountability, and team work. Furthermore, it can provide students with an opportunity to critically think and to apply the concepts learned in class to real life situations.

Attending the enhancing pedagogy series focused on developing and implementing group projects was a valuable experience to help enhance the group project experience in my classes. Although I have utilized group projects in my classes before, this institute helped me to critically analyze my previous group project assignments and gave me better tools to improve the planning and scaffolding processes that are necessary for successful group projects. In order to apply the tools I learned from this institute, I chose my Winter 2019 Sports Nutrition class to implement a group project entitled "The Nutrition Coaching Assignment." This project was worth 30% of each student's grade and required a written as well as an oral presentation. The project was done over a four week period approximately two weeks into the term. The description of the project is below:

"Students will work in groups of 2-3 students where you will each serve as each other's own nutrition/fitness client and nutrition coach. The first part of the assignment will be conducted in the lab where you will each fill out a "client intake form" as well as go through a basic fitness assessment with the help of "your coach" to measure your weight, waist circumference, hip circumference, waist to hip ratio, body composition, broad jump for distance (lower body power), and upper body muscular endurance. Your "coach" will record all of the data on your Fitness Assessment Sheet and put it together with your intake form. Based on the results of your

fitness assessment, answers to the questions on your intake form, and your desired fitness goals, you and your “coach” will write 2 objective goals for yourself to strive towards over the course of 3 weeks (i.e., lose 3 pounds of body fat and maintain muscle mass, improve broad jump distance by 2 inches and reduce waist circumference by 2 cm, etc.). With the guidance of the instructor in class, your “coach” will design a nutrition plan to help reach your health/fitness goals that will include total daily caloric intake, appropriate macronutrient breakdown, pre/post workout nutrition, and potential nutrition supplements. Next, you will create (or sign on to) a free account on **MyFitnessPal** using your smart phone, computer, or tablet where you will input the daily nutrition goals customized for you to meet your health/fitness goals. A tutorial on using the software will take place in class (it is your responsibility to be there). You will track/input everything you eat/drink and all of your formal exercise into your MyFitnessPal diary for 21 days. Every 7 days, you need to fill out the 7 day summary report that is on Blackboard (this is mainly for you to keep you accountable) that you will turn into your “coach” on a weekly basis. On or about day 21, you and the same partner will perform the same assessments that were performed during the initial fitness assessment. You will compare your “pre-results” (first assessment) to your “post-results” (after 21 days of tracking your nutrition/exercise). Your “coach” will then analyze how successful or unsuccessful you were at meeting your daily nutrition/exercise goals over the 21 day period and if you met your 2 objective fitness goals that you set for yourself. You will each do a brief 2-3 minute presentation about your client as the “coach” and report on: a) the sample food plan you designed for your “client” with Calorie and Macronutrient breakdown, b) pre vs post results, c) your client’s 21 day summary, and d) discuss if your “client” met their 2 objective goals and explain why or why not. You must turn in your client’s answers/calculations to questions for this assignment (forms are found on Blackboard), at least 3 full days from each of the 3 weeks (9 days total of all you tracked/input into

MyFitnessPal), the three 7 day summaries, the 21 day summary (form is on Blackboard), pre and post fitness assessment results, and intake form. You must also write a concise answer (1-3 sentences) to each of these reflection questions found on your 21 day report: 1) What did you learn from this assignment? 2) Was this assignment valuable? 3) What did you like and/or what could be improved about this assignment? **In order to receive credit for this assignment, you MUST turn in all materials discussed above along with the rubric for this assignment to your instructor with you and your partner's name on it. YOU CANNOT RECEIVE CREDIT WITHOUT THIS AS I CANNOT GRADE IT.** The grading rubric will be posted on Blackboard and MUST be followed to be sure you address what is expected to receive full credit. Please refer to class outline for the due date. Please staple everything together in this order when you turn it in: Presentation Rubric with your name, Assignment Rubric with your name, client intake, complete and accurate calculations worksheets, sample food plan you made for your client to meet prescribed goals, your client's 3 x 7 day reports, your client's 9 full days of everything they ate, typed 21 day report."

Overall, the group assignment went very well. Scaffolding the calculation worksheet in class to enable students to accurately prescribe caloric recommendations, macronutrient intake, nutrient timing, and developing a sample food plan gave students the opportunity to apply a real life case study to the principles learned in class. Furthermore, the required 7-day reports that the students had to turn in to each other helped them be accountable to each other and to the project. The student comments of the assignment were very positive in nature. Some comments included "I appreciated the real life applications of this project," "I learned how to properly track my calorie and macronutrient intake," and "I became aware of how my food choices impacted my overall nutrition goals." Some students actually suggested that we extend the project for another 1-2 weeks to potentially see more drastic changes.

I plan to run this group assignment “as is” for the next 1-2 quarters so that I can assess other group dynamics and the feedback from other students. Once I have run a few classes through the project, I will address apparent weaknesses as needed to keep the project improving. My goal is to utilize the student feedback to enhance the experience from this assignment.