STLR: Student Transformative Learning Record

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Abstract

UCO’s Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR), tracks student learning in and out of the classroom. Students highlight their employability, communication, leadership, and citizenship skills in dynamic e-portfolios. STLR e-portfolios help show employers many of the skills they seek in addition to a student’s academic major (discipline specific) knowledge and skills.

Why STLR?

Employers are increasingly pointing out college graduates and new hires are lacking key job skills. They say college graduates are qualified with their degree or certifications, but are missing key skills that make them an effective employee such as: coachability, emotional intelligence, motivation, taking initiative, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and having the right attitude/personality suited to the particular job/work environment (AAC&U, 2013; NACE 2013; Murphy, 2015; Hart Research, 2013). Employers have told our university that they rarely look at the academic transcript to tell if a graduate will be a promising employee (STLR Employer Advisory Board, 2015). They say they cannot tell if a student made an A or B in International Marketing if that means they will understand how to work with a diverse group of clients, key stakeholders, or other colleagues. If a student makes an A or B in a Management course, it does not mean the student will be a good leader or problem solver. In addition, accrediting bodies and legislators are increasingly asking how higher education institutions are being accountable and preparing students for the future (Spellings Commission Report, 2006). Should the way higher education has been “done” for centuries be the same way we continue because that is the way it has always been done or because that is the way we as current academics had to do it? Innovation and progress would disagree.

What is Transformative Learning?

Transformative Learning, primarily founded by Jack Mezirow, is a holistic view of learning that goes beyond just cognitive skills, and even further beyond Bloom’s Taxonomy, which is still primarily application of cognitive learning and contexts. Transformative Learning theory, based in student development theory and adult learning theory, encompasses not just the academic context a student learns in, but the whole picture of a student’s progress toward adulthood. To break it down simply, Transformative Learning is the process in which a person becomes a
functioning, responsible, aware, contributing citizen of the world (King, 2014). The basic crux of the Transformative Learning occurs in shifts in one’s perspective. The nuts and bolts of Transformative Learning theory are:

Change of Perspective through:
- willingness to be transformed (Taylor, 2007)
- having an experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2015)
- reflecting on that experience critically (Brookfield, 2004; Cranton, 2006)
- discussion within or with others (rational discourse) (Mezirow et. al, 2000)
- shift in perspective (Mezirow, 1978)

Patricia Cranton of Penn State, a leading writer on Transformative Learning, says an “elegantly simple” definition is how people change the way they interpret their experiences and interactions with the world (King, 2012). Cranton said,

...An individual becomes aware of holding a limiting or distorted view. If the individual critically examines this view, opens herself to alternatives, and consequently changes the way she sees things, she has transformed some part of how she makes meaning out of the world (Cranton, n.d.).

According to King, 2012, when people go through this type of change, they have essentially “transformed” their view of themselves or of the world and how they interact with others and their environment.

Transformative Learning at UCO

At the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), based on these principles, our answer to how to help prepare students with 21st century skills is to “help students learn (University of Central Oklahoma, 2017; Soffel, 2016).” While that may seem incredibly simplistic, our mission breaks down to this: we cannot make students learn or transform. However, we can create environments, experiences, and situations that prompt students to potentially engage in learning in a positive, challenging, and transforming way. Since 2006, as an institution, we have adopted Transformative Learning as THE way to create an atmosphere that fosters learning and progression into mature adulthood to create productive, creative, ethical, and engaged citizen leaders (University of Central Oklahoma, 2017).

UCO frames Transformative Learning around the Central Six tenets of learning (University of Central Oklahoma, 2017):

1. Discipline Knowledge
2. Global & Cultural Competencies
3. Health & Wellness
4. Leadership
5. Research, Creative, and Scholarly Activities
6. Service Learning & Civic Engagement
While UCO had been using the ideas of Transformative Learning since 2006, in 2015, a more concrete, specific UCO definition was developed out of a need to better define, assess, and record Transformative Learning:

**Transformative Learning @ UCO:**
- develops beyond-disciplinary skills
- expands students’ perspectives of their relationships with self, others, community, and environment.

**What is a Student Transformative Learning Record?**

The UCO Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) is a way to record and capture the learning that happens for a student in any part of their time at the university. Because we believe learning happens in many parts of a student’s life and experiences at UCO, STLR attempts to capture, document, and assess learning both in and out of the classroom, in both curricular and co-curricular contexts.

**The STLR Process**

1. STLR-trained faculty and professional staff create engaging Transformative Learning experiences for students.
2. Students participate in the learning experience (STLR class assignment, co-curricular group or event, out-of-class project, funded project or student employment).
3. Students submit a reflective artifact to the Learning Management System (LMS) in a course shell.
4. The faculty/staff member assesses the artifact using an evidence-based, robust tool, called the STLR Rubric that describes levels of embodiment of the Central Six skills/values and provides written (typed) feedback to the student.
5. The student reviews the assessment, STLR rating, provided feedback, and then can “push” the STLR artifact to their STLR e-portfolio and curate examples of their achievement in their STLR printable record.
6. The student can view the STLR achievements in a STLR dashboard in the LMS and in their printable STLR Official Record.
7. The student can create a web page presentation in the e-portfolio tool integrated inside the LMS.
8. The student can share out a link to a version of their STLR e-portfolio and/or their curated STLR Official printable record (snapshot page) to a future employer, graduate school, or scholarship application.

(see circle graphic on following page)
**STLR Co-Curricular and Curricular Assessment in the Same Space**

UCO identified a unique way to utilize the full extent of the LMS. Co-curricular STLR experiences are recorded and assessed in the exact same way as curricular experiences. Just as curricular course sections are provided a course “shell” to submit assignments, STLR co-curricular learning activities are provided a course shell for students to submit their reflective artifacts. In curricular STLR experiences that involve class assignments, faculty are able to assign a grade, use their own rubric within the LMS, and the STLR rubric, all within the same “grading” screen. The LMS can handle both a grade and multiple rubrics – both a points based grading rubric and the holistic STLR rubric that is not related to the student’s grade.

**STLR Dashboard**

In addition, the STLR process is a digital badging system. Integrated within the LMS, a STLR dashboard was created for students to track their STLR achievements in real-time. As STLR-trained faculty or professional staff submit the student’s STLR rating and feedback, the student’s dashboard updates showing their current progress in each of the Central Six Tenets. When the student selects one of the Central Six Tenet areas, they can drill down to specific achievements in that tenet in the various levels (Green, 2015).

(see screenshot on next page)
In late 2015, UCO was asked to join the existing selected group of the Lumina Foundation Beyond the Transcript Project through a joint partnership between the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). The project provided multiple sessions to meet with a cohort of twelve pilot institutions from across the U.S. between July 2015 and December 2016, on-campus site visits from NASPA and AACRAO consultants, and attendance at a Lumina Foundation convening to introduce the new comprehensive student record models in November 2016.

According to the project, of the institutions selected, special attention was paid to select those that served traditional students, adult learners, residential students, commuters, under-represented groups, veterans, under-prepared, and highly selective students. The twelve institutions included: Borough of Manhattan Community College of New York, NY; Brandman University of Irvine, CA; UCO, Edmond, OK; Dillard University of New Orleans, LA; Elon University of Elon, NC; Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) of Indianapolis, IN; LaGuardia Community College of Long Island City, NY; Stanford University of Palo Alto, CA; University of Houston Downtown of Houston, TX; University of Maryland University College of College Park, MD; University of South Carolina of Columbia, SC; and the University of Wisconsin Extension and Wisconsin Colleges of Madison, WI.

(see front page example on following page)
STLR Printed Customized Record Front Page Example (Green, 2017):

**Leadership**
- Organizational Comm. Capstone - Capstone Project/Reflection - Spring 2016 - Transformation
- Fundamentals of Speech - Passions Speech Reflection - Fall 2012 - Integration
- Conflict and Negotiation in Org - Case Study Reflection - Fall 2014 - Integration
- Corporate Training/Consulting - Training Design Artifact - Fall 2014 - Integration
- Interviewing Practices - Mock Interview - Spring 2016 - Integration
- Internship: Recruiting, Event Planning, and Marketing Strategies - Fall 2015 - Exposure
- Ted x UCO - Event Participant - Fall 2015 - Exposure

**Service Learning and Civic Engagement**
- Integrated Knowledge Portfolio Project (IKPP) - Fall 2015 - Transformation
- Internship: Recruiting, Event Planning, and Marketing Strategies - Fall 2015 - Transformation
- Success Central - Service Learning Activity Reflection Paper - Fall 2012 - Integration
- MLK Day of Service - Event Participant - Spring 2016 - Exposure

**Research Creative and Scholarly Activities**
- Intro to Organizational Comm. - Reflection Paper - Summer 2014 - Transformation
- Specialized Publications - Research Project Paper - Fall 2014 - Integration
- Media Production - Media Artifact - Fall 2015 - Integration
- Major Quest - Event Participant - Fall 2015 - Exposure
- General Biology - The Decline of Bees Film - Spring 2013 - Exposure
- LA Symposium - Event Participant - Spring 2016 - Exposure
- Internship: Recruiting, Event Planning, and Marketing Strategies - Fall 2015 - Exposure

View EPportfolio - Clicking the provided link will open the student's portfolio in your computer's browser: [http://bit.ly/2mESkDg](http://bit.ly/2mESkDg)
The back of the STLR Printout (Green, 2017) provides a brief description of the Central Six Tenets and the levels of achievement in each tenet. This page is intended for quick reference for an employer or graduate school. The STLR assessment rubric is much more extensive and is discussed in detail later in this paper.

STLR E-Portfolio

Once the student has STLR achievements on their STLR record, they can use the STLR print out to remind them of specific, concrete examples they will want to highlight to future employers or graduate schools. UCO encourages students to highlight only a few examples in each area, rather than expecting employers to hunt through a long list of accomplishments. The UCO Career Services Office and Career Counselors are training to be able to provide feedback to students on their e-portfolios and provide workshops on tips to creating a solid, stand out e-portfolio.
Example of a STLR E-Portfolio Welcome Page (Kilbourne, 2016):

Link to view live version welcome page: http://bit.ly/2mESkDg
Example of a STLR Work Showcase Page (Kilbourne, 2016):

**Leadership**

In my research, whether it was with a group or on my own, I have found that leadership means traveling the road less traveled. To be an innovative thinker who is looking to solve problems, I have found it takes digging deeper than the surface, researching down to the root problem, being willing to put in the hard work, and being willing to look where no one else is looking for answers. **Read More.** Learn more about my Leadership Roles on the [Kilbourne Ecologig Group webpage](http://bit.ly/2lttbLt), the [KRM STEP outreach program page](http://bit.ly/2lttbLt), or my [Resume].

**Collaboration in Action**

In a Chemistry class my junior year, we had a service-learning group project where we went out and tested the tap water of a total area with guidance from the Oklahoma Water Board. We created a report as a class and gave the report to the Water Board. The Water Board used our findings as part of a larger scale project they were working on, testing tap water across the metro area. We helped test one quadrant. **Read More.**

**Work - Life Balance**

When I'm not studying, working, or serving, I am an avid hiker and explorer. I've found many curious things on my hikes, whether it was a beautiful piece of twisted wood, an astonishing view from a cliff, or a personal revelation from taking time to breathe and think. **Read more.**

**A Call to Serve**

From being a first-generation college student, I know it's a tough road to care about others around you and the environment when you're trying to survive yourself. As part of a joint partnership between UCO and the Urban Riversports program, I served as a volunteer guide for urban youth (one of my best groups pictured) at River Sports area in OKC. From this work and other service projects with the KRM STEP Outreach program, I found my calling to ultimately work with urban youth to bring free programs to reduce child stress and encourage a connection to caring about the environment. **Read more.**

[video link](http://bit.ly/2lttbLt)

from [dropbox](http://bit.ly/2lttbLt)

Evidence-Based Authentic Assessment Using the STLR Rubric

STLR-trained faculty and professional staff use a robust rubric to assess the Transformative Learning experiences that happen both in and out of the classroom. The STLR rubric has three levels: Exposure to the Central Six tenet, Integration of the tenet, or Transformation by the tenet. A faculty/staff person uses the rubric to decide if just exposure to the tenet concept occurred, the student integrated the tenet into her reflection and work, or if there was demonstration that the student was transformed in the area. Achievement of Transformation is not expected in the General Education or early college years for traditional-aged students (Kilbourne, 2015; Verschelden et. al, 2017).

However UCO has a highly non-traditional student population that includes adult students. If students come in with previous life experiences and demonstrate the level of Transformation even in lower level courses, the faculty/staff member can rate the student at Transformation if there is evidence in the student’s reflection to support the rating. Students do not have to achieve the lower levels on the rubric to get to being able to be rated at the higher levels. However, it is recommended that Transformation be reserved in few and far between cases, in order to maintain the integrity and value of the STLR process and assessment.

A group of ten to twenty faculty and assessment staff at UCO worked to create the STLR rubric, based on the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) sixteen Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (V.A.L.U.E.) rubrics (AAC&U, 2013). The V.A.L.U.E. rubrics were created by a group of around 200 faculty from across the U.S from all disciplines. UCO faculty worked side-by-side with the UCO Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness staff and Student Affairs staff to map the Central 6 rubric ratings and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to the AAC&U Value Rubrics. Within the three levels of each tenet, multiple criteria exist for a student to achieve each level (King, 2014; Kilbourne, 2015).

The STLR Rubric and Badge Levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenet</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
<th>NOT Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global:</strong></td>
<td>The student sees her or himself as a global citizen, positioned in a specific country but part of a greater whole.</td>
<td>The student is knowledgeable about global issues and welcomes interactions that challenge her to self-reflection about her place in the global future.</td>
<td>The student is beginning to understand her cultural self and engage with others in understanding cultures different than her own.</td>
<td>The student has a developing sense of her or himself as a global citizen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural:</strong></td>
<td>The student demonstrates well-developed traits that support her or his sense of multiculturalism, e.g., awareness of her or his cultural self, flexibility, adaptability, inclusivity, creativity, and self-reliance as she or he willingly engages with cultures different than her or his own.</td>
<td>The student has experimented some with getting outside of her or his country, through travel or study, and has had some insights about how knowledge about people across the globe helps her to better understand what goes on in the world.</td>
<td>The student is beginning to understand her or his home or cultural background informs the way she or he sees the social environment and others.</td>
<td>The student can sometimes articulate his positionality within the world community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health &amp; Wellness:</strong></td>
<td>The student demonstrates a holistic view of health and wellness (physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, environmental, financial, occupational, and social) and can articulate its meaning to others.</td>
<td>The student demonstrates commitment to care of self and others.</td>
<td>The student engages in activities that demonstrate physical balance, wellness, and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle.</td>
<td>The student exhibits behaviors that demonstrate a change in perspective in fostering and sustaining a healthy community and natural environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STLR Rubric and Badge Level Descriptions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Verschelden et. al, 2017)

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The STLR Rubric and Badge Levels (continued):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenet</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
<th>NOT Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td><em>The student can identify the leadership styles and philosophies of peers and effectively use this knowledge to create teams and workgroups.</em></td>
<td><em>The student articulates a personal philosophy of leadership.</em></td>
<td><em>The student may have never considered her or himself as a leader but is open to the potential and understands that each person has the ability to serve as a leader.</em></td>
<td><em>The student believes that she does not have the potential to serve as a leader and wants unwilling to explore the opportunities presented.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The student acknowledges that individuals may display leadership differently and recognizes that leadership is not a position or title but centers on the ability to influence the community.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research:
*The student has gone beyond mere ability to properly define the problem and identify correct methods of investigation.*
*Student uses proper methodology and tools at the matter of course starting point, then critically applies a meta-view of similar research to compare and contrast potential research design, selecting the best match to discover the answer who is seeking in the research.*

Creative Activities:
*Student displays a unique artistic vision—more than mere competent execution (although complete execution is required).*
*The artistic statement made in the work can be extended by the artist in a coherent description of the piece, its theme, and the intent in creating the piece.*

Creation Activities:
*Student begins to contextualize the research project with a disciplinary context and adds the search for relevant information.*
*The student asks more questions to frame both the problem and the hypothesis and considers a broader array of potential intervening variables.*
*For qualitative research, the student can simplify a rudimentary coding scheme to category responses.*
*The student works independently of instructor on at least some aspects of the research and takes care to ensure data integrity.*

More Results from Fall to Fall, STLR has been shown to raise retention and academic achievement both for the overall student population and the three sub-populations, to the tune of 13 percent in the three sub-populations and 19 percent in the non-target population. This data includes confidence intervals at 95 percent with statistical significance, conducted by the UCO Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (IR & IA) professional.

(Service Learning: The student is actively engaged in socially responsible behavior and in good dialogue beyond course markers. The student develops and articulates an informed perspective based on both theory and knowledge of the class content and service experience. The student’s ability to think critically about societal issues is evident and demonstrated through personal reflection.

Civic Engagement: The student articulates through personal experience and understanding of active citizenship in a democratic society.

Service Learning: The student expresses awareness of how his/her service experience contributes to understanding and awareness of core societal issues.

Civic Engagement: The student may become actively engaged in addressing and/or more core societal issues but does not completely make connections beyond course material.

Service Learning: The student expresses awareness of how his/her service experience contributes to understanding and awareness of core societal issues.

Civic Engagement: The student may become actively engaged in addressing one or more core societal issues but does not completely make connections beyond course material.

Civic Engagement: The student has developed a sense of responsibility for others and takes responsibility for his/her actions.

Civic Engagement: The student demonstrates an awareness of the application of the course material to practice outside the service-learning experience.

Civic Engagement: The student completes the required service-learning component of the class.

Civic Engagement: The student demonstrates active engagement or movement in civic life.

Civic Engagement: The student does not complete the required service-learning component of the class.

Civic Engagement: The student demonstrates active engagement or movement in civic life.

Civic Engagement: The student has not demonstrated active engagement or movement in civic life.

Research: The student has never done a research project that required the formulation of a hypothesis and the process of supporting or disproving the hypothesis.

Creative Activities: The student is a beggar at the college level and does not comprehend the creative process.

Creative Activities: The student is unable to combine technical skills with ideas of composition and creativity in order to fulfill an artistic vision.

(Verschelden et. al, 2017)

Results

The STLR process was piloted in the 2014-2015 academic year. STLR was soft-launched in Fall 2015 targeting freshmen students, with a STLR assignment in every section of the Success Central freshmen success course that approximately 67% of the incoming freshmen class take. STLR was launched to the entire campus population in Fall 2016, with a goal of bringing awareness of STLR to all students through the 2016-2017 academic year and moving forward. The ultimate goal of implementing STLR is to increase retention among all students, but particularly among three sub-populations: low socio-economic status, first generation, and under-represented minority students. From Fall to Fall, STLR has been shown to raise retention and academic achievement both for the overall student population and the three sub-populations, to the tune of 13 percent in the three sub-populations and 19 percent in the non-target population. This data includes confidence intervals at 95 percent with statistical significance, conducted by the UCO Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (IR & IA) professional.
In the breakdown provided, the UCO IR & IA staff provide info on low STLR and high STLR involvement. Low STLR involvement includes student participation at STLR event attendance only. High STLR involvement includes STLR experiences that included a more extensive STLR reflective artifact. UCO Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, John Barthell (2017) noted this is the first time he has seen this high of an impact on retention and achievement in decades.

(Scheideler, Hwang, & Wimmer, 2016)

*Includes confidence intervals at 95%.

**Target Population Definition: Low socio-economic status, first generation, underrepresented minorities. “Low STLR”: Engaged only through attending STLR-tagged events and automatically assigned lowest level of achievement (“exposure”); “High STLR”: Created a learning artifact assessed using STLR rubrics.

References


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