Assessment often feels like a Sisyphean task—rolling that assessment boulder up the hill, only to have it roll down again and again. You would think that after 24 years I would tire of it and, to be honest, there are days when I have, but even when the process is not working, I still get excited by the possibility of it; the “big” ideas around learning and how we can continue to get better and better at teaching because of it.
In fall 2022, we collected written and oral artifacts from students, via their instructors, to assess our General Education Goal of Effective Communication. You may be wondering, “What ever happened to that assessment?” or “Why haven’t we seen any recommendations from that assessment?” Well...

For over a year, we have been slicing and dicing the data to see if it reveals anything about our students’ attainment of the student learning outcomes in oral and written communication. Unfortunately, we have found little. Despite investing considerable time and energy into this college-wide assessment, the fact is that it simply was not fruitful. In hindsight, we should have realized that the small sample sizes were insufficient and adversely affected the data quality, especially the exceedingly small sample of oral artifacts.

We did learn that large-scale assessments that require faculty participation are difficult. Even if enough faculty volunteer at the time of the request, student attrition and actual participation reduce the sample size dramatically. We also learned that assessing students’ work by faculty outside of the discipline requires training, norming, and an enormous amount of time. Sometimes we learn what we should not do, and the recommendations are focused on the process of assessment rather than the improvement of student learning.

Even when these tasks seem insurmountable, we persist. We persist in our assessment endeavors because we believe that the continuous effort increases the likelihood of uncovering meaningful findings essential for the improvement of learning by:

1. Improving Educational Outcomes - Understanding how students learn enables us to develop more effective teaching methods and personalize learning experiences which will ultimately lead to improved student success.
2. Identifying Challenges and Barriers - Studying how students learn allows us to identify common challenges, misconceptions, and barriers that students encounter and to develop effective mechanisms to address these.
3. Promoting Equity – Understanding diverse learning needs and experiences supports efforts to create equitable educational opportunities for all students.
4. Meeting Accountability Requirements – Strong assessment practices can accurately gauge learning outcomes which, in turn, can positively affect high-level decision-making.
I don’t enjoy teaching Zoom classes. Blank, black screens reporting names like “rumba zumba,” chat responses such as “yeah” to complex questions, and students who don’t respond verbally when asked. Did any of us become teachers because we wanted this?

Still, I found myself teaching an OL (now OS) class last summer, Linear Algebra, because it’s my favorite class. I pre-recorded all my lectures, posted these lectures on Brightspace, and told the students that the class time would be devoted to solving problems. I couldn’t accept the thought of running a summer of podcasts, my students pretending to listen while doing, well, something else.

I enjoyed teaching the class! My students performed well on assessments! The Zoom sessions got social! Why? I think what happened is, I put lectures where they belong. I’m not criticizing lectures; lectures can move learning forward. If I lecture a lot in the course, the students who miss a day are far more disoriented when they return, so students get something out of the lecture.

But lectures need not happen in class. By accident, I put a lecture on Brightspace, where my students could decide to pay attention when they wanted, where they wanted, for as long as they wanted. They could stop my lectures when they wanted, and they could even choose how fast I talked (lots of students listen to videos at 2x speed). In other words, my students could play with the lecture.

We know that humans and many other species on Earth learn through play. Defining play can be difficult, but we know it includes autonomy and low-stakes consequences. What posted, pre-recorded videos offer is a chance for students to exercise autonomy over how they engage in lecture, and to do so without any negative consequences.
Pushing lectures out of my Zoom sessions allowed me to stop talking at my students (who, given the technological situation, had no need even to pretend to listen), and engage my students. I told my students to show up for class ready to play with linear algebra. We solved problems, we talked about how we solved them, we talked about what we experienced, what was hard, and what was confusing. I think learning happens much more naturally if students can simply practice with the material, make mistakes without consequences, feel free to try what they choose, surrounded by friends and colleagues who provide feedback, support, and humor. I think my students got to play during the Zoom sessions, and I didn’t have to force anything.

I could assess my students while they played with the material. My class sessions involved much more one-on-one discussions with students. There was a lot more feedback. We know that people get more engaged in environments that are social and include frequent, supportive feedback. Assessment in the class moved beyond quizzes and exams to what appeared to be a more mentoring experience. Students seemed less stressed about grades, perhaps because they understood better how the grade was connected to the progress of their learning.

All the students in that class listened to my pre-recorded videos, so those students got all the lectures anyway. However, moving lectures out of the class time allowed for assessment and active learning to become the dominant experiences of class time. When the class got more playful, the class became more social and engaging for me, too. I didn’t mind the OL environment so much.

My experiences appear applicable to in-person classes, too. I’m building more pre-recorded lectures for my in-person classes, so my students have more time to solve problems in class, and in the process explore, try, fail, talk, and play, in other words. For me, I can assess their learning with more resolution, spending more time with individual students or groups of students and experiencing how they engage.

We all know we should “lecture less.” But a lecture is an efficient method for exposing people to new material and, at its best, can be inspiring. Students need this exposure, they need our inspiration, and they need to see our enthusiasm for our fields. Maybe we don’t need less lecture, just less lecture in the classroom. We can put the lecture somewhere else and use the class time to focus on the core teaching work of active learning, assessment, and feedback.
ASSESSMENT READINGS
BY KATIE EDIGER


In terms of the general education studies for the Assessment Committee, we are about to release the final report for Effective Written and Oral Communication before the end of the Spring semester. The committee will also have available the final report for Inquiry and Analysis by the beginning of Fall 2024 for presentation at FDW. Finally, the committee has been working hard on our next study concerning Critical Thinking. After careful consideration, the committee has crafted a faculty survey to be completed during FDW Fall 2024 that will then be used as the basis for the study. We are looking forward to these exciting opportunities to learn institutional knowledge about our general education assessment practices!
In a past co-curricular assessment, the Career Center decided to survey Cosmetology students on the effectiveness of our mock interviews prior to students graduating. Since we learned so much from the responses, we decided to adopt this practice each semester for each new group of graduates. We also run an additional class presentation for the students in the second to last class on interviewing. Mock interviews occur during the final class. Our intention next semester is to increase the frequency of interviews to two sessions.

After the session and mock interviews, we ask students to complete an anonymous survey. We conduct the interviews in-person and administer the paper survey immediately afterward to get feedback from the students’ perspective. It is primarily a simple “yes or no” format with room for feedback and suggestions.

We have developed a series of questions to ask students for the practice interviews, specific to the field of Cosmetology. Their answers are compiled into a document and we then provide suggestions and edits to improve the responses for their actual interviews. Students are then encouraged to schedule an additional session with one of our our team to provide additional support.
FROM THE LIBRARY

This semester the library piloted an assessment with an online asynchronous Child Development class to teach students about how to determine if a website is reliable. While the library regularly works with in-person classes and remote synchronous classes, we have not created many materials with the intention of having them used asynchronously. The assessment was developed using the platform LibWizard, and students were prompted to watch short videos or review websites and then answer related questions.

To get a better understanding of what students knew before they did the tutorial, we had students answer 3 pretest questions. We also asked them 3 questions at the end of the training to see if students had gained a better understanding of the material after taking the tutorial. The assessment was designed to allow students to retake questions that they answered incorrectly, with the goal of having them learn the material. This semester, we only got 6 respondents which we didn’t feel was a large enough sample to analyze. That said, even piloting it with that small number of respondents showed us trends and gave us information that we will use to reorganize our pre and post test questions. We’re excited about refining this assessment and trying it out with a larger group of students either over the summer or during the fall semester.

Submitted by Katie Ediger, Library Assessment Committee Liaison
FROM THE HUMANITIES

The Humanities, Art, Music & Foreign Languages Department has suffered some assessment setbacks during the Fall 2023 academic year. We need to spend some time discussing and determining what assessment means for our entire department as well as the approach we should take, which will most likely require us to begin next Fall with a brand new 4-Phase Study that accommodates the two major sticking points within our department:

1.) Many of the courses we offer across the humanities disciplines are taught by one instructor. As we all know, the focus of a departmental assessment study should include anonymity and not run the risk of singling out any individual faculty member. After all, the goal is to determine how students are learning, not point fingers.

2.) The impressive variety of disciplines within our department and their respective SLOs make for difficulties in determining a single outcome on which to focus and study. One example of this is trying to reconcile the applied study courses (courses which involve an applied performance or creative product) - such as any of the Visual Arts, Piano, Music Theory, Music Theater, French, and Spanish courses – with general education and survey-type courses – such as Humanities, Philosophy, Religion, Logic, or any of the Introduction courses.

One possible approach to these issues is to broaden our assessment perspective and begin to ask “bigger picture” questions, as opposed to trying to find common SLOs between our disciplines and “force-fit” them into a study. For example, determining one or two broad, common outcomes, in which the expectation would be reasonable and demonstrable competency, for students who have completed their Humanities/Fine Arts requirements towards graduation. Put another way – what do we as a department expect students to be able to do upon successful completion of their requirements within our department?

(Cont. pg 9)
FROM THE HUMANITIES CONTINUED

One final thought: if we were to undertake the approach suggested above, we would have to spend time determining those potential one or two common department-as-a-whole outcomes. Certainly not an impossible task, but a formidable one.

If I am fortunate enough to remain our department’s liaison for the next academic year, I look forward to having these discussions with my colleagues, as well as sharing our discussions with my assessment team members!

Submitted by Ritch Keitel, Humanities' Assessment Committee Liaison

FROM MATHEMATICS

The Math Department has been interested in the question: what are the best intervention methods for struggling students? We attempted to tackle this question with our 4-phase assessment study. We specifically targeted a skill that was a pre-requisite for Math 125 (statistics). We assessed student learning after different kinds of interventions such as math videos and Math Center tutoring. When we completed the study we ran into some “hiccups,” and did not get a clear answer to the question. We are now taking a different approach to answering this question. We are in the process of creating a survey to ask students what they do when they have trouble solving a problem. The survey should provide them with options such as: watching a math video provided by MyOpenMath or your instructor, seeking math tutoring, messaging/asking the instructor, or skipping the problem (come back to it later if you can). We also will ask them why they chose this option when they study. We hope to look at the results along with: the student’s grade in the course, the level of course they are taking, the topics they have trouble solving, and the modality of the course. Hopefully, we will get some interesting data to analyze. It could lead us to potential correlations regarding the types of interventions that students take. It also could generate more questions, with a need to seek more data.

Submitted by Maeve Massini, Math Assessment Committee Liaison
ECTJ: English 102: Assessing Students’ Ability to Construct a Lengthy Argument that Uses Sound Reasoning, Evidence, and Analysis

English 102
The 4-Phase Assessment Project, which began in fall 2022, assesses how well students are handling the progression from English 101 to English 102, where students move from instructor-identified sources to sources researched independently by students and use these sources to support their arguments. The goal of this assessment project is to assess and subsequently improve SLO 8 of the English 102 syllabus, which asks students to “construct a lengthy argument that uses sound reasoning, evidence, and analysis.” Here is the timeline of this project:

Fall 2022: English 102 instructors submitted student research papers (names removed) that reflected high, medium, and low performance on SLO 8. The 102 course mentor, Dr. Anne Close, collected the artifacts and assembled sets of these papers, with a mix of (unlabeled) high, medium, and low performance.

Spring 2023: English 102 Instructors participated in the initial norming step, where sets of student research papers (names removed) from fall 2022 were blindly rated, according to the English 102 research paper rubric. Participating instructors entered their feedback on a survey, and responses were collected and categorized by the English 102 course mentor, Dr. Anne Close.

Fall 2023: The English 102 course mentor and instructors met to discuss the ratings in general and identified the need to support faculty and students in their pursuit of SLO 8 through the collection of artifacts and resources.

Spring 2024: The collection of artifacts and resources phase has begun. The English 102 mentor created a survey on which English 102 instructors further articulated the differentiation among high, medium, and low performance on SLO 8 and also uploaded any techniques, exercises, and/or examples of student work that have been effective in addressing SLO 8. Here is the link to the survey: https://forms.office.com/r/5YDS9MEkFF

Fall 2024 (Tentative): The English 102 course mentor will collect and categorize the results of the Spring 2024 survey. The 2024-2025 academic year will be spent on creating resource guides to improve SLO 8 for both faculty and students.

Submitted by Ana King, ECTJ Liaison
FROM EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES

Exciting Spring 2024 updates from the Education and Human Development Department include:

--In September, we submitted our Year 2 Interim Report to The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as part of our accreditation. In late November, we received the news that our report was accepted!

--We have hit a roadblock with our four-phase study and are currently “stuck” in Phase 2. The overarching goal is to align design to learning for one of our endorsement programs. We have been juggling back and forth between two different assessments to use. Some issues surrounding one of the two plans include alignment to SLOs, only one section of the course being offered, and the inability to use the same assessment in other courses. The issues around the other option involve the varying grade levels that our endorsement students teach and the different programs used for lesson planning. Conversations continue to happen and we hope to have a solidified plan by the end of the Spring 2024 semester.

--Lastly, a few members of our department have been working on the district-wide NAEYC Curriculum Revision Project team. This team is updating the Master Syllabi for our AAS courses. This includes course objectives and SLOs and aligning them with the 2020 NAEYC Higher Education Accreditation Standards. After the master syllabi have been approved by all the Child Development faculty, the courses will be put through the PACC process.

Submitted by Madi Johnson, Education and Human Development and Family Studies Assessment Committee Liaison
FROM SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In order to look at a broad cross-section of courses offered across different disciplines within the Social and Behavioral Sciences department, we had originally planned to assess three different SLOs from three different courses: Soc 201, a History course, and INTDSP 101. The plan was to sample student work from each course and assess these artifacts against the SLOs.

However, in consultation with the Assessment Committee, we identified a few limitations with this study: 1) assessing course SLOs won't yield meaningful insights into department-level SLOs (which would need to be defined); 2) a limited number of faculty teach sections of each course, which may impact findings (only 1 history faculty teaching HIST 111 and HIST 112); and 3) the sampling of student work would be laborious and time-intensive.

Upon further reflection, we decided to revise our assessment study to focus on critical thinking across disciplines within the department by posing the following question: Q) How many opportunities do students have to engage in critical thinking in our courses?

Benefits of this revised approach include 1) opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue across disciplines within the department, 2) the study results won't rely on variations in student work samples (student work won't be sampled), 3) the study may yield insight into potential departmental SLOs, and 4) this study will complement the upcoming Gen Ed study of critical thinking.

Our next step will be to finalize a plan for implementing this study in FA24. We will accomplish this at our May department meeting.

Submitted by Diego Baez, Social and Behavioral Sciences Assessment Committee Liaison
During the Spring 2024 semester, the Physical Science and Engineering department started working in phase 4 of our 4-Phase Assessment. In the Spring 2023 semester, we learned that many of the students in our basic-level chemistry classes were not prepared for the Algebra component of the course. Instead of just focusing on the students who scored poorly on the algebra pre-assessment administered at the beginning of the semester, we decided to focus a little deeper on the algebra in the course.

We set up tutoring hours for our Introductory Chemistry and Physics classes in the Science Center for the Spring of 2024. We were able to work with Jennifer Brody and have specific tutors dedicated to these classes. The tutors composed two different worksheets:

1. Conversions
2. Solving a formula for a specific variable.

At the beginning of the semester, a flyer was sent to students in Chem 121 and Physics 131 with the contact information for each tutor (specific hours, zoom link, email, etc). Students were required to attend at least two tutoring sessions to complete these worksheets. To ensure attendance students were assigned participation points to be counted as a part of their participation grade at the end of the semester. Our goal is to increase students’ confidence in these skills as well as increase awareness of our Science Center.

At midterm, the Science Center reported that there had been an increase in Physics students which is very promising. We plan to continue phase 4 for fall 2024 and spring 2025.

Submitted by Leah Page, Physical Sciences and Engineering Liaison
MEMBERS

ACADEMIC & DEPARTMENT LIAISONS

- Art, Humanities, Music, and World Languages: Ritch Keitel
- Automotive: Vacant
- Biology: Harry Sdralis
- Business / CIS:
- Cosmetology: Vacant
- English, Communication, Theater, Journalism: Ana King
- Education & Human Development and Family Studies: Madi Johnson
- Library: Katie Ediger
- Mathematics: Maeve Masini
- Physical Science and Engineering: Leah Page
- Social and Behavioral Sciences: Diego Baez

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chair: Jennifer Asimow (Education & Human Development and Family Studies)
- Vice Chair: Maeve Masini (Mathematics)
- Chair of Gen Ed Assessment: Brandon Bumstead (English, Communication, Theater, Journalism)
- Secretary / Archivist: Madi Johnson (Education and Human Development and Family Studies)
- Chair of Co-Curricular Assessment:
- Research Analyst: Andrew Kerr (Mathematics)

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO JOIN THE COMMITTEE:
VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR EMAIL MADI JOHNSON AT MJOHNSON815@CCC.EDU