



Assessment Committee

Annual Report

Fall 2013-Spring 2014

Introduction

AY 2013-2014 was a year filled with hard work and new beginnings. This report summarizes and comments on the activities and achievements of the Assessment Committee. Attention is paid to faculty participation in this important activity of the college. Tasks, results and challenges are presented. Particular emphasis is given to the level and range of faculty involvement in our work and our broadening role within assessment activities at the Department, Unit, and District level.



Participation Data

These data are presented to give a sense of the scale and scope of faculty and staff involvement in the regular work of the HWC Assessment Committee. Comparative data is presented from 2010 onwards so that this weekly committee activity can also be viewed in the longer-term context of a sustained, committed culture of assessment at Harold Washington College.

Activity	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013
Committee Meetings	12	14	12	13
Lowest Weekly Attendance	9	10	11	9
Highest Weekly Attendance	18	17	16	14
<i>Average Weekly Meeting Attendance</i>	15	14	14	12

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Number of Departments and Offices represented	11	8 (9)*	8 (9)*	8
Regular contributing departments were: Art, Applied Science, English, Library, Mathematics, Physical Science, Humanities and ELL/WL Faculty.				
Activity	Spring 2011	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Spring 2014
Committee Meetings	12	14	14	14
Lowest Weekly Attendance	11	9	10	10
Highest Weekly Attendance	14	16	18*	13
Average Weekly Meeting Attendance	13	13	13	12
Number of Departments and Offices represented	11	8 (9)*	9 (10)*	9
Regular contributing departments and offices were: Art, Applied Science, English, Library, Mathematics, Office of Instruction, Physical Science, Humanities and ELL/WL. We also had a new representative from the Social Sciences Department and administration.				

We have maintained a strong membership and have added one new member this spring, Cynthia Cerrantano from the Social Sciences Department. Nearly all of the new faculty members who joined the committee over the past two years have remained active members and increased their roles and responsibilities, as this full report will note. We lost one regular member of the committee this spring but gained participation from 2 new members. These participation data are indicators of a vibrant, committed and sustained group of faculty regularly involved in our assessment work. We continue to be unable to get a representative from the Business Department and the Biology Department. We were happy to see the regular attendance of Dr. Banks and John Bragelman from the Office of Instruction indicating our active support from HWC administration.

Key Activities and Issues Fall 2013

There were six major areas of activity during the fall semester, which were predominantly handled through our effective subcommittee structure. Key officers were charged with heading up subcommittee work and taking responsibility for outputs and outcomes from these diverse groups of committee members. This has proven to be a very effective methodology for sustaining a complex and demanding range of tasks that are managed through our one-hour communal meeting. This academic year again saw increasing pressure placed on this regular committee meeting and much work continued outside committee and at regularly scheduled additional times. The leadership met regularly both as a group as well as in smaller teams. The Unit Level Assessment Liaisons met regularly before the regularly scheduled assessment meeting. The importance of regular meetings and strong faculty dialogue and critique will be returned to in the conclusions to this report.

The six key work activities this semester were: continuation and support of Unit Level Assessment Activities; organizing and gathering data for our 2013 Oral Communication assessment; finalizing the report and planning for the dissemination of our 2012 Human Diversity Assessment Data; researching and planning for the assessment of Information Literacy; updating the website and 7-year assessment plan; and, working with District colleagues on broader assessment issues.

As the end of the semester approached, Michael Heathfield received word that his sabbatical request had been granted. That meant that the committee needed to find new leadership and elect new officers. Jennifer Asimow stepped up from her position as Vice-Chair and offered to serve as an Interim Chair for one semester. That left the position of Vice-Chair vacant. Michael and Jennifer approached Dr. Ray Tse, who had been a regular member of the committee for 3 semesters, and asked him to step into the Vice-Chair position. He readily agreed and the committee approved all of these changes with acclimation.

Unit Level Assessment

Unit Level Assessment activities continued during the fall with a team of three faculty specifically charged with this task. This is managed through academic departments with Carrie Nepstad representing Applied Sciences, Paul Wandless representing Art and Architecture and Erica McCormack representing the Humanities and Music Department. The college did not renew nor provide support for the Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator position previously charged with organizing and leading the Unit Level Assessment activities. This will be discussed later in this report.

The Discipline Liaisons continued to meet weekly prior to the larger committee meeting time. Each of the liaisons broadened and deepened their assessment work by developing new protocols, collecting additional data, recruiting faculty participation from their respective departments, and disseminating meaningful data for improving student learning amongst their department faculty members. The liaisons also wrote a proposal to speak at the Assessment Fair, which was subsequently accepted, at Moraine Valley Community College about their Unit Level Assessment work.

Dissemination

Under the leadership of Jennifer Asimow, an Assessment Times and an Assessment Times for Students was produced and disseminated during the 12th to 14th week of the semester. The Dissemination sub-committee also produced a poster outlining the Effective Writing Assessment recommendations that was printed in vibrant colors and displayed throughout the college. Work began on the creation of documents to disseminate Human Diversity Data.

Data Analyst

Phillip Vargas worked alongside Michael Heathfield most of the semester refining the interpretation of the data results from the Human Diversity Assessment. He also began consulting with each of the Department Liaisons, supporting their work with deeper data analysis and processing.

Key Activities and Issues Spring 2014

The spring semester started off with big changes to the committee leadership. As Michael Heathfield stepped down from his position as the Chair and embarked on his sabbatical, Jennifer Asimow and Ray Tse stepped in as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. We added a fifth key subcommittee to our regular four during the spring semester: Dissemination (Effective Writing and Human Diversity), Information Literacy Assessment planning, Discipline Assessment, analysis of our Oral Communication Assessment Data and (new) Core Documents, focused on updating the Assessment Calendar and the Committee Charge. The college administered the CCSSE in April under the direction of George Calisto and the Office of Instruction. In previous years, the CCSSE was administered via the Assessment Committee. This relieved the committee of some expected work during the semester, but created other challenges that will be discussed later in this report.

Unit Level Assessment

In conjunction with Jennifer Asimow, the Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons decided to streamline their regular reports by submitting a bi-weekly update on their work progress directly to Dean Sarrafian using a Google Docs form. This was decided as a stopgap measure due to the absence of a Unit Level Assessment Coordinator. It was also decided to restructure the relationship of Unit Level Assessment to the larger college Assessment Committee.

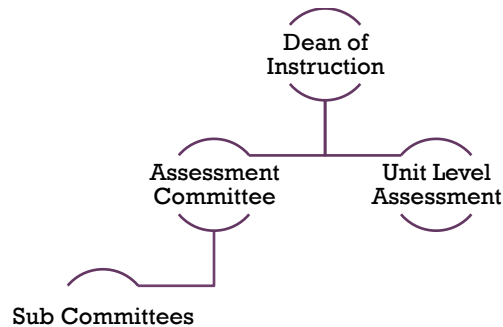


Figure 1 Assessment Relationships

The new structure allows for autonomy and separation for Unit Level Assessment from the work of the larger committee while functioning alongside and within the larger umbrella of college-wide assessment initiatives. This clarifies the chain of communication necessary for support and feedback for the Discipline Liaisons as well as a clear structure for oversight of these activities. In addition, the Discipline Liaisons wrote a new charge that outlines this new structure, their work roles, and responsibilities. This charge will be added to the Assessment Committee Charge as an addendum. (Unit Level Assessment Charge - Appendix A)

In March, Erica McCormack and Carrie Nepstad spoke at the Assessment Fair at Moraine Valley College. Their session was well received and well attended. They also spent the rest of the fair attending other sessions about assessment. They brought back interesting and pertinent materials and presented those to the larger committee.

Applied Sciences Unit Level Assessment

Aggregate data collected from the fall writing assessment was examined by Phil Vargas who made recommendations based on his analysis. Initial findings revealed that of the 192 writing samples assessed all areas of writing, as defined by the rubric, need substantial support. The Department met in order to review the data, and discuss the implications of the findings. It was decided to revise the rubric and add an additional performance level in order to collect more nuanced data regarding student writing. In addition, course numbers and course delivery (face-to-face, distance, hybrid) was added to the rubric in order to compare writing skills in terms of experience in the program, and/or method of delivery. The department decided to target specific courses and specific writing assignments across the disciplines in the fall 2014 semester. In conjunction with the rubric revision process, the writing website was revised to reflect faculty needs. Meaningful resources have been added to the website in order to support faculty as they assess student writing.

Art and Architecture Unit Level Assessment

Work began on the creation of a new assessment for ART 196 - Beginning Ceramics in conjunction with Jessica Bader. The Art 144 Perspective Assessment was re-administered in March with improvements learned from the previous two administrations of the assessment. Revisions were made to the original rubric based on what they learned and the new rubric will show how prior art experiences influence students' level of command in the expected areas. A new Observational Art 131 Drawing Assessment also ran in April. The Art program has already learned much from their Unit Level Assessment practices. They have developed a shared lexicon so all faculty in the assessed courses use the same language to eliminate student confusion around shared vocabulary. They learned that students who have not taken the two-dimensional design class (Art 144) before the Beginning Drawing course (Art 131), might not have the basic established skill-set that would have been learned to be more successful 2D Area Courses.

Humanities and Music

Assessment in the Music Program grew this semester. It included more faculty input and more interaction from adjunct faculty. Data was collected for a second time from the Music Theory Assessment, which will be compared to the data collected in fall 2012. Changes were made to the Music performance assessment rubric and juried evaluation form to make them more user-friendly. The music faculty want to be sure that the assessment accurately reflects what they thinks students can demonstrate when they leave the college with their AFA. Rubrics were shared with full and part time faculty and a norming session was scheduled. Faculty used a music performance on YouTube to practice using the rubric. Data is being collected through the end of the semester.

The music program also began collecting data for the Music Performance Juried Exam. The new rubric was developed to include detailed descriptors for expectations. The rubric was also created for multiple uses – from the beginning of the program to the end – and as a grading tool for those who choose to use it that way.

Core Documents

This new subcommittee focused on updating the Committee Charge and the Assessment Calendar.

Data Analyst

Phillip Vargas focused on analyzing the data from the fall 2013 Oral Communication Assessment. In addition, Phil worked with all of the Discipline Liaisons to analyze the Unit Level Assessment.

Phil also wrote a proposal for him and Jennifer Asimow to speak at the fall IUPUI Assessment Conference about the Human Diversity Assessment.

Dissemination

This subcommittee was headed by Jennifer Asimow and took on a number of tasks during this semester. Regular communication began between Jen Asimow and Nikole Muzzy, Director of Marketing in order to ease some of the heretofore problems the committee has experienced with visual and graphic capabilities. As the work of the committee becomes more publically accessible and widely available the committee needs continued support to create professional looking and appropriately branded publications. Three main ideas have bloomed from the data garnered by the Human Diversity Assessment.

1. The creation of a series of slides presented on the LCD screens throughout the college highlighting both supportive and “food-for-thought” comments written by students about the Human Diversity Assessment.
2. The creation of a colorful flyer that summarizes the most salient data from the report designed for all members of the HWC community.
3. Additional marketing for the college based on the results of the assessment via local newspapers and interviews.

Currently, the quotes for the slides have been chosen and approved by the committee. They have been sent to Nikole Muzzy so they can be turned into slides. The goal of the committee is to have these slides available by open registration in the fall.

The flyer was written by Jennifer Asimow and edited by the committee. The goal of the committee is to have these flyers available in the fall and to produce enough copies so they can remain available as a marketing tool over the next several semesters.

In addition, an Assessment Times and an Assessment Times for Students was produced under the able leadership of Ray Tse and laid out by John Kieraldo.

District-Wide Assessment Committee

Regular meetings of the District-Wide Assessment Committee continued this year under the new leadership of Jonathon Keiser. Time was spent investigating potential additional capabilities of Blackboard. Through a rigorous review process and two Bb presentations the committee

recommended an investment in the Outcomes Assessment Program. Based on this recommendation, the District is adding that capability to our Blackboard sites next year.

Much of the District-Wide Committee time is spent supporting one another via shared experiences and expertise. Although this meeting is *in addition* to all of the other time dedicated to assessment work, these meetings are important for building intercollegiate dialogue, support, and connections amongst committee leadership at the seven colleges.

Conclusions

We knew changes were coming for the leadership of the committee in fall 2014, so the committee chose to hold elections earlier than usual this spring. Carrie Nepstad was elected as the new Chair, John Kieraldo as the new Vice-Chair, and Jeffrey Swigart as the returning Secretary. Phillip Vargas was also re-elected as the Data Analyst for the coming year. This new leadership team is ideal as the overlap of two returning members can help support the new Chair and Vice-Chair. We are delighted that Carrie Nepstad is returning as the Chair, as she previously served in this position from 2005-2007 and John Kieraldo is stepping into the Vice-Chair position as he has not only been a member of the committee for several years but has taken on greater leadership roles in committee work recently.

As in years past, there was a promise of administrative support and attendance at the Assessment Committee meetings. This continues to be a challenge as attendance at the meetings is inconsistent and it is a struggle to maintain continuity under these circumstances. When an administrator is able to come, their feedback and support is priceless. Ideally, regular attendance by an administrator should be supported by his/her direct supervisor and could then be made a priority of that position.

The ever-expanding role and workload of the Assessment Committee continues to present challenges. The committee decided to clarify the roles of the Discipline Liaisons and the relationship between the Unit Level Assessment team and the larger Assessment Committee. This delineation of work will provide a strong framework for ongoing assessment work at all levels of the college. As Unit Level Assessment gains momentum throughout the college, department member buy-in, continued administrative support and department chair support will strengthen the process and embed it in all areas and levels of the college.

A challenge that should be noted and considered was the loss of the Coordinator Role in Unit Level Assessment. As Unit Level Assessment continues to grow, the responsibilities associated with leading this charge and supporting the Department Liaisons should *not* fall on the shoulders of the Assessment Committee Chair. The committee would like to renew our request for this

position to be funded and supported by the Office of Academic Affairs. Until that time, the Discipline Liaisons will continue to report directly to the Dean of Instruction via bi-weekly electronic reports.

Additional meeting time continues to be an effective strategy for getting work completed. The Discipline Liaisons meet regularly as does the committee leadership. The Chair has also been meeting regularly with various members of the committee in an effort to minimize time spent in committee meeting time on small tasks and to maximize time spent in sub-committees, where much of the work is completed.

We continue to struggle with producing professional looking publications as this work tends to fall on committee members who do not have the expertise to construct this level of graphic design. The committee was hopeful when presented with the help and support of the Director of Marketing for the college. Unfortunately, the level of support we had hoped for did not emerge, as it is clear that this one person is very busy with other, more pressing tasks both at the college and the district level. This is not an indictment of any one person; it is simply a comment about how and where we are spending our time. We will need to develop a range of new solutions to resolve this issue which is certain to continue to grow in importance.

An additional challenge related to the above is the *turnaround time* required to create meaningful reports from the assessment data for faculty and the great HWC community. The importance of Phillip Vargas' work cannot be exaggerated here. His contribution to the process has decreased turnaround time exponentially; however report writing, and disseminating information continues to be difficult at best. For example, we are currently in the process of approving flyers and reports on the Human Diversity Assessment that took place in 2012. We are now in 2014. This time lag, although shorter than it used to be, is a constant struggle. The question remains about the usefulness of information that is 2+ years old?

The administration of the CCSSE via the Office of Research and Planning relieved some of the workload of committee members, primarily the chair, but presented other challenges. In years past, the CCSSE was managed and administered by the Assessment Committee with support from the Office of Research and Planning. This year, the roles were reversed and the Office of Research and Planning conducted the CCSSE. The Assessment Committee experienced some pushback and disappointment from college faculty in the way that the CCSSE was administered. In years past, the CCSSE oversampled enough courses that we were able to make the administration of the survey voluntary. Faculty at HWC are not accustomed to losing teaching time to outside requirements and resent being told they "have to". We encourage the administration to use this experience as a learning opportunity as the Assessment Committee

does not want to have to rebuild the goodwill that it has engendered over the years amongst fellow faculty.

The following concern is taken directly from last year's Assessment Report as it continues to be a challenge this year.

"Perhaps the biggest unresolved challenge we have faced this academic year also relates to our increasing roles and workloads but speaks more directly to more administrative and fiscal issues. As our work increases and embeds itself more directly and overtly in the regular work of academic departments, we need to revisit the current funding strategies for our assessment work. The special assignment process has proved to be vulnerable, at times unreliable, and an administratively complicated process not best suited to such expansive and consistent assessment responsibilities and functions. HWC administration has fought hard to win strong fiscal support for our assessment activities, yet the manner in which we practically fund the work is a system too vulnerable to uncontrollable forces. These forces have delayed scheduled work, changed staffing arrangements, timescales and certainly impacted deliverables. These are significant unintended consequences of a system designed for special assignments rather than those that are in fact ordinary, expected and consistent functions for some faculty and can clearly be seen as core college activities. We need to find better ways to maintain consistent fiscal support for assessment work that reduce some of the vagaries of our current special assignment administrative system. Apparently, the fiscal total of our assessment work comes close to approaching the equivalent of (more than) three full-time faculty. Our current system of payment and accountability does not serve us well, is not efficient, and creates too much unnecessary managerial and administrative work."(Heathfield, 2013).

The strength of the HWC Assessment Committee continues to lie in our robust membership, our dedication to improving student learning, and the administrative support from the college President and the Office of Instruction. We are all very aware that we continue to be leaders in the District in our assessment efforts due to the unparalleled support shown to the leadership of the committee as well as each and every member.

It should be noted that the majority of the committee members come to the weekly meetings because they choose to be a part of this important work. The committee would not be where it is today if it weren't for the active participation of these committee members. Committee time is a happy time where academic dialogues about teaching and learning take place and all members are respected and valued.

APPENDIX A

ADDENDUM TO THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE CHARGE (2014)

The HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee is charged with developing, supporting, and expanding a learning-focused, evidence-based campus culture within departments, across disciplines and units, beyond the individual course level.

The Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons, in consultation with the Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator and their own department faculty, formulate and approve specific unit-level student learning outcomes within the department and then construct and implement an assessment of student learning as it relates to those outcomes. The goal is to improve student learning.

Relationship of the HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee to the Harold Washington College (HWC) Assessment Committee

The Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons and Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator comprise a subcommittee of the Harold Washington College (HWC) Assessment Committee. The Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee reports directly to the Dean of Instruction. The goal of the HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee is to include at least one liaison per HWC department.

The Unit-Level Assessment Liaison charge is an addendum to the HWC Assessment Committee charge. Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons serve as voting members of the HWC Assessment Committee (HWCAC) and use the services of the Assessment Research Analyst to interpret assessment data.

Responsibilities of Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator (3 hours release time)

1. Requirements
 - a. Appointed by the HWCAC Chair in consultation with Department Chairs and Dean of Instruction
 - b. Preferred: prior experience serving on HWCAC and/or Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee
2. Duties
 - a. Attend regular HWCAC meetings
 - b. Organize and facilitate HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee meetings
 - c. Report to the Dean of Instruction on Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons' progress through the six stages of the assessment process.
 - d. Provide subcommittee updates to the HWCAC Secretary for inclusion in the HWCAC minutes.
 - e. Support liaison work in selecting coherent units of assessment (this may include reviewing drafts, being CC'd on emails, attending a department meeting, etc.)
 - f. Consult with and mentor faculty to utilize assessment results to improve student learning
3. Deliverables
 - a. Submit updates twice a month to the Dean of Instruction
 - b. Work with Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons to create a master calendar for unit-level assessments
 - c. Work with Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons to disseminate results of unit-level assessments

- d. Write annual written report of Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee work submitted to the Dean of Instruction
- e. Organize annual presentation at late spring HWCAC meeting

Responsibilities of Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons (3 hours release time)

1. Requirements
 - a. Appointed by the HWCAC Chair in consultation with Department Chairs and Dean of Instruction
2. Duties
 - a. Attend regular HWCAC meetings
 - b. Attend HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee meetings
 - c. Follow the stages of the HWC Unit-Level Assessment process.
 - d. Provide regular reports of assessment activity to the Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator and their department
 - e. Select, in consultation with department faculty, coherent units of assessment at the department or discipline levels (beyond the individual classroom)
 - f. Design and sustain, in consultation with department faculty, a working plan for assessment, using the six stages of cyclical assessment.
 - g. Consult with and mentor faculty to utilize assessment results to improve student learning
3. Deliverables
 - a. Submit updates twice a month to the Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator
 - b. Design and maintain assessment calendar for unit-level assessment cycles within the department
 - c. Disseminate results of unit-level assessments
 - d. Write annual summary report or reflection of Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee work, submitted to the Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator
 - e. Participate, in any format appropriate to the specific unit-level assessment project, in annual presentation at late spring HWCAC meeting.

Means of Success

The HWC Unit-Level Assessment Subcommittee understands their central activity to be engagement in a comprehensive process that is ongoing, systematic, structured, and sustainable. The members of this Unit-Level Assessment process (henceforth referred to as the “Unit-Level Assessment Team”) include the HWC Unit-Level Assessment Liaison, the HWC Unit-Level Assessment Coordinator, and faculty within the liaison’s department). The HWC Unit-Level Assessment process involves the following six stages:

- 1) **Department Buy-In and Outcome Definition**
In consultation with the Unit-Level Assessment Team, the unit of assessment is selected and defined. Unit-level assessment looks beyond the individual course level and therefore includes A) multiple sections of one course, B) a series of courses, or C) a degree program.

The Unit-Level Assessment Team formulates and approves specific unit-level student learning outcomes.

- 2) **Assessment Research and Design**
The Unit-Level Assessment Team will find, review, or create tools. The Unit-Level Assessment Team will then create or decide on a tool (such as a rubric or test) with the express purpose of assessing the specific unit-level student learning outcomes.
- 3) **Pilot Assessment Tools and Processes**
Faculty volunteers and a small number of student sections pilot any assessment tool and process so that when the full assessment is used we have minimized potential errors and anticipated logistical and methodological challenges.
Once the Unit-Level Assessment Team decides on a tool, a calendar for the current assessment cycle will be drafted and shared with all members of the Unit-Level Assessment Team to ensure continuous progress toward its implementation.
Members of the Unit-Level Assessment Team will share their work periodically with the rest of the department.
Liaisons may choose to seek input from the full HWC Assessment Committee about pilot assessment tools and processes.
- 4) **Administer Specific Assessment**
The Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons will design the methodology for administration of the assessment. They will recruit faculty and sections and conduct the assessment process. It is important to ensure that the assessment is accessible to all students.
- 5) **Data Analysis**
Assessment data are collected and organized by the Unit-Level Assessment Liaison, in consultation with other members of the Unit-Level Assessment Team and with the HWCAC's Assessment Research Analyst. The analysis is coordinated by the Unit-Level Assessment Liaison.
- 6) **Supporting Evidence-Based Change**
A broad range of techniques will be used to disseminate findings and encourage dialogue and action to improve student learning.
The Unit-Level Assessment Liaison will document the process by which evidence-based changes (such as changes to policy, curriculum, sequencing, prerequisites, and teaching practices) are made to support student learning.
The final part of this stage also includes a review of the specific student learning outcomes under investigation and the continuation of the assessment process by returning to Step One. Unit-Level

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Assessment is a faculty-driven cycle of inquiry that includes the collection of assessment data, which is examined and then utilized in order to make evidence-based decisions to improve student learning outcomes.