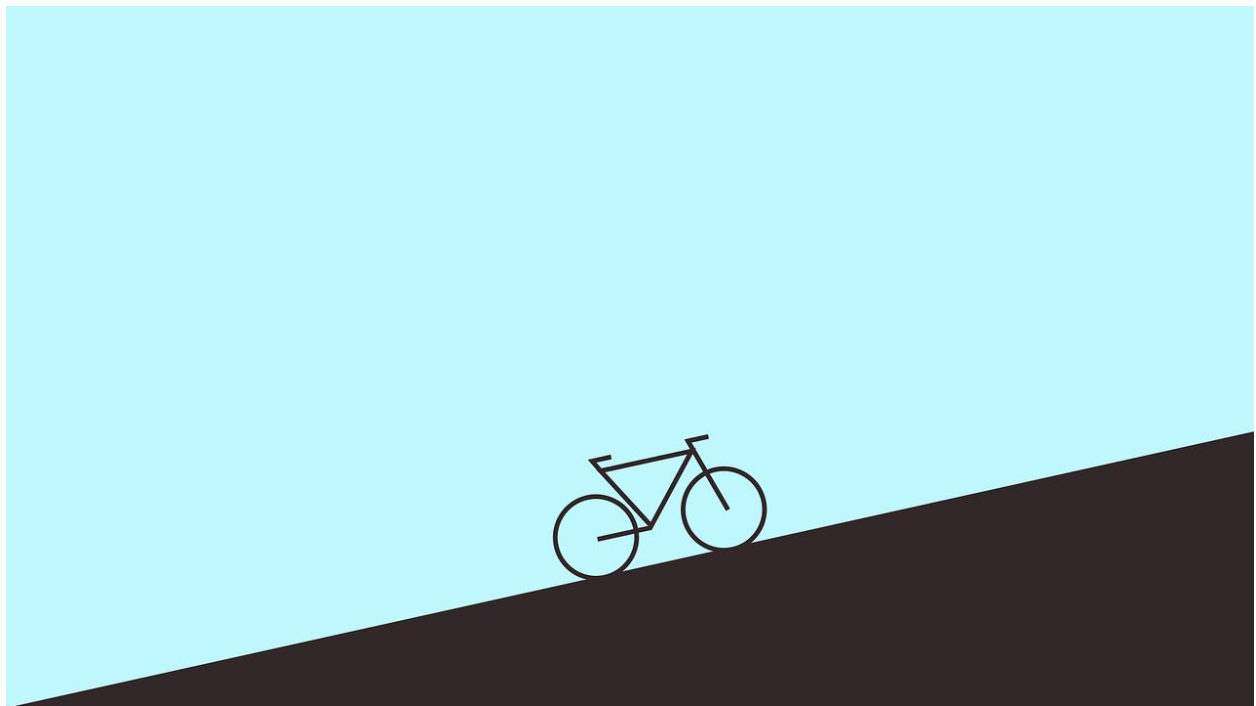


What a ride! An annual report of the HWC Assessment Committee for Fall 2017 through Spring 2018

[Harold Washington College Assessment Committee](http://www.ccc.edu/hwcassessment)

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(Picture by Ranjith Siji via Pixabay)

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Committee Membership

Executive Committee

- Chair: Carrie Nepstad, Social and Applied Science
- Vice Chair Unit-Level Assessment: Erica McCormack, Humanities and Music
- Vice Chair General Education: Jeffrey Swigart, Mathematics
- Secretary (Spring 2018 Only): Yev Lapik, Biology
- Secretary (Fall 2017 Only): Jeffrey Swigart, Mathematics
- Research Analyst: Phillip Vargas, Physical Science
- Research Analyst: Fernando Miranda-Mendoza
- Research Analyst (Fall 2017 Only): Sarah Kakumanu, Mathematics

Coordinators

- Program Assessment: Paul Wandless, Art and Architecture
- Online Learning: Jennifer Asimow, Social and Applied Science

Unit-Level Assessment Liaisons

- Art and Architecture: Paul Wandless
- Biology (Fall 2017 Only): Bara Sarraj
- Biology (Spring 2018 Only): Aigerim Bijelic
- Business and CIS: Bral Spight
- English, Speech, and Theatre: Amy Rosenquist
- Humanities and Music: David Richardson
- Library: Todd Heldt
- Mathematics: Camelia Salajean
- Physical Science: Allan Wilson
- Social and Applied Science (Fall 2017 Only): Ingrid Riedle
- Social and Applied Science (Spring 2018 Only): Domenico Ferri
- World Languages/ELL: Matthew Williams

Membership

- Ewa Bejnarowicz, Office of Information Technology
- Katelin Karlin, Library
- Kwok-Tuen (Ray) Tse, Physical Science
- Loretta Visomirskis, English, Speech, and Theatre
- Jacquelyn Werner, Academic Support Services
- Jennifer Vogel, Advising
- Shawntay King, Child Development Intern, Erikson Institute

Introduction

The Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC) was founded in 2003 with the mission to assess what students know and to use the resulting data to improve pedagogy. Our faculty-driven work reaches deeply into so many aspects of our college. Our unit assessment liaisons help their departments on fine-tuned projects while our general education branch looks at the big picture of what all students should be learning. Our work provides ongoing, in-house professional development to our colleagues along with improving student learning. The following is a summary of our work over last academic year of fall 2017 to spring 2018.

Unit Assessment

Our unit assessment liaisons work with their colleagues outside of our committee to assess student learning according to the needs of their department. This usually begins with a discussion on broad learning outcomes that apply to the entire department. It is important for liaisons to give their colleagues space to take ownership on what to assess. The resulting projects vary greatly as each department is its own world with distinct needs.

Here is a brief summary of each of this academic year's projects, with more detail for each available in the [unit assessment section of our webpage](#).

- **Art and Architecture:** Paul Wandless developed assessments for general drawing, 2D design, and 3D design classes, emphasizing to his colleagues and students that it is indeed possible to assess objective skills in art instead of focusing on subjective opinions on creativity. He is also beginning to plan a future assessment on ceramics.
- **Biology, Fall 2017:** Bara Sarraj used student lab reports to assess the skills of collecting data, analyzing data, and writing ability.
- **Biology, Spring 2018:** Aigerim Bijelic focused on some of the many concepts students learn in Biology 121.
- **Business and CIS:** Bral Spight assessed various aspects of student learning in courses from the earlier stages of the business program versus the later stages.
- **English, Speech, and Theatre:** Amy Rosenquist assessed how students learn soft skills across a variety of classes. In particular, she looked at the rising importance of theater skills in the business world for the purpose of improving the people skills of employees. In fact, more and more businesses are hiring consultants to give in-house theater training. Amy also looked at the problem of low retention in English 102.
- **Humanities and Music:** David Richardson worked on a philosophy assessment on beliefs about learning as well as norming how music instructors grade music performance juries.
- **Library:** Todd Heldt assessed students' skills incorporating the Boolean operators "and" versus "or" into search engine searches as well as students' views on what sources of information are trustworthy.

- **Mathematics:** Camelia Salajean assessed Math 118, the general education class that allows instructors to select four topics out of twelve to be taught. She carefully chose outcomes broad enough to be covered by all instructors. The primary unifying topic was mathematical models and their use of formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics.
- **Physical Science:** Allan Wilson decided to move from broad assessment to specific topics after being inspired by that practice at Oakton Community College. He and his colleagues chose the topic of stoichiometry, which involves mathematical calculations for chemical reactions.
- **Social and Applied Science, Fall 2017:** Ingrid Riedle looked deeply into the Political Science 201 class, namely at the graduation requirement for a constitution exam and at how aligned different sections are with the student learning outcomes.
- **Social and Applied Science (Spring 2018 Only):** Domenico Ferri worked with department colleagues to develop outcomes on civic engagement and social justice.
- **World Languages/ELL:** Matthew Williams assessed all ELL classes on the broad skill of crafting effective introductions in speeches. He also looked at specific skills in Spanish 102.

General Education Assessment

The general education branch of our committee looks more broadly at what we agree all students should be learning, regardless of which specific courses they take. We usually collect data on one General Education Goal each fall and then analyze that data the following spring. Below is a summary of our general education work for this academic year, with more detail in the [general education section of our webpage](#).

- **Natural Sciences:** Phillip Vargas, with help from the committee, finished the [report for natural sciences data collected in fall 2015](#).
- **Humanities:** David Richardson and Erica McCormack supervised the rating of humanities essays collected in fall 2016. Those essays were part of a survey in which students chose an artifact from the late 19th century to analyze. The choices included a philosophical text, musical piece, painting, or poem. The raters were a group of faculty members who practiced ahead of time and participated in norming sessions.
- **Quantitative Reasoning:** Jeffrey Swigart supervised the preparation for the fall 2017 data collection for quantitative reasoning. The survey focused on real-life applications, especially on the topic of how the unemployment rate is measured. One question specifically assessed whether students could recognize poorly displayed statistics. In the late fall, we sent out personal invitations to faculty members to give the survey in class, resulting in a sample of over 1000 student participants. A team of faculty members then rated the open-ended questions during spring 2018.
- **Student Engagement:** Our college's administration used the CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) in 2005, 2009, and 2014. Although the HWC Assessment Committee never directly planned or supervised it, we often helped

with advertising and distribution. In 2005 and 2009, we received results quickly and reported out on them. Yet in 2014 the results never made it back to us but instead were held at district. Finally, in fall 2017, we received a copy of the 2014 results and discussed them at length in committee. Our general consensus was that it is a reasonable tool and that an earlier administration of the tool had led to key changes in the registration process. Nevertheless, in spring 2018 our interim HWC president began considering alternatives to CCSSE.

- **Civic Engagement:** We began planning for our fall 2018 data collection on the topic of civic engagement. We had discussed this topic as far back as 2013, so we are now excited to finally follow through on it.

Online Learning Assessment

Jen Asimow was our coordinator of online assessment for fall 2017 through spring 2018, and these are the projects she worked on, with more detail in the [online assessment section of our webpage](#).

- **Student Perceptions:** In fall of 2017 Jen presented her findings on student perceptions of learning in online courses during our college's faculty development week. She later finalized a [report which can be found on our webpage](#).
- **Accreditation Prep:** Throughout the rest of the fall of 2017, Jen gathered information from departments about their current assessment work in their face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes. The Higher Learning Commission is coming soon for accreditation and may be auditing the total amount of time students spend on coursework. So it is important to align all modes of the same class in this way and to make sure the syllabi clearly reflect this.
- **English:** Jen specifically met with English online faculty in fall 2017 to determine which online English classes use common assessments, particularly in terms of the research paper assignment. Three online faculty members volunteered to share data from their classes. In spring of 2018, Jen continued this work more specifically for English 102 online.
- **Child Development:** Jen began working with child development instructors in spring 2018 to align their online sections.

Other Committee Work

- **Program Assessment:** Paul Wandless met with department representatives from the disciplines of Psychology, Journalism, History, Political Science, and Business in information gathering sessions to discuss assessment strategies currently in place and the possibility of future assessment work within those programs. For example, the Psychology courses currently have assessments in place for individual courses but do not look at assessment from the program level. Paul also began helping the committee edit its charge to move program assessment to the purview of unit liaisons. Since the liaisons work more closely with their departments, they will likely be better able to gauge what is going on with departmental-specific programs.

- **Research Analysts:** The various branches of our committee each collect massive amounts of data, and we all send that data to our research analysts to look for interesting findings. Our demand for their work became so great, in fact, that in fall 2017, Phillip Vargas produced a workflow document outlining expected turnaround times. They also help us with in-house training sessions to teach us to do some of our own basic statistical work. For example, during committee meetings in fall 2017 Fernando Miranda-Mendoza taught us about hypothesis tests, and Sarah Kakumanu taught us about regression analysis.
- **Newsletters:** We have been publishing our *Assessment Times* newsletter since fall 2004, usually once per semester. It has become one of our best outlets in reaching our colleagues and other stakeholders about our work and its importance for student learning. See the [newsletter section of our webpage](#) for the [fall 2017 issue](#) and [spring 2018 issue](#) as well as older issues.

Collaboration Across the College

We are proud of how much our committee collaborates with other colleagues and groups in our college. Here are a few examples.

- **Accreditation:** During spring 2018, in addition to Jen Asimow's work on Criterion 1 (the Mission), Allan Wilson worked on Criterion 4 (Assessment) and contributed to the task force preparing for the upcoming Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation visit, which included auditing our webpage as well as various other HWC subpages.

Former chair of the HWC Assessment Committee, Michael Heathfield, led the writing of the college's self-study, and our committee provided him with assessment artifacts to include.

In late spring 2018, many of our committee members participated in an interview with mock accreditation visitors. We later received positive feedback, as they said that *our strong assessment culture was the highlight of their visit*.

- **Administrators:** Carrie Nepstad met with HWC administrators in the Office of Instruction every other week, often bringing along other committee members. She also met once in fall 2017 with the interim HWC president and the district provost to share the philosophy and history of our committee's assessment work.
- **Assessment Office Hours:** Carrie Nepstad held 3 office hours per week during spring 2018 to discuss assessment-related issues.
- **Brightspace:** Jen Asimow attended a January 2018 meeting about the Brightspace learning management system (LMS) in order to request greater assessment capabilities.
- **CAST:** Carrie Nepstad met with members of the Committee on the Art and Science of Teaching (CAST) multiple times to plan joint projects such as Faculty Development Week (FDW) for August 2017 and Teaching and Learning Community (TLC) for April 2018.
- **Committee for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality:** Carrie Nepstad met


with them in February 2018 to support their plans for a conference.

- **Department Chairs Meetings:** Carrie Nepstad attended the monthly meetings; assessment is now a standing agenda item.
- **Districtwide Assessment Committee:** After a hiatus of some time, Brandon Nichols from district called this group together again in spring 2018. Topics of discussion included civic engagement and co-curricular assessment.
- **Faculty Council:** Carrie Nepstad attended their February 2018 meeting regarding domestic violence awareness.
- **Office of Information Technology:** In February 2018, Ewa Bejnarowicz asked our committee to help edit a survey she would later send out to faculty about needs and opinions regarding technology.
- **Shared Governance Meetings:** Various committee members, including Loretta Visomirskis and Jacquelyn Werner, took turns representing us at the meetings, and assessment is now a standing agenda item.

Presentations

We frequently present our work to our colleagues, in order to provide in-house professional development. Below are some of our favorites from this academic year, and the slides for many of them are available in the [presentations section of our webpage](#).

- **FDW (Faculty Development Week), August 2017:** Our unit assessment liaisons presented their projects in breakout sessions. They were well received, though the attendance was quite low. We are considering creating videos in the future to make the presentations more accessible and on-demand.
- **[Assessment Day, September 8, 2017:](#)** As part of our ongoing discussion of civic engagement, J-L Deher-Lesaint of the English, Speech, and Theatre department gave a keynote presentation about his experience becoming a US citizen. Also, Todd Heldt presented on information literacy, and Jennifer Asimow shared about her recently completed online learning report.
- **[Assessment 101 Quiz, Fall 2017:](#)** Carrie Nepstad created a quiz about the basics of assessment for the purpose of generating conversations. She specifically used it in a meeting with our administration as well as at a department chairs meeting.
- **Adjunct Orientation, January 2018:** Carrie Nepstad presented at the adjunct orientation; hopefully, this will become a standing topic of training for adjuncts in the future.
- **Illinois Assessment Fair at Joliet Junior College, February 23, 2018:** Carrie Nepstad presented the online learning perceptions data collected by Jen Asimow and analyzed by Phil Vargas.
- **[TLC \(Teaching Learning Community\) Event, April 6, 2018:](#)** This was a joint effort among our Assessment Committee, Committee on the Art and Science of Teaching



(CAST), and the Office of Instruction. Here are some of the sessions led by our committee members:

- Todd Heldt and Shana Cooper presented on information literacy.
- Yev Lapik presented on effective writing for online biology classes.
- Fernando Miranda-Mendoza, Camelia Salajean, and Jeffrey Swigart presented on quantitative reasoning.
- Carrie Nepstad gave a lunchtime talk about creating an effective assessment.
- Matthew Williams and Karen Smith presented about the student research symposium.

Conclusion

Our HWCAC engaged in and produced meaningful and important assessment work during the 2017/2018 academic year. Our committee's work supporting student learning in the college became increasingly apparent as the HLC visit approached. The mock visit in the Spring 2018 semester, in preparation for the upcoming October 2018 visit, confirmed our culture of assessment as a major strength at HWC. From the unit-level assessments to the general education assessments, we have been investigating questions from faculty about student learning and applying what we learn from the assessments to make recommendations to improve curriculum, pedagogy, and policies. We look forward in our weekly meetings to continuing to discuss how to "close the loop" by applying this year's findings for faculty development and to improve student learning. We also look forward to continuing our tradition of leaving space in the meeting for friendly conversation, sharing of snacks, and light-hearted laughter. We have worked hard over the years to cultivate a positive energy in our committee, and we believe this has such a positive impact on our work for student learning.