

## **The 2006 Gen Ed Humanities Assessment—the First Step Toward Closing the Loop**

The Humanities Subcommittee of the Assessment Committee is pleased to announce that the final report on the **2006 Gen Ed Humanities Assessment** is nearing completion. The findings from the measure are most illuminative and will provide guidance for instructional practices at HWC for years to come. Among the most interesting items included in the report are:

According to the student surveys, the consensus beliefs were that:

- ~Studying the arts gave them new ways to think about their lives (97%)
- ~Studying the arts helped students reach academic and personal goals (93%)
- ~Studying the arts improved students' creativity/imagination (93%)
- ~Studying the arts helped broaden students' taste (93%)

According to the student surveys, students report that they are quite likely to attend an arts related event as they progress through the Humanities General Education Requirement:

- ~69.7% will attend a museum or art exhibit.
- ~54.5% will attend an arts tour
- ~54.5% will attend a show featuring live music
- ~61.2% will attend a play

In scoring the accompanying students essays, we found that:

- ~Student responses often omit textual evidence that would lend support to their reasoning.
- ~ Students rely on a very narrow emotional vocabulary in discussing how works make them feel.
- ~ Students rarely utilize the technical vocabulary of the disciplines in their engagements with cultural artifacts.

In response to this assessment's findings, we recommend that instructors at HWC spend additional time working with students to develop their vocabulary as it relates to affective and interpretive tasks; to increase student opportunities to provide evidential support for their reasoning; and to introduce students to a wider array of critical tools for explaining, interpreting, evaluating, and contextualizing humanistic artifacts. These findings should foster discussion in all departments across the curriculum and encourage them to talk further with each other and with humanities-related instructors (art, literature, music, philosophy, etc.) to develop ways to integrate the arts and appreciation of them across the curriculum and so ensure that all of our students are more successful at achieving the desired General Education outcomes.