



THE ASSESSMENT TIMES

MARCH, 2010



Assessment Week

We are extremely pleased to offer an exciting lineup of presentations and activities during Assessment Week, which happens semesterly during week 12. The presentations include:

Assessing Student Learning on Diversity for Classroom, Program, & Institution

Carrie Nepstad, Janvier Jones and Patricia Perez

Wednesday April 7th 3:00 - 3:45pm
Room 1115

Natural Science at HWC: The 'Learning Leap' and other findings

Jaime Millán, Christopher Kabir, Allan Wilson and Mike Heathfield

Thursday April 8th 2:00 - 2:45 pm
Room 1115

Know It and Show It

Assessment Team Challenge

Open to all - Faculty Pairs, Student/Faculty Pairs, Student Pairs. First Prize - Lunch with Dean Metoyer (He pays!)

Thursday April 8th 3:00 - 4:00 pm
Room 1115

Want to Know What's Up?

Presently the Assessment Committee will offer two new ways to keep up with institutional assessment activities. By the end of this semester, the long-awaited *Institutional Assessment Policy Manual and How-to Guide* will be completed. Authored by Todd Heldt and Chris Sabino, this document covers all aspects of institutional assessment at HWC. In our efforts to go green and save as much paper as possible, the primary means of dissemination will be the internet.

And that brings us to our second announcement. The AC is revamping its website so that it can be updated more regularly. The new website is <http://sites.google.com/site/hwcassessment/>.

We look forward to seeing you there!

The Assessment Cycle —Right Here, Right Now—

Assessment Committee is in some ways like a metaphysical, pedagogical juggler. In any given semester we are working on multiple assessments, either analyzing the results of the last measure, piloting a new tool, preparing to assess student learning outcomes for the next general education goal on the list, or trying to figure out a good way to disseminate the interesting information we gather each semester.

This semester we are working out the Social Science SLOs, analyzing data from the Quantitative Reasoning assessment, creating the Effective Writing tool to assess the Written and Oral Communication gen ed objective, and working on a host of presentations for Assessment Week.

To give you a better idea of what we are doing any given semester, consider our 6-stage process through which we meet our charge and systematically structure our work. This cyclical assessment process is as follows:

Stage One – Outcome Definition

Committee members formulate and approve specific general education student learning outcomes. We have just finalized the outcomes for social science and written and oral communication.

Stage Two – Assessment R&D

The Assessment Committee uses a sub-committee structure to maximize our expertise in researching and designing a specific methodology for each general education outcome. We are currently creating our own tool to gauge student learning in the area of social sciences.

Stage Three - Pilot Assessment Tools

Faculty and small number of student sections are used to 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. This semester we are not piloting any measures, but next semester we will be piloting our Effective Writing tool.

Stage Four – Administer Assessment

A successful assessment requires buy-in and active contributions from many stakeholders. We are conscious of achieving a significant sample size and one which mirrors the diversity of our student body. Committee members recruit faculty and sections, ensure sample size, and conduct the testing process in formats that are accessible to all our students. This semester we are not running a measure, but next semester we will assess Social Sciences.

Stage Five – Data Analysis

We codify and input assessment data, and then we check reliability and validity. Once the data are deemed reliable and valid, the committee produces and disseminates usable data. This data analysis process also includes a methodological review of the process and tool. We are currently reviewing the findings of the Quantitative Reasoning assessment.

Stage Six – Supporting Evidence-Based Change

Committee members partner with other stakeholders to present findings and to recommend change. We are currently planning our Assessment Week activities to get the word out about our important findings. We are likewise always seeking feedback from various departments about what they have done with the information we have given them.

This stage also includes a review of the specific student learning outcomes under investigation and the restarting of the assessment process by returning to Step One.

History Lessons

Recently Carrie Nepstad and Dave Richardson visited the Assessment Committee and led a discussion on the lessons we have learned through our years of assessing student learning. Among the topics discussed were the value of creating our own assessments, the respect our efforts are shown by others in the field, the necessity of keeping it simple, and the future of assessment at HWC.

Carrie applauded the committee on its record of creating its own assessment tools, saying that she feels that this is the best kind of assessment because it can be tailored to our actual students and targeted to find exactly the information we need. In addition, she noted that when she and others have presented what we've done at conferences, others in the field have expressed enormous admiration for our process, methods, and findings.

Keeping it simple

One of the biggest lessons learned is to keep assessments simple. For example, the diversity survey generated so much data that much of it was unable to be used. In response to that phenomenon, over the years, assessments have become more focused, targeting one or two SLOs instead of four or five.

An added benefit of a more targeted approach could be that the AC would do frequent, small assessments instead of the current practice of doing large scale assessments on a 5-7 year cycle.

The Future

If indeed we begin performing smaller, more frequent assessments, AC is interested in finding ways to embed measures into the classroom, so we can get assessment data without asking teachers to give up a whole class period to our cause. We will investigate the possibility of creating tools that can be used as assignments in classes across the curriculum.

Departmental Assessment

Finally, there was a great deal of talk about the necessity of increasing departmental assessment activities. Not only do Dave and Carrie both hope that departments will do more assessment of student learning, they hope that the departments will become even more involved in the institutional assessment process. For instance, the humanities assessment attempted to assess a broad range of humanities outcomes, feedback and involvement from the department was crucial

In the end the AC was extremely grateful for the conversation. The goal,

really, is to learn from our past in order to avoid mistakes/become more efficient in the future. If the future is to learn from the past, we might well heed Dave's words: "We don't need more assessment, we need smarter assessment."

Social Sciences SLOs Hot Off the Presses

In efforts to continue assessing HWC's General Education Goals, the Assessment Committee has established a subcommittee to assess the objective aimed at the Social Sciences. This General Education Goal (as it appears in the HWC Catalog 2008-2010, p. 146) reads as follows:

To understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their (*the student's*) study.

To accomplish its task, the subcommittee first created four student learning objectives (SLO's):

1. Explain in oral and written form and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society.
2. Apply the scientific method to social phenomena using relevant research designs.
3. Analyze historical, current, and hypothetical events through the lens of the social scientist.
4. Formulate questions and evaluate theories, concepts, and philosophies about social phenomena as applied to the personal pursuit of a quality life.

These SLO's will be individually assessed one at a time. In fall of 2010, the subcommittee plans to have in place an assessment tool to pilot SLO #1 listed below. Currently, the subcommittee is in the process of custom designing an electronic tool which will measure a student's ability to recognize key concepts and terminology relevant to each of the seven social sciences; to formulate relevant discipline-specific questions aimed at studying social phenomena and lastly, to assess affective domains toward the study of the social sciences.

Members of the "Social Science Gen Ed Goal" subcommittee include Professors Matthew Williams, Lynnel Kiely, Jeffrey Swigart, Christopher Sabino and Chao Lu. Ex-officio members also offering

valuable input included Professor Michael Heathfield and Research-Development Assistant Christopher Kabir.

Quantitative Reasoning Preliminary Thoughts

In Fall 2009 the Assessment Committee assessed student learning in the area of Quantitative Reasoning (QR). Almost 1200 students took part in the assessment. The assessment consisted of the following 4 parts: a demographic survey, an attitudinal/perceptual survey, a multiple choice section and a free response section. The last two sections consisted of QR (math essentially) problems which focused on percents, geometry, average, interpretation of graphical data, analysis of math models, etc.

The QR subcommittee was able to grade all of the free response questions using rubrics. Currently, the assessments are in the process of being scanned in order to collect and tabulate the data. Once this is complete, analysis and interpretation of data will begin. Look out for more news on the QR assessment by Assessment Week. Preliminary, anecdotal results from the graders indicate that overall, students had difficulty with the concepts presented.

Already Looking Ahead

In Fall 2010 we will be assessing student progress toward the Social Science general education objective and will be asking you to volunteer classes to take the measure.

Please reserve week 12 in your schedule to volunteer your class for the measure.

New Members

If you want to be a part of a great committee that does important work, and can meet weekly from 3:00 to 4:00, please contact Todd Heldt at theldt@ccc.edu.

We'd Love to Hear From You

The purpose of assessment is *not* to collect reams of data, but to improve student learning. Let us know what you are doing in response to the Assessment Committee's findings. You can contact Michael Heathfield at mheathfield@ccc.edu and Todd Heldt at theldt@ccc.edu.