

# ∞ THE ASSESSMENT TIMES ?



FALL, 2010

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES ASSESSMENT FALL 2010

Under the oversight of Professor Lynnel Kiely, the HWC Assessment Committee, has produced an assessment tool for the social sciences. The purpose of the tool will be to assess student progress toward two of the social sciences learning outcomes:

Explain in oral and written form and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society, and analyze historical,

current and hypothetical events through the lens of the social scientist.

These social science outcomes correspond to the general education goal that students at HWC will be able to "Understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their study."

The Social Science Assessment will take place during week 12 of this semester, November 8 - November 13.

## FALL 2010 ASSESSMENT WEEK BY THE NUMBERS

Over 2,500 potential student volunteer opportunities were offered by faculty.

We have scheduled 61 class sections.

40 faculty from every college department were selected.

Selected volunteered sections deliver a potential

student respondent count of 1,698.

We project 1,188 student respondents, or 70% of potential students.

48 sections will be proctored in Room 404.

13 sections will be in class or at home.

(Continued on next page.)

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Mike Heathfield - Chair**  
Applied Sciences

**Todd Heldt - Vice Chair**  
Library

**Chris Sabino - Secretary**  
Mathematics

**Jennifer Asimow**  
Applied Sciences

**Margarita Chavez**  
FL/ESL

**LaRhue Finney - English**

**Chris Kabir**  
Office of Research & Planning

**Lynnel Kiely**  
Social Science

**John Kieraldo - Library**

**Liliana Marin**  
Physical Science

**Jaime Millan**  
Physical Science

**Willard Moody - English**

**Farah Movahedzadeh**  
Biology

**Nick Pietrowski**  
Applied Sciences Intern

**Dave Richardson**  
Humanities

**Kurt Sheu - Mathematics**

**Jeffrey Swigart**  
Mathematics

**Loretta Visomirskis**  
English

**Matthew Williams - ESL**

**Allan Wilson - Physical Science**

## WHERE WE ARE ON THE QR

If 0.58% of all U.S. tax returns are audited, approximately how many returns are audited for each 1000 returns filed?

a) 1 b) 60 c) 580 d) 6

If you answered a), then you agree with almost 84% of our students. Unfortunately, you're wrong. This is just one of many statistics that you'll see very soon.

In the fall of 2009, the Assessment Committee administered the Quantitative Reasoning Assessment, which measured students' progress toward the mathematics learning objective. In all, 1132 students took that assessment, thanks to over 30 faculty members who volunteered their sections. The assessment consisted of two parts, an indirect, affective survey and a direct math "test."

The AC used the two-part format to determine if a relationship exists between student confidence about mathematics and actual abilities. Interestingly, the measure determined that there was no correlation between the two, and that confidence cannot be considered a predictor of a student's mathematical ability (as measured on this assessment) or vice versa.

The AC can share a few preliminary findings from the measure and expects that a richer trove of data will be available when Chris Sabino completes the final analysis and report. Here are a few preliminary findings to whet your appetite for the full report:

1) Over 52% of students taking this assessment reported that they had yet to successfully complete a math course here at HWC. This implies that many

of the students who took this assessment were likely new. This is corroborated by the fact that over 60% of students have completed less than 15 credit hours here at HWC.

2) Students who took the measure excelled at interpreting graphical data. This was by far the strongest area of the assessment.

3) Including the scores of 0 (which indicate either a lack of ability or desire to

complete the work), the average score (out of 24) on the math test portion was less than 12 (i.e., less than 50% of the possible points).

In the final report, the AC will cross-reference student achievement and the number of math courses taken at HWC, the level of those courses (i.e., 101, 201, etc...), the number of credits completed at HWC, and much, much more.

### FALL 2010 ASSESSMENT WEEK (continued) BY THE NUMBERS

Peak traffic days are Monday 8th, Tuesday 9th, and Wednesday 10th November.

Our sample is from across the timetable and disciplines.

There is a large imbalance between 100 and 200 level courses – 72% are 100 level courses.

There are 2 Math 99 sections and 1 Math 98 section that have been counted in these data as 100 Level sections.

### THE AC POLICY MANUAL (Defining Assessment at HWC)

The Assessment is proud to announce that the HWC institutional assessment policy manual, tentatively titled *Defining Assessment at Harold Washington College*, is nearing completion. The manual, authored by Todd Heldt and Chris Sabino, was motivated in part by a desire to explain the committee's role in the college, as well as to establish firm guidelines on which to base future assessment efforts. Co-author Chris Sabino explains, "The purpose of the manual is not to replace annual reports but to talk more about the inner workings of the assessment process at HWC."

Currently, the manual is days away from being brought to the AC for approval. The document, weighing in at over 60 pages, treads the line between assessment theory

and practice, and navigates the entire assessment process—from designing or finding an appropriate measure, to showing how all outcomes should be derived from the college mission statement, to highlighting the measures already being used at the college, and ultimately down to the day-to-day activities of the Committee. Special attention is paid to the notion of "closing the loop," and the document closes with a survey of some other institutions' practices. Co-author Todd Heldt states that, "The purpose is not merely to inform, but to instigate discussion about what we are doing and why we are doing it."

## EFFECTIVE WRITING

The Effective Writing Subcommittee is pleased to announce that the Effective Writing Assessment is approaching readiness for use in 2011. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) to be assessed by the measure are focus, organization, development, and effective use of the conventions of standard written English. To accurately measure student performance,

the subcommittee has created a 16-point rubric to be used while scoring the student writing samples.

The Effective Writing Assessment will take on the important task of measuring how well students communicate and express themselves in writing. The committee is currently finalizing the tool in preparation for a pilot

assessment in week 12 of the Spring 2011 semester. The college-wide assessment is scheduled for Fall 2011.

## A CURE FOR CANCER?

Assessment Week is fast approaching (November 8th-13th), and we are getting ready to use our new online Social Science Assessment Tool. Over 40 faculty have kindly volunteered 2,400 students to take the test – an amazing number. It seems that we will easily manage our target of 1,000 student respondents. So thank you for your important contribution to HWC's assessment program. The Assessment Committee is bracing itself for a week of complex logistics but are excited to know how our first electronic assessment tool will work out, and also what we find out about our students' Social Science capabilities.

Because we are using Blackboard to host the tool, some basic data will be available instantly. We will circulate these findings pretty quickly, but you will need to give us a little more time to grade and analyze over 2,000 narrative answers! -Mike Heathfield

## THANKS IN ADVANCE

In the coming weeks you may notice some new posters adorning the walls. Or, your students might come into class and ask if it's true that someone found a cure for cancer. You didn't miss anything big in the news! The posters hint at a fictional scenario presented in the Social Science Assessment in week 12. In the scenario, a possible cure for cancer may have been found, but the rush for the cure may entail trampling on the rights of indigenous peoples. The posters are meant to provoke thought, discussion, and ultimately interest in assessment activities at HWC.



## HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

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[http://sites.google.com/site/  
hwcassessment/](http://sites.google.com/site/hwcassessment/)

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### ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE CHARGE

The HWC Assessment Committee is dedicated to the improvement of student learning through the meaningful utilization of assessment data in an effort to support the HWC community towards the evolution of college curriculum. As outlined in this charge, the HWC Assessment Committee is committed to defining assessment at Harold Washington College, as well as establishing and ensuring that appropriate assessment procedures and practices are followed in collecting, reviewing, analyzing and disseminating information/data on assessment. Finally, the HWC Assessment Committee is responsible for providing a forum for dialogue regarding assessment issues to support a college culture, which includes the assessment process.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

We are always looking for new faculty, students and staff to join in our exciting work. We meet every Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. in room 1032. All are welcome to join us. The Committee Charge states that there can only be two voting members from each department, but we are happy to involve as many people in our work as possible. If you want to discuss what this might involve or ask further questions, please contact Mike Heathfield (see contact info at left).