

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

THE ASSESSMENT TIMES

SPRING, 2013

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

FROM THE CHAIR MICHAEL HEATHFIELD	1
STELLAR HWC FACULTY MICHAEL HEATHFIELD	2
SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT LYNNEL KIELY	3
EFFECTIVE WRITING ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS JEN ASIMOW	5
DATA RULES MAKING DATA WORK FOR YOU	6

FROM THE CHAIR

We opened 2013 with the great news of our Council for Higher Education Accreditation Award for outstanding institutional practices in student learning outcomes. This resulted in a very quick trip to Washington D.C. and much reflecting on 10 years of hard work by many, many people.

This work continues at a scale and pace stronger than ever before. Over the past year we have added in two new and complex elements to the well-established work of assessing our general education curriculum. We have a great pilot team from Art & Architecture, Applied Sciences, and Humanities who are establishing the assessment of student learning outcomes at the Department, Discipline and Unit level. This is progressing very well, and we are learning much about how to “grow from within” department assessment cultures to provide faculty with solid data and decisions to continuously improve student learning within their disciplines. Carrie Nepstad, Paul Wandless and Erica McCormack are leading this with great aplomb.

Another new initiative, led by Jen Asimow, has nine faculty from across the campus creating our very own HWC MOOM's. By this I mean Mini Online Open Modules. We are using our general education assessment findings to create 21 of these short learning opportunities to strengthen our students' specific learning outcomes. More about this can be found in this issue of Assessment Times.

We are also involved in a re-write of our Assessment Charge, job descriptions, and relationship to Faculty Council. This is a very typical example of our workload expanding while our policy documents remain written in stone from over 10 years ago. I understand we are one of the best resourced Assessment Committees across the District, in no small part due to a long history of supportive

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mike Heathfield - Chair
Applied Sciences

Jen Asimow - Co Chair
Applied Sciences

Jeffrey Swigart - Secretary
Mathematics

Samar Ayesh
Physical Sciences

Rosie Banks
Office of Instruction

Margarita Chavez
ELL/WL

John Kieraldo
Library

Lynnel Kiely
Social Science

Chao Lu
Mathematics

Erica McCormack
Humanities
Department Liaison

Willard Moody
English, Speech & Theater

Carrie Nepstad
Applied Sciences
Department Liaison

Dave Richardson
Humanities

Ray Tse
Physical Science

Phillip Vargas
Physical Science

Loretta Visomirskis
English

Paul Wandless
Art and Architecture
Department Liaison

Matthew Williams
ELL/WL



CITY COLLEGES of CHICAGO
Harold Washington
Education that Works

30 E. Lake St.
Chicago, IL 60601
312-553-5600/ hwc.ccc.edu

administrators who understand and recognize what “faculty-led” really looks like.

You will almost certainly have received an email about our upcoming Oral Communication assessment in the fall of 2013. This is going to be a complex assessment that will challenge our creativity and methodological skills. We are trying to build a grassroots method that builds on faculty strength across the campus, so we must find ways to actively engage increasing numbers of our adjunct colleagues.

As many of you know already, it is budget time, and we are working with our administrative team to sustain a strong Assessment line item to build on the significant progress we have already made. We know already that when we come up for re-accreditation in 2018, a well-resourced budget line for assessment is one key element of successful reaccreditation.

I know we are all really buried in the end of the semester, and talk of 2018 seems a very long way off right now.

Michael Heathfield, Assessment Committee Chair

Stellar HWC Faculty

If we need any more evidence of how great HWC faculty are, here it is. In one week, 112 faculty responded to an email request for information about their planned Oral Communication practices for the fall of 2013. This represents 29% of our teaching faculty!

We are planning our first ever college-wide Oral Communication assessment and want to build this process around the practices of faculty. We have a target of 1,000 students, which is a very tall order for something we have never assessed before. It will require the direct assessment of student skills being demonstrated in the classroom.

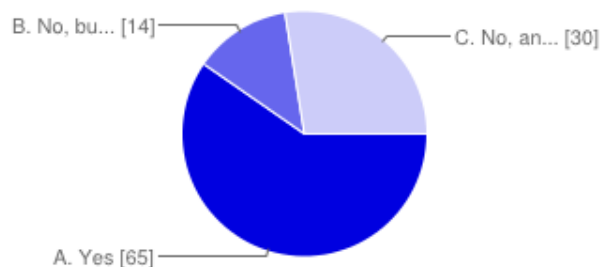
We already have our student learning outcomes and are reviewing grading rubrics from our own English Department, the University of Kentucky’s Assessment LISTSERV, Valencia College, Ohio State University, and the AAC&U, amongst others. We are particularly invested in reaching out to more adjunct faculty and engaging them in our important assessment work. We got a great deal of useful information back, including almost 30 named faculty we can count on to help us in the fall. This attests to our deep assessment culture and is not bad at all considering we are all up to our necks in midterms right now. Some key findings were:

Do you plan to have an assignment with an “Oral Communication” component in any of your classes in the fall semester of 2013?

A. Yes: 60% (65 respondents).

B. No, but I would be willing to include one in a course I am teaching this fall: 13% (14 respondents).

C. No, and I do not want to include one in a course I am teaching this fall: 28% (30 respondents).

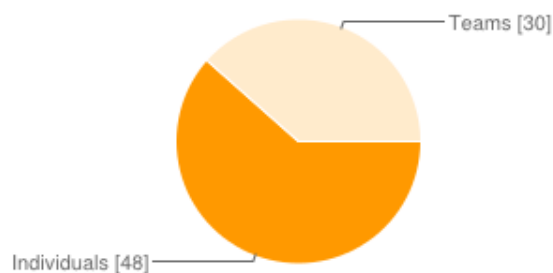


Are these Oral Communication assignments delivered by individuals or teams?

Individuals: 62% (48 respondents).

Teams: 38% (30 respondents).

While only 5% of responding faculty tape or record these diverse student oral communication assessments, the dominant format was student presentations (81%). Alongside this strong method for assessing student oral communication skills was the use of a grading rubric by many faculty.



Do you provide a grading rubric to students for any of these Oral Communication assignments, and if so, would you be willing to share it with us?

- Yes, I provide a grading rubric, and yes, I would be willing to share it with you: 41% (31 respondents).
- Yes, I provide a grading rubric, but I would rather not share it: 23% (17 respondents).

- No, I do not provide a grading rubric: 36% (27 respondents).

We also got numerous suggestions and guidance about how we can undertake this complex task. Especial thanks go to the faculty who shared their practice wisdom with us. We plan on keeping this conversation going as we move forward through the design and pilot stages. If you gave us your email address, we will also respond to you personally. If you want to get involved in some way in this fall 2013 assessment of our General Education curriculum, then please send me an email so we can work directly with you. It would be exceptional if we could get 45 active faculty contributing oral communication data from their classrooms. We strive to be as inclusive as possible, so you don't have to sit on the Assessment Committee to contribute to our nationally recognized "outstanding institutional practices"!

Michael Heathfield, Assessment Committee Chair

Social Science Assessment

Summary Report

In Fall 2010, we assessed the Social Sciences General Education Objective: **To understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their study.** To no one's surprise, this assessment yielded plenty of knowledge about how we teach and what our students are learning about the disciplines that constitute the social sciences: anthropology, economics, history, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology.

However, interestingly, this assessment also yield two firsts. Fall 2010 marked the first time since the inception of our committee that the social sciences general education objective had been assessed at all. Second, we created, as an assessment tool, our first on-line assessment survey using a Blackboard platform.

Procedure and Design

Following our normal assessment procedures, we first discussed and identified four student learning outcomes. Then, we sought an instrument that would effectively measure all four; however, to our chagrin, we learned that there was no such instrument. So, we designed our own instrument, which would measure the most foundational of the four outcomes: **Explain in oral and written form, and**

through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society.

To adequately measure this outcome, we designed a three-part assessment. Part One included nine small, invented dialogues between social scientists, each representing conversations within a specific social science discipline. We asked students to read the dialogues and identify the discipline represented in each conversation. Part Two asked demographic questions about students' exposure to social science courses taught at HWC or elsewhere and affective questions to determine how students valued what they learned in the social sciences and the social sciences as disciplines. Part Three provided students with a fictional scenario of a social phenomenon and asked them to examine it through the eyes of two self-selected social scientists of different disciplines. Specifically, students were asked to list key concepts, explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might contribute to establishing social stability and control, and explain how an investigation of those concepts/characteristics might affect one's personal quality of life.

After designing the instrument, we decided to run a pilot using our intended online delivery process. Thanks go to the faculty who participated voluntarily and helped us complete 110 assessments! Based on the pilot, we were able to plan ahead for the large-scale assessment we had in mind by doing the following:

- We figured out how to add an anticipated 1,200 student volunteers into separate Blackboard classes;
- We shortened the length of the assessment; and finally,
- We printed hard copies of the instrument in case of technical failures.

While we felt fully prepared for up to 1,200 students, we are grateful for the 977 students who completed the finalized assessment.

What We Learned

A lot, in short!

Specifically, we learned much about students' relationship to the social sciences, such as the following:

1. Students were more comfortable with the social sciences than they were with mathematics or the

Continued on page 4

natural sciences. However, they were not as comfortable with the social sciences as they were with reading, writing, and the humanities.

2. Among the seven disciplines within the social sciences, students demonstrated a greater ability to distinguish between **economics, geography, political science, and history**.
3. However, the ability to distinguish among all seven disciplines improved as students completed their social science requirements.
4. While students valued the importance of the social sciences in understanding the world around them, students were less certain of the applicability of what they learned in the social sciences to future careers or to other college courses.
5. Students recognized that the social sciences require a higher level of cognitive learning than simple recall or comprehension; however, the assessment provided no evidence that what they learned in a social science classroom was applied beyond the classroom.

Reflections

As with all assessments, **what we learn** encourages further reflection on **what we do as teachers, how we develop instruction that is supportive of student learning** in our classrooms, in our departments, in our programs, and at an institutional level, and how to further improve our assessment of student learning. This assessment gave us an opportunity to consider both our faculty's discipline-specific specializations, the general social science survey courses we offer, Social Science 101 and Social Science 102, and the relationship between the two. How does the disciplinary specialization of the faculty teaching those courses impact how those courses are taught and what is covered? Are the faculty's diverse disciplinary specializations beneficial or detrimental to addressing all of the learning outcomes in Social Science 101 and 102 in an equitable way? Most important, relative to this study, how do the general survey social science courses as currently organized impact relative discipline recognition skills?

We also considered how class size and mode of instruction, e.g. face-to-face, hybrid, or online, may have impacted student learning. To what extent were our results impacted by the inclusion of CDL courses in the assessment process? Is there a fair equivalency in outcomes

when class size is reduced in one delivery mode as opposed to another or when more students choose one specific delivery mode over another?

Further, we considered what we could determine from our results. That is, we considered the relationship between self-reported course completion data and our expectations of students' capabilities to realize the SLOs we identified. If we accept that the self-reported course completion data is a reasonable measure of student progress, can we demonstrate that there is a strong correlation between this progress and their ability to **explain in oral and written form, and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society?** Further, we learned after the fact that the assessment, designed to register increasing complexity and understanding of the social sciences, ultimately did assess two more of the four originally identified SLOs: **"Formulate questions and evaluate theories, concepts, and philosophies about social phenomenon"** (SLO#3) and **"Explain and defend one's own position and arguments about social issues as applied to the personal pursuit of a quality life"** (SLO#4). Is it possible to show that there's a correlation between self-reported course completion data and the realization of those SLOs?

Lastly, we considered how our use of an online delivery mode for assessment may have impacted our results. Our first full attempt at a campus-wide electronic assessment brought many unexpected challenges. We happily learned that, despite the number of constraints and technical capacity issues we experienced with Blackboard, the key issues are always with survey design, i.e. complexity and length. Access or delivery mode was not as impactful as we thought. Still, we are challenged by the fact that there is a wide variance in students' technical capabilities from those higher than our assessment methodologies can address to those at a bare minimum. We need to be attentive to this variance in order to more accurately assess and be responsive to our students.

As we move forward with future assessments and ultimately return to the next social science assessment, we hope to close the loop and use what we've learned and these reflections to improve student learning. We welcome your feedback in this process.

Harold Washington College

Effective Writing Assessment Conclusions

Recommendations

Students who had the additional support of a combined Reading section with their English course performed significantly better on the Effective Writing Assessment

Students should be placed in 100/125 more frequently.

Additional sections of wrap-around Reading sections should be made available.

Students who place into pre-college English courses did not perform as well on the Effective Writing Assessment as those who came in at college-level English

Strategies for successful and speedy completion of pre-college English courses should be examined

Completion criteria in transitioning from remedial courses to college-level English should be re-examined

The effectiveness of current pre-college English courses needs to be re-examined with a specific focus on SLOs, content and teaching/learning pedagogy

Students struggle with self-identifying their strengths and challenges as writers

Frequent and abundant feedback should be offered to students on all of their written work

Faculty should be specific about the strengths and challenges their students face in writing

Professional development should be made available to all faculty about the best way to give useful feedback to students to improve student writing specifically

Students who are asked to write more frequently in their coursework, perform better than those who are asked to write less often

Faculty should assign more written work in all disciplines

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

Assessment Committee

Michael Heathfield - Chair
Applied Sciences
Phone: 312 553-2679
E-mail: mheathfield@ccc.edu

Jen Asimow - Co Chair
Applied Sciences
Phone: 312 553-3087
E-mail: jasimow@ccc.edu

Jeffrey Swigart - Secretary
Mathematics
Phone: 312 553-3062
E-mail: jswigart@ccc.edu

[http://ccc.edu/
hwcassessment/](http://ccc.edu/hwcassessment/)

Newsletter layout: John Kieraldo

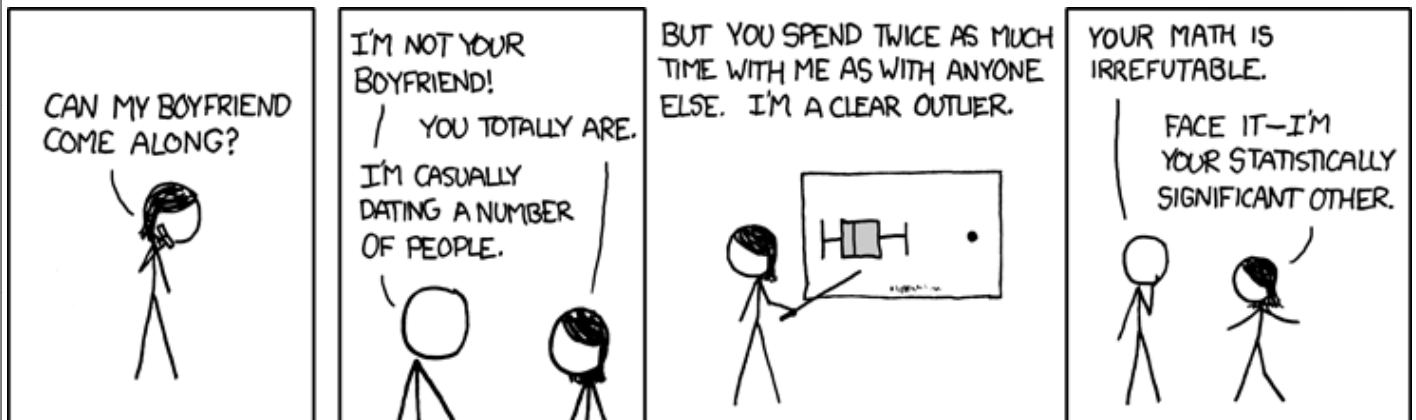
ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE CHARGE

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).

Data Rules: Making Data Work for You



Source: <http://www.xkcd.com/>



CITY COLLEGES of CHICAGO
Harold Washington
Education that Works

30 E. Lake St.
Chicago, IL 60601
312-553-5600/ hwc.ccc.edu