

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

THE ASSESSMENT TIMES

FALL, 2014

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR CARRIE NEPSTAD	1
ORAL COMMUNICATION AT HWC JEN ASIMOW	2
INFORMATION LITERACY ASSESSMENT JEFFREY SWIGART JOHN KIERALDO	2
UNIT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT IN THE HUMANITIES ERICA MCCORMACK	3
UNIT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE PAUL WANDLESS	3
UNIT-LEVEL ASSESSMENT IN THE APPLIED SCIENCES JEN ASIMOW	4
SECOND (CARTOON) XKCD.COM	4
ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE IN INDIANAPOLIS PHIL VARGAS	5

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

A Message from the Chair

One thing that makes talking about assessment so difficult is that any discussion about assessment can slide effortlessly into the abyss of accountability, or to the alien world of jargon-land where SLOs, rubrics, taxonomies, data-driven, evidenced-based, “blah-blah-blah” take over! I know this world well. It’s an interesting place, but it isn’t where most of us mentally reside on a daily basis.

It’s much more meaningful to talk with colleagues about what we want students to learn. What are we all working toward in our many different ways? The overwhelming goal of the HWC Assessment Committee has always been to keep student learning at the center of our discussions and decisions. For example, every time we write a component for an assessment tool the number one question we ask is, “how will this question help us to understand student learning?” If the question on the survey or test doesn’t help us to understand student learning, it gets tossed immediately.

With the tools we design, the committee collects assessment data every year. Data are gathered in various ways, but one method has been consistent for the past ten years, and that is to invite faculty to volunteer their sections for assessment activities. The assessment program has benefitted from ongoing and consistent faculty participation, and we have collected a great deal of student learning data from years of work.

In a continual effort to get that information back to faculty, the Assessment Committee is focusing on revisiting recent assessment results. The goal is to send an Assessment Update via e-mail to all instructors periodically throughout the semester to provide ongoing updates, but also to share resources based on assessment results in an effort to support the teaching/learning process. Of course, the HWC community always has

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Carrie Nepstad - Chair
Applied Sciences

John Kieraldo - Vice Chair
Physical Science

Phillip Vargas - Data Analyst
Physical Science

Jeffrey Swigart - Secretary
Mathematics

Jen Asimow
Applied Sciences
Department Liaison

Cindy Cerrentano
Office of Instruction

Margarita Chavez
ELL / WL

Janette Gayle
Social Sciences

Erica McCormack
Humanities
Department Liaison

Willard Moody
English, Speech & Theater

Loretta Visomirskis
English

Paul Wandless
Art and Architecture
Department Liaison

Matthew Williams
ELL / WL

Allan Wilson
Physical Sciences

Continued on page 2



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

access to up-to-date assessment materials on the Assessment committee website: <http://www.ccc.edu/hwcassessment>. Please check it out! In addition, if you have a specific question or request, feel free to send me an e-mail at cnepstad@ccc.edu or call ext. 6095. I look forward to hearing from you!

This semester, we are assessing the general education student learning outcomes for information literacy skills. The Assessment Committee is trying a new method of administration for this particular assessment. In lieu of reserving a computer classroom for a week in order to proctor assessments, an invitation went out to faculty who were then sent the link to the assessment tool to administer to students as they saw fit. In addition, we are going to include the link on the computers in the open computer lab in room 404 in order to collect data directly from students.

— Carrie Nepstad, Applied Sciences

Oral Communication at HWC

Last fall, the Assessment Committee assessed the General Education Goal of Oral Communication across the college using a rubric adapted from *American Colleges & Universities* and a short survey developed by committee members. 488 full-time and 92 part-time students participated in the assessment.

Student presentations were assessed in the following areas: Content, Delivery, Language, Organization, and Supporting Material. The survey asked questions about student feelings toward public speaking in terms of nervousness, preparedness, and importance. Last spring the data was analyzed and a full report was written over the summer.

The report outlines and discusses the findings and provides recommendations for improving student learning in the area of Oral Communication based on those findings.

We discovered that students who prepare well and do a significant amount of background research for oral presentations, do so whether they are being graded or not. There was a slight correlation between students who feel nervous about speaking in class and their confidence levels about speaking in class; which means that if they felt nervous, they also had low levels of confidence in their abilities. However, there was only a small correlation between feelings of nervousness and the rated quality of the presentation. We also saw a small correlation between

students who understand that there are different styles of oral presentations depending on the audience and their self-reported organization and planning skills. In addition, students who did not feel confident in their abilities to support their presentations with additional materials did not report understanding that there are different styles of oral presentations depending on the audience.

In addition to several recommendations for the faculty and administration of HWC, the Assessment Committee recommends the following in regards to Oral Communication:

1. Harold Washington College should continue to have high standards for oral presentations throughout the curriculum, not only in the Speech Department.
2. Faculty should consider varying the types of oral presentations assigned, clearly identifying the scope of the assignment and reinforcing the concept of "audience."
3. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* on June 16, 2014 (citation listed below) reports that speaking in public is people's No. 1 fear, more frightening than flying or death. In light of this, faculty should make every effort to put students at ease before their oral presentations.
4. Further discussion about the purposes of assigned oral communication assignments should be encouraged between speech and non-speech faculty with the following questions posited:
 - Are oral communication assignments designed to strengthen students' skills in public speaking or to provide another vehicle for transmitting information?
 - If students are expected to improve their skills in oral communication, are those skills being taught in non-speech classes?
 - Does content weigh more heavily than other areas of skill?
 - Does delivery weigh more heavily than content?

Queenan, Joe. "Speak no Evil — People Dread Few Things More than having to Give a Speech; but Fear Not." *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern edition, June 14, 2014.

— Jen Asimow, Applied Sciences

Information Literacy Assessment

The Assessment Committee is currently working on an instrument for assessing student learning outcomes in information literacy among HWC students. We ran a pilot of this survey-based assessment in the spring, and this semester we are carrying out a formal, college-wide assessment of information literacy.

In attempting to determine what this assessment endeavor would look like, we took into consideration several of the information literacy assessment tools that are available.

Three of the better known information literacy assessment tools are Project SAILS, TRAILS Assessment of Information Literacy Skills, and the Network of Illinois Learning Resources in Community Colleges' (NILRC) information literacy assessment. The Assessment Committee last carried out an information literacy assessment in 2003, and the assessment tool that was used was the Project SAILS instrument.

Based on standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries, SAILS involves establishing a benchmark for the information literacy skills of a given group of students through pre-testing. Administering an information literacy assessment using SAILS costs four dollars per student. TRAILS, partially based on standards of the American Association for School Libraries, is an assessment tool designed for students in the third through the twelfth grades.

The tool that we have chosen to base our assessment on is that of the Network of Illinois Learning Resources in Community Colleges (NILRC). It was designed for first-year community college students. There is no cost to run the assessment on NILRC's Web site. However, as the original assessment was written more than ten years ago, we have decided that our needs would be better served if we were to modify the assessment somewhat and to run it ourselves with freely available resources.

We have tailored the NILRC assessment to provide information about how our students are performing in the areas of our student learning outcomes for information literacy. In some cases we have modified questions with a view to a more current context, and in other cases we have modified questions for the sake of greater clarity or relevance to our local community, as well as to our SLOs. And we are also incorporating into our assessment a number of questions surveying the research practices of our students.

- Jeffrey Swigart, Mathematics and John Kieraldo, Library

Unit-Level Assessment in Humanities

This semester, the Humanities department continues its Unit-Level Assessment endeavors by focusing on Music Performance. Last semester, full-time music faculty worked with the Humanities Department Liaison for Unit-Level Assessment (Erica McCormack) to create a new evaluation form and rubric for the juried exams. Juried exams constitute an important assessment of student learning within all levels of the Applied Music courses.

The juried exam evaluation form was piloted in the Spring 2014 semester, and the data from the pilot is now being processed and analyzed to give Music instructors information about which components of music performance our students are strongest in, and which they are struggling with. We are also now receiving input from full-time and part-time music instructors about the form's user-friendliness and are making revisions to it based on suggestions generated from the pilot.

We look forward to implementing the new and improved forms for all juried exams at the end of this semester, and we are eager to gather data about student performance across multiple semesters so we can also learn about how our students are moving through the Applied Music courses toward meeting our program-level student learning outcomes in Music Performance.

- Erica McCormack, Humanities

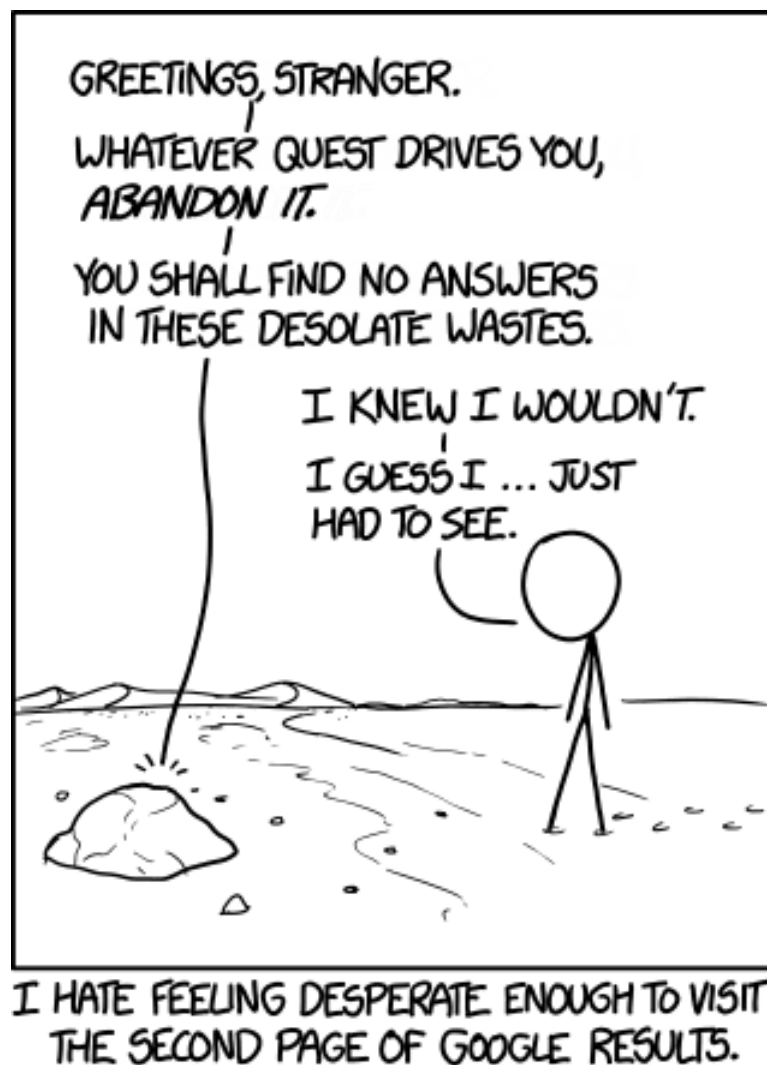
Unit-Level Assessment in Art and Architecture

The departmental level assessment taking place in Art and Architecture is at the individual course level. This Fall marks the fifth consecutive semester that Art 144 (2 Dimensional Design) and Art 131 (General Drawing) have been assessed.

Art 144 will continue to have the skills of 1-point perspective, 2-point perspective and isometric projection assessed, but a new skill has been added to the assessment for Fall 2014. How students create value and apply value to form will be the new addition that will be assessed. This meets the goal of expanding the amount of outcomes in the syllabus that are being assessed in the class. The core skills that students learn in Art 144 are

Continued on page 4

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

(Continued from page 3)

needed to do well in the studio classes they will take once this course is successfully completed.

The end-of-the-semester, observational drawing is still the focus of the Art 131 class assessment. The assessment measures how all the skills learned through the semester are being applied to drawing a still life with a variety of challenging objects. The ability to distinguish surface, delineate forms, create a sense of depth, and effectively use line and value are all skills assessed in the drawing.

The next assessment that's currently in development will be for

studio critiques. An oral communications assessment specifically for studio art critiques will be created this semester with input from HWC Studio Art faculty along with Studio Art faculty across the district. The benefit of this assessment is that it is not course specific and can be administered in all studio classes. The goal is to run it as a pilot in Spring 2015.

— Paul Wandless, Art and Architecture

Unit-Level Assessment in Applied Science

Over the past two years the Applied Science Department has been assessing a goal that we all share – Effective Writing. Although we don't share the exact same outcomes across our disciplines we do share many of the same supportive skills that are necessary for students to either transfer to four-year universities or to find success in their future employment. Using a slightly modified version of the rubric developed by the Assessment Committee for assessing effective writing, faculty in the Applied Sciences measured student writing in their courses. We now have quite a bit of data to analyze. We are hopeful that a deep examination of the data will reveal ways in which we can all better support students as they continue to develop their writing skills. In addition, a Writing Resource website was developed for the Applied Sciences faculty. A huge amount of effort was put into creating this place for faculty to find resources to improve student writing. Currently, the department is considering ways to expand or narrow the Effective Writing Assessment. A survey was developed to reveal faculty interests in either furthering these efforts or streamlining them.

The next phase of Unit Level Assessment in the Applied Sciences includes a reworking of the Key Assessments required by the National Association for the Education of Young Children that accredits the Child Development

Continued on page 5

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

Assessment Committee

Carrie Nepstad - Chair

Applied Sciences

Phone: 312 553-6095

E-mail: cnepstad@ccc.edu

John Kieraldo - Vice Chair

Library

Phone: 312 553-5761

E-mail: jkieraldo@ccc.edu

Phillip Vargas - Data Analyst

Physical Science

Phone: 312 553-3076

E-mail: pvargas21@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 1046. 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 Carrie Nepstad (see contact info at left).

(Continued from page 4)

Program. Happily, the accreditation visit revealed that we were going above and beyond the requirements and could scale our assessments back a bit. This semester we are developing a new system for collecting assessment data for Child Development with a tight framework that includes all areas of the program. We will let you know how that goes!

- Jen Asimow, Applied Sciences

Assessment Institute in Indianapolis

Jennifer Asimow and Phillip Vargas presented at this year's IUPUI Assessment Institute in Indianapolis. The presentation "Diversity – Quantifying Growth in Both Tolerance and Acceptance" was both well received and engendered productive discussions with faculty members from across the county. In addition to presenting, Phillip and Jennifer attended tracks in STEM assessment to gain insight in the upcoming Natural Science assessment in 2015 and community colleges assessment to ensure we continue using best practices. This information was shared with the committee at large and is being incorporated into our practices.

— Phil Vargas, Physical Science



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