HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

THE ASSESSMENT TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

SPRING, 2017

MEMBERS:

FROM THE CHAIR

The new year started off with an Assessment Day, which was held during Registration Week in January. Todd Heldt, Librarian and Assessment Liaison, presented a compelling talk about fake news and how to support the development of information literacy in our students. This presentation provoked discussion among participants about the importance of information literacy. Todd suggested that faculty take advantage of the various classes offered through the library.

Faculty are invited to sign up their sections for 1-3 library sessions taught by librarians. In addition, faculty are encouraged to share assignment descriptions with librarians who can support the teaching and learning process in terms of information literacy and research skills. Finally, Todd shared compelling anecdotal evidence from his LIS 101 course in which students spent the semester doing research on specific topics related to climate change. With an in-depth approach to information literacy over an extended period of a semester, it was clear that students' information literacy skills improved.

After the presentation, faculty spent time in roundtable discussions examining the current Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for general education. This was a lively discussion as is always the case when faculty come together to discuss how we define student learning in various areas and what we are looking for in terms of evidence when students have met those outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes

After the discussion it became clear to the AC that the current SLOs need further examination and revision. The AC members have spent some time discussing the possibility of consolidating some of the SLOs in an effort to shorten our assessment calendar, which currently spans a 7-year cycle. Because we have developed assessment tools for all current SLOs, it will take a significant effort to make changes to this process. The AC considers this to be a good time to do this level of reflection due to the affirmation process for HLC.

Public Speaking: Todd Heldt and Carrie Nepstad presented "Information Literacy in a Post-Truth World" at the 21st Annual Illinois Community College Assessment Fair, which was held at Prairie State College. Later this month, at the end of April, Carrie Nepstad, Jennifer Asimow, and Kristin Bivens will travel to Black

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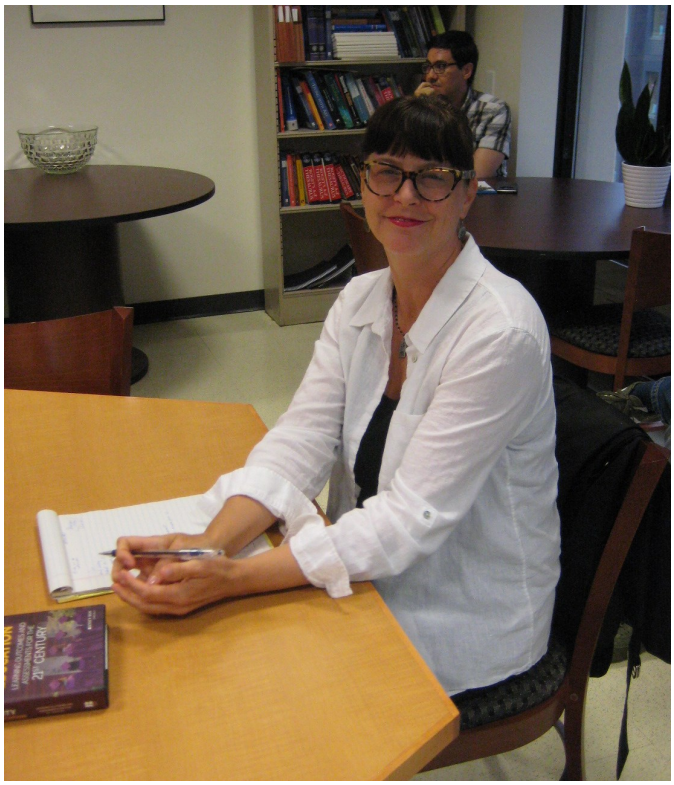

Carrie and Fernando

Hawk College in Moline Illinois to lead a 2-day workshop with faculty and administrators on the assessment of student learning.

Spring cleaning: Every spring, the AC reviews core documents including the committee charge and master calendar. The revised charge has been approved by the committee and is now available on the HWC Assessment web page. We have also done a review of our web pages to make sure the content is up-to-date and easily navigated. Our web pages can be found on the HWC website under Academics: look at the Achievement heading, and click "Assessment."

We are getting ready for the fall semester. The AC, in partnership with CAST, will offer sessions during Faculty Development Week and will also do a professional development day during registration week. The dates and times for these events will be announced before the end of the semester, so please stay tuned!

Carrie Nepstad

Online Learning Coordinator Report

As of 2014, one-third of all students in institutions of higher education are enrolled in at least one online course (Allen & Seaman, 2014). There is nothing to suggest that this number will decline anytime soon, and it is predicted that it will rise. Progressive delivery systems in educations, like online courses and hybrid courses, have the potential to expand access to greater numbers of students and to make higher education a real possibility for students heretofore unable to attend traditional classrooms.

Online versus Face-to-Face

A central question to these burgeoning methods of delivery is whether or not they are of the same quality as traditional face-to-face courses and, moreover, whether or not students learn as much, more, or less in them. Student perceptions are important for two reasons. The first is the connection between perceptions of learning and the learning outcomes and second, "understanding student perspectives helps both student administrators and educators make informed decisions when it comes to course offerings and course design" (Platt et al. p. 490, 2014).

In fall 2016, we designed a survey (based on a pilot survey conducted in online Child Development courses in spring 2016) to get to the heart of the above questions. This web-based survey had 14 closed-ended questions with opportunities for students to follow-up their answers with open-ended written responses.

Near the end of the semester, we sent out requests to the online faculty to make this survey available to their students. Many faculty did just that, and we had a final count of just over 500 student responses. This was very exciting, as this large sample further validates the data. Of those 515 responses, 443 students were eligible to take the entire survey, as the survey was designed as a comparative analysis of online courses versus face-to-face courses and thus they needed to have taken a face-to-face course at some point in their college career at CCC.

This survey has revealed so much rich data, more than I could ever detail here, but I will share a few tidbits with you. Very promisingly, 57% of respondents reported that they rate their online learning about the same as their face-to-face learning. This is a departure from the national research that shows students perceive their learning to be less in their online classes (Platt et al., 2014). Our data revealed that students feel that their human interactions (student-teacher, student-student) are less in their online courses but their personal activity (reading, research, studying) is more.

We also discovered that the most common reasons our students take classes online is because of work schedule conflicts. However, we also found that there are a myriad of reasons why students take online courses, including active military duty, chronic illness, child care issues, and the reputation of the online courses. This is important for everyone involved in online learning to remember. Students may have many challenges that prevent them from coming to a local campus.

Online learning makes college possible for these students, but they still may have many obstacles to overcome in order to be successful. Of course, this is true in our face-to-face courses as well, but we should not assume that our online students are all there because they have self-determined to be successful,

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independent, technologically-oriented self-starters.

A few other items that may be of interest:

1. Students do not feel that group projects are connected to their learning.
2. Students do think that the textbook and other learning materials matter when it comes to their learning.
3. Students care about the quality of feedback they receive from their instructor. They believe that if it is courteous, timely, and responsive to their learning style, it positively affects learning.
4. Students have many positive things to say about their online faculty in terms of their learning. In some cases, they report glowing commendations of their instructors.
5. Students have some criticisms of their online faculty in terms of their learning. Some report that their instructors were unresponsive. Others felt that their instructor did not "care" about their learning. Some felt that faculty who were disorganized or who did not follow the syllabus affected their learning adversely.

Over the next few weeks, I will be completing the final report of this study. This will be made available to you for review once it is approved through the Assessment Committee.

This is an exciting time for online learning at CCC. Stay tuned for more assessment news from the online world.

Allen, I.E., & Seaman, J. (2014, January). Grade change: Tracking online education in the United States. Babson Park, Massachusetts: BABSON Survey Research Group. Retrieved from http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/gradechange.pdf

Platt, Carrie Anne; Raile, Amber N.W.; and Yu, Nan (2014, December) "Virtually the Same?: Student Perceptions of the Equivalence of Online Ckasses to Facve-to-Face Classes." MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching; Vol,10: No. 3.

Jen Asimow

What is Program Level Assessment?

Program level assessment is looking at an area that offers a degree or certificate and seeing if there is some type of tool that measures how well students meet the degree/certificate outcomes. Areas and disciplines that are independently accredited have these kinds of assessments already in place. Child Development, for example, has active program-level assessments in place as part of meeting their outside accreditation requirements.

Other areas, though, are in different stages of having program-level assessment and need to take the next steps of making them active assessments at some point in the future. As part of the HLC process, documentation is needed to show that HWC is doing program-level assessment for all its degrees and certificates.

Liberal Arts Degrees and Certificats

My focus for Spring 2017 Program Level Assessment has been with the Liberal Arts degrees and certificates. My first step was to identify 6 areas and contact the faculty responsible for the degrees or certificates within the programs or disciplines. Once the proper contact person is identified, I'm treating the first step as a fact-finding and information-gathering opportunity.

The first six areas I chose are Studio Art, Digital Media Design (DMD), Architecture, Theater, Music and Philosophy. Some of these areas are AFA degrees, some are AS degrees and some are offered within the AA degree.

So far, I have discovered that many areas already have things in place that can be used for program level assessment, so it is just a matter of utilizing what they have in place. The next step would be organizing how it is used more methodically and create a way to document the results. Degrees and certificates that have capstone classes or portfolio classes as part of their pathways, fall into this category.

Other programs are currently doing unit- level assessment with cohorts of sections within their degrees. Some of these unit- level assessments can then inform how the program- level assessments should look. This is a starting small, then growing tall approach. This allows each stage to inform the next in a more organic manner.

There are some areas that have not had an opportunity to start any type of purposeful assessment due to being under staffed or not properly supported. Planning, creating and administering assessments take time and require departmental and administrative support. Unfortunately, not all areas have what they need to properly facilitate assessments yet. So the first step here is to find a way to have these support systems available to areas that are too under staffed to do it on their own. Some degrees or certificates are "departments of one" and the faculty member simply can not take on a task like this.

Looking at program assessment and how it can work is different for every area. That has been one of the real discoveries I have made so far. I have also discovered that for the most part, program-level assessment is happening in some shape or form. It is just not always officially labeled as such. So going forward, I plan to do more fact finding and information gathering to help areas start to plan and label their program-level assessments.

Paul Wandless

The Analysts

I have been in the official role as research analyst of the Assessment Committee for the last three years. Last year was the first year support became available to offer two research analyst positions, and Sarah Kakumanu also took on this role. She was able to bring numerous skills to the committee that were an excellent complement to my own. Next year, it appears that we will be getting a third research analyst on the committee, Fernando Miranda-Mendoza. While the level of support is remaining the same, Sarah, Fernando, and I will be splitting the duties and support of these positions three ways.

The analysts are very excited about this development. We believe that having support distributed across a strong team is more

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Fernando and Camelia

effective than when it is concentrated on a single individual. This will allow us to utilize backgrounds in statistical theory, numerical optimization, and data analytics. Having these three fields represented in the committee will allow us to be even more data-driven in assessing student learning and more confident in our interpretations of the results.

As the analyst serving the longest in this role, it has also inspired me to document the work we are doing in our corner of the committee. While we have presented our results and explained the processes in committee, we have never formally written them down with sufficient detail that they can be reproduced. Additionally, while I don't have any intention of stepping away from my role in the near future, having a staggered leadership transition and clear documentation of our assessment history will allow the work we have done in the last few years to be replicated and refined.

Phillip Vargas

Unit-Level Assessment—Introduction

For the second semester in a row, all academic departments are represented by a Unit-Level Liaison to the Assessment Committee. Each liaison works to support a project selected in consultation with their department colleagues in order to address pressing questions about student learning.

Some projects are in the initial stages, working to develop a pilot using an assessment tool and rubric, while others are concluding the first cycle of the six stages of assessment. A few of the departments have even run certain assessments across multiple semesters. The articles that follow highlight the different phases of the assessment cycle that each of these projects undergo, just as they highlight the diverse array of questions that faculty want to investigate.

While some projects choose to investigate student learning across multiple sections of a particular course, other projects examine student learning along several courses in a sequence and others are designed to assess student learning at the program level. After running the assessment and analyzing the data, the process of closing the loop begins. This is the most important component since it focuses on how to take what we learn and apply it in our classrooms to improve student learning. Closing the loop involves determining and sharing recommendations about pedagogical approaches and curriculum design.

Please continue to support your department's liaison by engaging your colleagues in discussions about student learning and considering what questions about student learning you would like to investigate in the future.

Erica McCormack

Art & Architecture Unit-Level Assessment

Assessments that run frequently over a period of years need to be updated and even expanded to stay relevant. Art 144 (Two Dimensional Design) is a class that fits into this category. It has been assessed every year since Fall 2013 and has greatly benefited from being revisited to see if it is still producing usable data. If the assessment does not evolve over time to reflect the current needs of the class, it becomes a less effective tool. So a good look at the assessment data to determine what aspects of

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the assessment are still relevant and what aspects are no longer needed is important.

Over the last four years, much has been learned from the data produced from the assessment. The findings from the reports have been successfully used to improve the effectiveness of meeting the syllabus outcomes every year. Based on the data and recommendations generated by this assessment, faculty have created a shared glossary that is now used across sections, and faculty have also shared projects related to the skills measured by the assessment.

Early data showed that there was some discrepancy in how terminology was being applied and utilized in projects. This affected the overall scores in the first year of running the assessment, then improved after the shared vocabulary and project recommendations were implemented.

The assessment has also been expanded twice since 2013. Initially, it covered different ways to use perspective (one-point, two-point, and isometric) to draw rectilinear shapes with receding openings. Then it expanded to include a section on creating value with shading and hatching to show mass and volume. This year, it again expanded to include a section on color theory that covers properly identifying color harmonies and correctly recognizing color use.

Expanding Assessment

Expanding the assessment every few years to capture more data on additional outcomes makes it a better tool for addressing faculty questions about student learning. Perspective, value, and color are core concepts and skills that students need to master in order to be successful in their future studio courses. Now data can be tracked and compared to see if students are meeting the outcomes related to these critical skills.

Updating by refining is just as important as expanding, when appropriate. Sometimes updating can mean taking something away from an assessment. In the perspective section, the skill of drawing rectilinear shapes using isometric projections has never shown itself to be challenge for students. Since 2013, it started as a high scoring area and has stayed consistently high since. So at this point, there does not appear to be further benefit to continuing to assess this particular skill. Therefore, for Fall 2017, we will update the assessment by removing this part of the assignment.

It is important to consider the length of time needed to take the assessment in order to obtain good results. So removing elements that faculty no longer have questions about helps in keeping the length of time to complete the assessment reasonable. Especially as new elements are being added, it only makes sense that some elements can be removed.

An assessment tool is only useful if it changes to reflect the current environment in which it is given. Revisiting the tool every year is great way to ensure the data it creates is both relevant and actionable. It also helps keep it fresh and up to date with current questions we have about student learning, curricular design, and pedagogical approaches.

Paul Wandless

Biology Unit-Level Assessment

My work plan as a biology department liaison of the assessment committee is to work on three student learning outcomes(SLOs) from microbiology (BIOLOGY 233), specifically those focused on lab report writing assignments. Following the six stages of the assessment cycle process, I am moving through the first three stages during the spring 2017 semester (piloting the assessment in my two sections of microbiology) and will continue to engage in the last three stages during the fall semester of 2017 for an expanded number of courses and sections. The SLOs being investigated are:

1. Systematically collect, organize, and present appropriate data in graphs, tables, or figures.
2. Assess the validity of the data collected and interpret it correctly.
3. Exhibit, grammatically and technically, written communication competency through [lab] reports.

There are four lab report writing assignments for microbiology. Writing is on experimental data students generated in lab, and these data from all students' experiments were pooled in a single Excel sheet. Student learning outcomes are demonstrated via a template that students complete which follows the scientific journal format known as IMRaD (Introduction, Materials & Methods, Results, Discussion and References).

Starting with the second report assignment, students were provided with an updated template and a rubric that governs and further elucidates the template. I modified the rubric based on feedback from Biology faculty as well as on examination of previous assessment committee tools, US academic institution rubrics, and the accompanying literature. The final template and rubric will be used, in the fall 2017 semester and afterwards, fully or in part, to assess learning related to these SLOs through writing assignments in general and lab reports in particular.

Bara Sarraj

Business Unit-Level Assessment

The work this semester focused on two primary activities. The first activity was an ongoing effort analyzing Business Department student abilities prior to and after entering Business Department pathways. The second effort was to assess student learning in Business 181 – Financial Accounting in both online and face to face formats. In both cases, the work aims to show efficacy of current practices in contributing to student learning and/or highlight opportunities for curricular or pedagogical changes based on student responses.

The ongoing effort builds on a thirty-question survey taken in the fall 2016 semester by students within six courses. Three of the courses are typically taken earlier in a business student's tenure than the others. The "early courses" were identified as Business 111 – Introduction to Business, Business 141 – Business Mathematics, and Business 181 – Financial Accounting.

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The "early" assessment was provided to all 17 sections of Business 111, 3 sections of Business 141, and 10 sections of Business 181. The "later courses" for the survey were identified based on typical transfer requirements and how common the classes were to later Business and Professional Services pathway sequences. The courses for the "later" assessment included Business 182 – Managerial Accounting, Business 269 – Principles of management, and Economics 202 – Principles of Economics. Social and Behavioral Sciences faculty were engaged to secure their support for the Economics class. The "later" assessment was provided to all 5 sections of Business 182, 7 sections of Business 269, and 10 sections of Economics 202. The sections included both on-line and face-to-face classes.

The Business Department's goals for the assessment are to better understand the ability of students to demonstrate fundamental knowledge of business concepts and to perform elementary business calculations prior to entering a department pathway of study and to investigate those same skills toward the end of a student's pathway.

The department hopes to show subsequent improvement over time for the same learning outcomes as students move through Business programs, prior to transferring or graduating from a departmental pathway. This assessment work over time could help demonstrate programmatic efficacy and help improve pathway curriculum based on any trends and issues uncovered via the assessments.

Last semester, 157 student or 14% of the potential respondents completed the skills survey. 109 of the respondents were from the "early" courses and the balance came from the later courses. Response rates for all courses other than Economics 202 were above 12%.

The effort this semester centered around analyzing the student responses, assessing the validity of the questions and the assessment on the whole and then critiquing the messaging, procedures and policies around administering the assessment.

Our goal is to facilitate both instructor and student use of the assessment and to ensure a continued high participation rate. Results are expected to be available by the end of the semester, and any results that suggest areas for immediate improvement will be applied to the next round of assessments that will be conducted during the first two weeks of the fall 2017 semester. The results will also be used as materials in support of the upcoming departmental accreditation effort.

The second assessment effort involved sampling previous exit exams, using examples of questions provided by discipline faculty, and adopting best practice examples from national benchmarks to design a new thirty-question exit assessment based on 13 of the 15 student learning outcomes for Business 181 – Financial Accounting. The assessment focused on analysis, construction and interpretation of accounting concepts crucial for pathway advancement.

The questions were organized into a Blackboard enterprise survey, which was then given to all nine sections of Business 181 being taught this semester, four of which were conducted online and five of which met in person. An introduction and instruction

Matthew, Willard, and Yev

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piece to accompany the assessment was written for the students to assist in completion, and for the faculty to guide the administration of the assessment and to suggest how to help encourage high participation rates through class participation credit or other appropriate means.

The revised assessment and documentation was discussed with discipline faculty a final time for any additional input and to encourage faculty to promote participation. The assessment will be administered to students during the last two weeks of the Spring 2017 semester, beginning in week 14. The assessment was strategically timed so that it could also serve as a general study tool for the students preparing for finals and ideally reinforce the same concepts they have been studying all semester.

The results will be analyzed in the Fall 2017 semester for insights, and the results and recommendations will be discussed with faculty and administration for potential enhancements to online and face-to face alignment in order to strengthen student learning, regardless of course delivery mode.

Bral Spight

English, Speech & Theater Unit-Level Assessment

This spring, I had the opportunity to combine two passions: theater and data. It began last fall, when I collected SLOs from all of the fine arts classes offered by the English, Speech, and Theater department. The fall project assessed whether and to what extent our literature, creative writing, and theater arts classes conveyed "soft skills," the characteristics and abilities such as communication, interpersonal relationships, management, and presentation skills that are needed to excel in many professions.

"Soft Skills"

The performance-based Theater Art classes - Acting I and II (Theater Art 133 and 235), Improvisational Theater (Theater Art 242), and Theater Production, Direction and Management (Theater Art 132) - included SLOs conveying an extensive array of soft skill development. Therefore, the pilot assessment for this semester focused exclusively on the performance-based Theater Art classes, in relation to students' soft skill development.

In collaboration with Theater Art faculty, a survey was designed and administered to students enrolled in these four courses during Week 3 of the Spring 2017 semester. The survey focused on three areas: how much the students reported valuing the acquisition of each of a specific list of soft skills; how well they felt they had mastered each of those skills, at present; and, prior to enrolling in theater classes at HWC, whether they had experienced any level of acting, performance, or theater instruction.

This initial survey found that most students enrolled in fine arts classes do value soft skills, but rate themselves as "having mastered" the skills less frequently than the extent to which they value those skills. This survey will be followed with two additional assessments at the close of the semester: a direct assessment of students' soft skill development by their instructor, during their final performances in week 16, and a follow-up indirect assessment surveying how well they now feel they have mastered the soft skills as well as, again, how they would now characterize those skills' value.

As a side project, George Calisto, Assistant Director of Research and Planning, provided me with data on the top 15 schools to which our students following the Business pathways transfer. Using that data, I discovered that all but one of those schools (Robert Morris) accepts one or more of our performance-based Theater Art classes for fine arts or elective transfer credit. This was welcome news, as of course, closing the loop is a vital step in assessment. If we discover, after the Spring 2017 pilot and Fall 2017 full assessment, that Theater Art classes have a strong set of needed skills to offer our students, it is important to ensure that our students know that by selecting these credits, they are still on track to successfully transfer.

My personal story includes an amazing childhood on the local and regional stage. I absolutely loved every moment of my musical/ theatrical upbringing, but the stressful and uncertain life of a performance career didn't appeal to me at all. Having the same stereotypes and experiences of English teachers that many young people share, I was soon stunned to discover how much teaching college-level English composition paralleled my theater experience: memorizing lines, creating a persona, maintaining stage presence and eye contact, projecting my voice, gauging the audience's response and adjusting my timing and tone accordingly, and of course, improvisation when things didn't go as planned: these teaching skills are derived directly from my years on the stage. Upon reflection, many of the careers to which our students aspire demand some combination of these skills as well, and many more students may stand out in their fields due to having acquired them.

Amy Rosenquist

Humanities Unit-Level Assessment

Last fall's Philosophy Pilot Assessment of students' critical reading abilities and survey of their reading and learning beliefs set a new height for the "bar of excellence" at .7947 in regard to assessment measure reliability (as calculated by a Cronbach alpha test). Upon hearing the news I promptly gave myself a high-five (no one else was in the room when I read the email) and then Googled "Cronbach alpha test" to find out what it meant.

From the University of Virginia's data library [i], I gathered that the test is a useful way to determine a measure's reliability, or "the internal consistency of a set of scale or test items… In other words, the higher the αα coefficient [on a scale of 0 to 1], the more the items have shared covariance and probably measure the same underlying concept." To quote our data analyst, Phil Vargas, "The tool is looking really robust."

This news is not exactly a shocking, fluky surprise. The survey questions on the assessment measure, affectionately known as PhilAss #1 among those who have worked on it, were adapted from other tried and tested research tools aimed at gathering data

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Jeff

about: 1) students' reading comprehension; 2) students' reading approach; 3) students' mindset; and 4) students' level of independence—the latter three of which have all been shown in multiple studies to be impactful on the first—but even still, it is a rare and happy moment when something actually goes the way I expect it to!

This project is a direct result of the research I did about literacy learning and instruction while on sabbatical in the spring of 2013. The measure features three sections. First, students read a (roughly) 1400 word, argumentative excerpt from a paper published in an academic journal. The article focuses on Perry's taxonomy of college student intellectual development and scores at 12.1 on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test and a 39.1 for Flesch Reading Ease; these two measures of language density both suggest that the article is written at a level of linguistic density to be "difficult to read," but understandable, and thus appropriate for high school graduates and college students (whereas this article rates out at a 16 for grade level and a 32 for reading ease (lower is harder)).

The reading is followed by 10 multiple choice questions asking students to confirm or exclude various inferences and analyses, locate supporting ideas and assumptions, and identify audience. The second section features 20 questions which correspond to students' reading behaviors (i.e., pausing to consider the title before reading (60.4% said they did), previewing the text (51.6%), annotating the text as they read (only 18.7% said they did), and so on. A third section has another 30 questions about the students' reading and learning beliefs that correspond to their ideas about how to approach reading (as a 'transmission' or a 'transaction'), their 'mindset' (as 'fixed' or 'growth-oriented'), and their reading autonomy (as 'dependent' or 'independent').

Students on the whole did not score very well on the critical reading questions (for example, only 19.8% correctly identified the argumentative thesis of the selection); however, there were some bright spots too, such as the fact that 70.3% correctly identified an effective critique of the argument. Shockingly few students annotated while they read and shockingly many, 15.4% of the students surveyed, believe that "Good readers remember most of what they read verbatim (meaning 'word for word')."

Comprehension Strategies

Meanwhile, nearly 70% of the respondents said that when they struggle with a text, they know of multiple strategies they can use to get unstuck, which is good, and 75% or more agreed with all four of the statements that correlate to having a growth mindset, which seems great. Without deeper analysis, though, which would be inappropriate for a pilot, it is difficult to determine what those really numbers mean. Hopefully, we'll know more by the fall 2017 semester.

That analysis will be forthcoming, assuming the college isn't closed down due to a state bankruptcy and the creek don't rise, because the reliability record we set gives us a green light to go ahead with our scheduled assessment of all of our 100-level philosophy classes in week 13 of this fall 2017 semester. Once completed, we will be analyzing the data for information about our students generally, as well as about first-time philosophy students, students in their second or third philosophy classes, comparisons among those two groups, and, eventually, longitudinal data looking for changes in students' abilities as well as their attitudes about reading and learning.

In those data sets, we will be hoping to find out what sort of progress students are making in realizing our promised learning objective of "Improved Critical Reading Abilities" and demonstrating the associated outcomes related to argument analysis and evaluation. We also hope to learn what we as faculty might focus on to further improve student learning in these regards. In the meantime, we'll be celebrating our new record and high-fiving anyone and everyone who knows, and says, that philosophy rules!

[i] http://data.library.virginia.edu/using-and-interpreting-cronbachs-alpha/

Dave Richardson

Library Unit-Level Assessment

Assessment has always been important to me because I see it as where the rubber meets the road in education. Often when I teach and get visual confirmation that students are keeping up—eye contact, heads nodding, etc…--I just assume they have mastered the content. This might not be, and in fact often is not, the case. It takes meaningful assessment to say for sure.

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New Framework for Information Literacy

So when the ACRL adopted the new Framework for Information Literacy, I was immediately curious about how we were going to change our approach to teaching and assessment. The Framework demands that our instruction become more conceptual and less like a checklist of steps, and it can be a challenge to teach those kinds of lessons in 50 minutes of class time. The task is even more daunting when one needs to take extra time at the end to assess it all. Finally, without doing a pre-class assessment, it is impossible to establish a baseline of student performance.

These challenges notwithstanding, the librarians reconfigured HWC's one-shot instruction sessions to be more in-line with the goals of the Framework, designed a tool that will hopefully capture some of the conceptual nuance of the Framework while still fitting into the few minutes remaining at the end of a packed one-shot, and sent professors links to a pre-assessment before the session in order to capture growth.

The librarians originally standardized the outcomes of basic one-shots to include "Database Interface Navigation," "Search Strategies and Boolean Operators," "Evaluation and Critical Thinking," "Outlining the Research Process," and "Narrowing Topics." But after some time in practice, they decided to jettison the notion of "Narrowing Topics." This topic is most often covered by course instructors prior to library sessions, and such knowledge is difficult to assess in a multiple-choice format.

The library assessed 170 students during the spring semester. Though the data are still forthcoming, we can draw some inferences already.

Todd

First, there is a lot of overlap between the Framework and the Standards, so redesigning the sessions was not quite like reinventing the wheel. It was more akin to taking a wheel and making it much bigger and including all-terrain tread.

Second, the tool tries to assess student learning by using two questions to gauge each individual outcome, as well as one effort -checking question to make sure that students are reading all the questions. It remains to be see if the two question approach will provide solid answers about student learning, The effort question, however, weeded out several very low scores and one otherwise perfect score, the latter being either a very lucky guesser or a curmudgeon.

Third, the pre-test was not completed by any of the students to whom professors sent the link. Thus, the assessment is a snapshot of student learning upon completion of a one-shot and cannot be compared to any baseline.

Hopefully, when the numbers are all crunched, it will tell us what we need to do differently in the classroom. We have a lot to teach in a very short time, so honing our methods will help us make the most of our time.

Todd Heldt

The Latest and Greatest in Math Assessment!

Starting this semester, Spring 2017, the Mathematics Department is in the process of creating an assessment for Math 118 – General Education Mathematics. This is the only course for which the instructor selects 4 out of 12 topics to be taught. This is also the first semester in which we offer Math 118 in all three formats: face-to-face, hybrid and online. At our college, Math 118 is mainly taught by part time faculty. For these reasons, Math 118 poses a particular challenge when it comes to creating a unified and relevant assessment.

Forming and working with the Mathematics Department Assessment Committee, which consists of six full-time HWC Math faculty members, was a great experience for me and proved invaluable to our assessment work this semester. I found our meetings and email collaboration speedy and productive.

After we decided to create an assessment for Math 118, we realized we could not find its official Master Syllabus. It took us less than a week to first gather information and various versions of the syllabus from the previous chairs of our department, Curriculum Committee, and even the Truman College website, and then to consolidate the Master Syllabus for Math 118. (As a consequence, the Mathematics Department decided to review all master syllabi.)

Revising Student Learning Outcomes

The next step was to revise the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for this course, which had been presented specifically for

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each of the 12 possible topics of the course but did not include general SLOs that would be met in every section, regardless of the topics selected by the individual faculty member. As a result, I organized and worked with a district wide committee (at least one faculty member from each of the City Colleges) to determine common/general SLOs for Math 118 that students can meet no matter what topics are taught in the course. The next step was to present these common SLOs to my colleagues, and we unanimously picked one that we want to investigate during this assessment cycle.

Designing an Assessment from Scratch

We are currently working on researching the assessment tools available and designing our own authentic assessment, which we are planning to pilot before the end of the Spring 2017 semester and expand in the Fall 2017 semester to include a pre-test as well as a post-test. After collecting and analyzing data, we hope to identify where students are struggling, and to address the problems immediately.

Moreover, we are planning to examine patterns and to determine if the students' results are influenced by the specific topics covered in the course. All this information will help us determine strategies to enhance our teaching, with the goal of improving our students' learning.

Camelia Salajean

Physical Science Unit-Level Assessment

Last semester was something of a milestone for assessment in the physical sciences. By the end of 2016, we had finally completed our assessment efforts in our General Chemistry courses (CHEM 201), culminating in three big projects. These included a detailed survey of topics covered by Harold Washington faculty and analyses of both pre-test and post-test data for multiple sections across three semesters. The results were distributed to the department, to the assessment committee, and, perhaps most helpfully, to new adjunct professors as part of the on-boarding process. The positive feedback from them was particularly gratifying.

So we began 2017 with the enticing question … what next?

The prerequisite for General Chemistry is Basic Chemistry (CHEM 121). We offer numerous sections of this course every semester (it is second in enrollment only to Chem 201), and since it is intended for students who have never before taken chemistry, faculty report that it is a challenging class for both the students and the professor. Recently there has been an added complication: for many years this course was paired with a companion course, CHEM 100, that gave students extra help in working with the quantitative aspects of chemistry calculations. But a few years ago, this course was removed by district administration, and it was only reinstated after much argument last semester. So the choice of our next assessment target was almost inevitable – CHEM 121!

Leveraging Existing Tools

Luckily, we are not starting from scratch. For several years now we have been giving an assessment at the end of the semester in Chem 121 courses – the California Chemistry Diagnostic Test, a standardized exam published by the American Chemical Society.

High-quality snacks! (Fernando, Jen, Erica, Willard, Sarah and Yev)

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We have been diligently collecting the results in the hope that one day we would be able to sit down and analyze the data, and that time has finally come. So a huge thanks are in order to all of the professors who gave this test every semester, submitted the data every semester, and every semester heard nothing back. Your cooperation is finally paying off.

And the results are interesting. The exam has a variety of questions, both in terms of difficulty and subject matter. It seems that what predicts student success on a question is the difficulty of the question itself, not the difficulty of the topic that question assesses. For instance, electron configurations are a complicated and abstract topic, but the test question that addresses this topic is quite straightforward – students did well on this question. On the other hand, atom-mole conversions are usually not a difficult topic (at least, with practice), but the question on the test is slightly more complicated than it might first appear to students – students struggled with this question.

So … what next now?

The results of the 121 post-tests should be examined more closely to confirm the tentative conclusions described above, ideally with data from a few more semesters. But if it is true that our students can answer a variety of easy questions but struggle with harder ones, then several ideas come to mind. For instance, it might be productive for 121 faculty to meet to discuss how these new instructional hours from the reintroduction of CHEM 100 are being used. Perhaps someone has found a creative strategy for fostering more sophisticated problem solving techniques. Also, since writing higher level questions is often difficult, faculty could pool test questions so that we are not constantly duplicating others' work. Overall, these assessment results provide an exciting opportunity to enrich our chemistry curriculum. Stay tuned for further developments!

Allan Wilson

Social Sciences - The Past, the Present and the Future walked into the classroom. It was tense.

The unit level assessment project for the Social Science Department (SSD) was introduced to the department's faculty via email in early February 2016. It should be noted that the SSD encompasses six disciplines: Anthropology, History, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. The Applied Science Department(ASD) merged with SSD in the fall of 2017, further expanding the department. After consultation with Dr. Domenico Ferri, chair of the SSD, the decision was made in Spring 2016 to start the unit level assessment work by focusing on history. Because several fields of history are taught (U.S. History, African American, Latin American, African, and World), the challenge was to create an assessment tool and rubric that would apply to all history courses.

Adapting an Assessment Tool for Fit Our Needs

Adapting an assessment tool developed by history faculty at four-year colleges, the steering committee identified five essential skills it is important for students to be able to demonstrate at the end of any history course: the ability to (1) craft a thesis statement; (2) distinguish between primary and secondary sources; (3) use primary and secondary sources to support an argument; (4) understand and identify the factors that cause change and continuity over time; (5) demonstrate knowledge of specific historical content and context.

Focusing on the first three skills, the steering committee created a descriptive rubric to assess student learning relative to those measureable outcomes.

The pilot assessment project was launched in the second half of the spring 2016 semester and the rubric was used to assess students' final essays in the following courses: One online and one face-to-face section of History 111 (American History to 1865); and two face-to-face sections of History 115 (African American History Survey II).

The three assessment skills identified are important for success in any history class; however, the design process requires more thought in order to generate more relevant data for the particular questions faculty have about student learning. While these three skills are important in understanding history, they represent only a portion of what is necessary. The three assessed skills should have been tied to a larger skill -- critical thinking. It is recommended that in the future, the assessment be continued with the following suggestions:

1 Increase the number of student assessed;

2 Faculty should use same instructional guidelines in class to teach skills assessed and to share instructions with students;

3 Add a category to address counter arguments within the paper in order to assess critical thinking.

Sometimes One Word Can Make all the Difference

During the Fall of 2016 there was a new study designed to assess students' retention of key vocabulary terms for World War I and World War II. Three history courses were picked for this study. Two face-to-face classes of History 112 (from 1865 to the present) and one History 142 (World History from 1500 to the present). The main objective of the study was to assess retention of vocabulary terms over time. Students completed the assessment the last day of class, but the vocabulary studied and learned occurred earlier in the semester. There was a three to four week gap between learning vocabulary and the assessment being taken by students.

The assessment was in two parts. There were five multiple-choice questions and five short essay answers. There were two different rubrics created for this study. The multiple-choice rubric contains four categories: Best, Best incorrect , Incorrect answer and Blank (not answered). The short-term essay identification rubric analyzed both definition and context of a student's answer. Both of these categories were assessed as accurate, mostly accurate, somewhat accurate and no answer.

The raw data of this study have been collected and are under specific analysis with the data analysis team. We look forward to learning how to better support students in retaining vocabulary

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based on what findings are revealed by the data.

Nick Ceh

Nuts and Bolts of Storytelling in Spanish

Recently, several full-time Spanish language faculty members completed a revision of syllabi used for online and face-to-face Spanish 102 courses, including improvement and standardization of the student learning outcomes. The faculty then expressed particular interest in having this semester's assessment project explore student learning using the following SLO: "Students will be able to narrate events using present and past tense". I am now in stage two of the assessment process, in the midst of designing an appropriate tool to examine this aspect of student learning, and I have run up against several exciting challenges.

Mastering Past and Present Tense

In general, the challenge for this study is devising a tool that can balance the need for efficient and effective analysis with a sensitivity to the constraints facing the assessment takers. Given that some of the test takers are enrolled in online courses and others are enrolled in face to face courses, my inclination is to run this pilot in an online assessment format, but this must be weighed against the desire to get a representative sample of students participating in the assessment, which is sometimes best achieved by running the assessment during class time.

One specific challenge involves the two tenses listed in the SLO above. My first attempt at designing a tool that looked at both present and past tenses quickly became too long and would have discouraged students from completing it online (outside of class time, in the case of those students enrolled in face-to-face courses). Initial feedback from Spanish 102 faculty has given me some guidance on this, and I have decided to have the first part, which requires composition of individual sentences, will focus on the past tenses. The second part, which requires composition of a full paragraph, will allow the test takers to use both the present and past tenses.

Although parts one and two described above deal with the sentence level and the paragraph level respectively, both parts also engage learners on the word level since both tasks require them to pick out words from memory and manipulate those selected words into the acceptable forms for each sentence they are composing. In addition, both task types are authentic with respect to types of activities students would be expected to perform in class and in the real world.

Irregular Verbs

I am asking the Spanish 102 faculty for help in compiling a list of common verbs that are irregular in the preterite past tense in some way. (Spanish actually has two past tense forms, the preterite past and the imperfect past. Many students have more difficulty acquiring the preterite past as compared to the imperfect past since many verbs that are irregular in the former tense are regular in the latter) A list of about ten irregular verbs will be presented to the students (in the basic form) for them to integrate into the two task types described below.

While both of the following task types allow the participant to engage in word-level and phrase-level grammar construction, Task Type 1 focuses more on the word level since that task presents isolated sentences that are not connected to a longer narrative. Therefore, they will devote more energy than they normally would to production of the target forms of the specific verbs within each isolated sentence. Task Type 2, on the other hand, is a more authentic language production task since the participants must produce a continuous narrative, forcing them to concentrate on the story rather than just on the forms of specific verbs.

Task Type 1- (Part One, eight items) Test takers must work from short prompts written in spanish and compose individual sentences in the whichever past tense seems most appropriate.

Task Type 2- (Part Two, one item) Test takers must respond to a short prompt written in Spanish by composing a short paragraph using both past tenses and the present tense.

The test takers have seven minutes for Task Type 1 and thirteen minutes for Task Type 2 (which would include planning and revision time) for a total assessment time of twenty minutes.

The rationale for this design is rooted in my experience teaching English as a Second Language. I noticed that my students displayed a high level of verb tense accuracy on quizzes that required them to produce individual sentences. However, those same students often proved unable to reach those same high levels of performance when applying the same skill on essay assignments.

My hypothesis, based on these anecdotal experiences, is that paragraph level writing, like that required in Task Type 2, forces the test taker to concentrate on much more than word level and sentence level grammar. Task Type 2 imposes the extra job of thinking about the subject matter, the appropriate vocabulary to employ, as well as the best transitions to use. If this hypothesis is confirmed in the present study by showing a discrepancy between consistently higher scores in Task Type 1 and lower scores in Task Type 2, it would not quite show the lack of validity of the sentence-level grammar quiz task type. Rather, it would show that sentence-level tasks should not be used on their own as a predictor for equal success in longer assignments. It would suggest that when a student does well in sentence-level assignments, the instructor should not assume that the skill will be applied with the same degree of accuracy in paragraph-plus length assignments, and therefore some new pedagogical approaches should be considered in order to give students more practice with assignments of varying lengths.

Matt Williams

Child Development

The Child Development program at HWC is accredited by our national specialized association, NAEYC (the National Association for the Education of Young Children). We have been accredited by this group since 2007. As a part of our accreditation annual

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report, we are charged with assessing student learning in our program. Although we have six Key Assessments, we need only to report on one of these each year.

This year, we ran a pilot assessment on a new Key Assessment called the "Activity Plan." Students are asked to write activity plans (not unlike traditional lesson plans faculty might write for a college course) throughout our program from our introductory courses through our mid-program courses and at the end of our program in the capstone course – the Student Teaching Practicum (CD 259). In this final course, not only do students develop and write an activity plan, but they also execute this plan while being observed by their faculty instructor.

This fall, we collected data from students in each course where the activity plan is a required assignment. Several of these courses have multiple sections. The criterion for the assignment is described in the first row of the rubric below. Each of these learning outcomes is also mapped to one or more of the National Standards described by NAEYC.

The following are the results of that assessment:

	1a. Knowing and understanding young children's characteristics and needs, from birth through age 8. 5a. Understanding content knowledge & resources in academic disciplines Supportive Skill #2: Mastering & applying foundational concepts from general education	1c. Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments for young children. 5a. Understanding content knowledge & resources in academic disciplines.	1c. Using developmental knowledge to create healthy, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environments for young children. 5b. Knowing and using the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures of content areas or academic disciplines.	3a. Understanding the goals, benefits, and uses of assessment—including its use in development of appropriate goals, curriculum, and teaching strategies for young children. 5c. Using their own knowledge, appropriate early learning standards, & other resources to design, implement, & evaluate meaningful, challenging curricula for each child.	2a. Knowing about & understanding diverse family & community characteristics	3c. Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, including the use of assistive technology for children with disabilities. 4c. Using a broad repertoire of developmentally appropriate teaching/learning approaches	Supportive Skill 3: Written and verbal skills
	The activity plan includes appropriate learning goals for children and connects them to the academic disciplines.	The activity plan describes reasonable child behaviors that indicate the learning goals have been met.	The activity plan follows developmentally appropriate practice. The environment and materials have been carefully described and are appropriate to the activity.	The activity plan includes rich descriptions of appropriate expansion activities directly related to the activity.	The activity is sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity and provides suggestions on ways to enhance that sensitivity.	The activity incorporates more than 2 DAP teaching or learning approaches.	Writes clearly and without any spelling, grammar, & punctuation errors, or typos.
FA 16 107	60%	50%	40%	40%	60%	40%	50%
FA 16 109	23%	23%	23%	15%	8%	23%	31%
FA 16 149	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
FA 16 259	59%	71%	76%	94%	76%	88%	88%

** These are percentages of students who "Met" the standard for each criterion

A 70% statistically significant increase between Fall Intro courses (CD 107, 109, 149) and CD 259 denotes that 100% of students who are completing the program are meeting the learning outcomes described in the above rubric. This data is very promising for the Child Development

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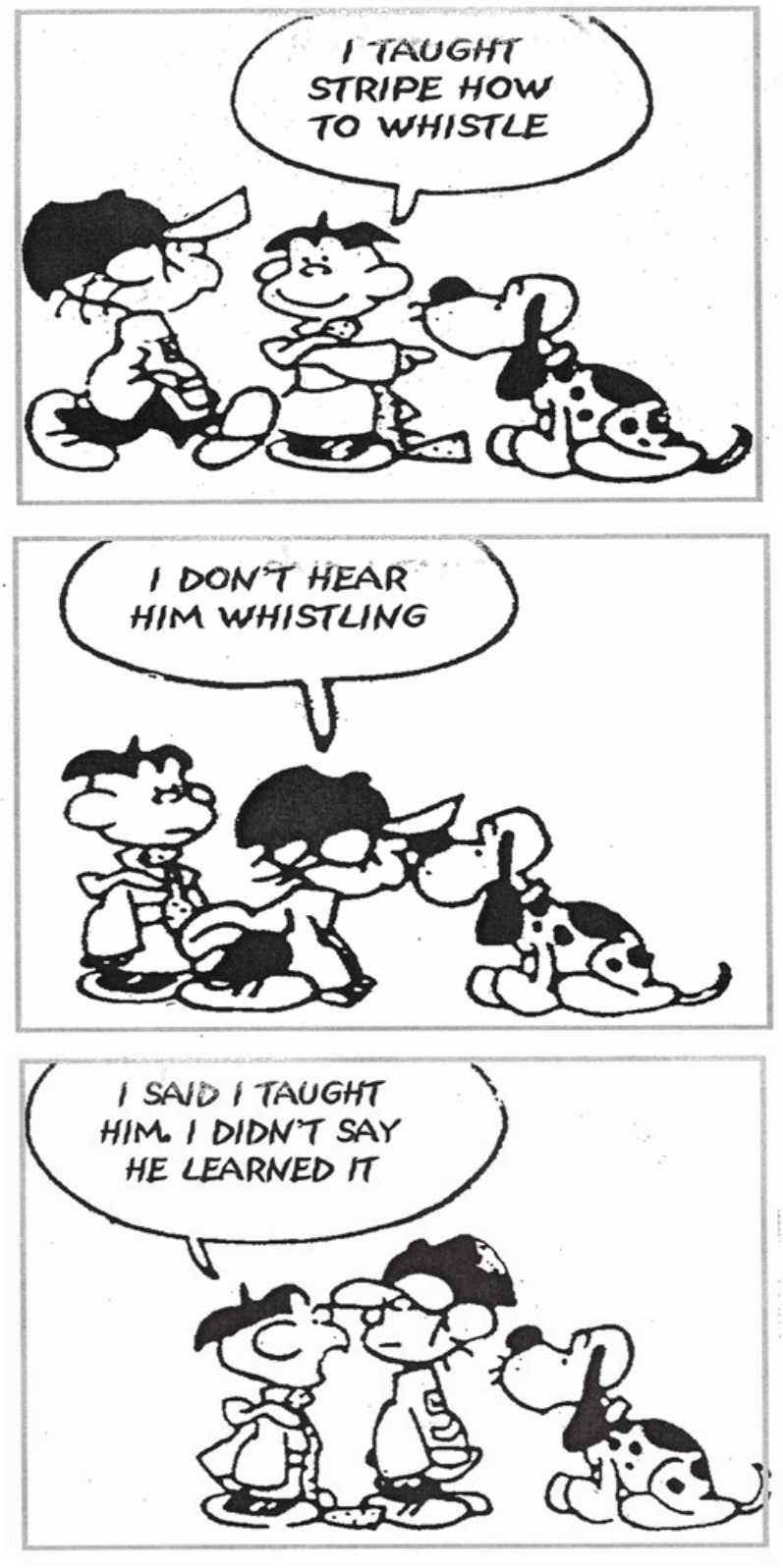

Blake, Bud. *Evidence of Effectiveness.* Kate Schutte. Web. 25 Apr. 2017. <https://sites.google.com/site/kschutteportfolio/effectiveness>

Continued from page 13

program. It suggests that our students are performing better at this particular skill at the end of the program than they are when they enter. This continues to be our hope for all of our assessments.

Jen Asimow

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).

NEWSLETTER

The HWC Assessment Committee produces a newsletter in fall and in spring. You can find an archive of these newsletters on our Web site:
http://www.ccc.edu/hwcassessment/

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