The Assessment Times

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC)
Fall 2017

Webpage: www.ccc.edu/hwcassessment

Committee Members

Chair: Carrie Nepstad

Vice-Chair of Unit Assessment: Erica McCormack

Vice-Chair of Gen Ed Assessment: Jeffrey Swigart

Secretary: Jeffrey Swigart

Research Analysts: Sarah Kakumanu, Fernando Miranda-Mendoza, and Phillip Vargas

Online Learning Assessment Coordinator: Jen Asimow

Program Assessment Coordinator: Paul Wandless

Unit Liaison for Biology: Bara Sarraj

Unit Liaison for Business: Bral Spight

Unit Liaison for English, Speech, Theater: Amy Rosenquist

Unit Liaison for Humanities & Music: David Richardson

Unit Liaison for the Library: Todd Heldt

Unit Liaison for Math: Camelia Salajean

Unit Liaison for Physical Sciences: Allan Wilson

Unit Liaison for Social & Applied Sciences: Ingrid Riedle

Unit Liaison for World Languages & ELL: Matthew Williams

Working Members:
Aigerim Bizhanova
Katelin Karlin
Ray Tse
Loretta Visomirskis
Jacquelyn Werner

(Carrie Nepstad)

From the chair

Carrie Nepstad

The Assessment Committee is grateful to J-L Deher-Lesaint for sharing his story during the Assessment Day this past August about becoming an American citizen. As the AC explores Civic Engagement and considers adding it as a student learning outcome for general education, it has been very helpful to think about what it means to be a citizen and to consider what civic engagement looks like within our community at HWC. There may be an opportunity to explore this outcome beyond the academic experience and consider student clubs, tutoring, and other student services as collaborative partners in providing students with rich experiences in civic engagement. Please stay tuned!

Here are some committee updates:

1. In General Education, we are currently collecting data for the Quantitative Reasoning assessment. At the same time, we are analyzing data from the Humanities assessment which was administered last year. In addition, later this semester, we will be disseminating the final report for the Natural Sciences assessment. Our most recent reports for Online Learning and Information Literacy can be found on the AC website along with all of our past reports, documents, newsletters, and meeting minutes.

2. A new ad hoc committee has been formed to explore Civic Engagement as a general education student learning outcome. This is an exploratory committee with interdisciplinary membership including administration to consider Civic Engagement and how it relates to our mission at the college level and to our role in assessment. We are considering a partnership with co-curricular assessment practices such as in Student Services and other areas of the college.

3. The committee has been working closely with partners on campus including CAST for professional development and the HLC Criterion Chairs in preparation for accreditation.

4. AC leadership meets with Armen and Vincent every other week to discuss updates on a regular basis. In addition, Carrie attends Department Chairs meetings regularly.

This is a snapshot of what the committee is currently doing. A core component of our philosophy is that assessment of student learning is faculty-driven, and administratively supported. Each week we consider new information about how our students learn and how we can do a better job of supporting student learning. If you have any questions about our work, please contact Carrie Nepstad at cnepstad@ccc.edu or feel free to visit a meeting. We meet every Wednesday from 3:00-4:00 pm in room 1046.

CITY COLLEGES of CHICAGO
Harold Washington
Education that Works

In This Issue

(J-L Deher-Lesaint)

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Special guest column: Betterment through assessment

Kristin Bivens, PhD

On a warm spring morning in April 2017, I picked up a mini-van from Enterprise Rental Cars and set out to pick up two esteemed colleagues and assessment experts: Jen Asimow and Carrie Nepstad. Our goal was to head west on I-80 to Blackhawk College (BHC) in Moline, Illinois, which is right on the Mighty Mississippi River. Upon our arrival at BHC, we were greeted by the man who started it all--Galen Leonhardy--who had sent out a request for an "HLC-approved assessment program" via the Two-Year College Association (TYCA) listserv in December 2016. Joyfully, and with a smile on my face, I was able to respond, proudly writing:

The Assessment Committee (AC) at my college won a CHEA award in 2012 for our assessment work, so yes, our assessment program is HLC-approved. We are a two-year, urban institution.

If you have questions, I might be able to send you in the right direction, but the AC website has a nice catalogue of the AC work.

Over the course of several email exchanges with Galen [and after sharing the CASTpods (from when I was CAST co-coordinator) with both Carrie and Erica McCormick], Galen was sold on HW's thoughtful, engaging AC work. Over the next few months, after gaining BHC administrative and faculty support (and after another BHC faculty member independently found the HW AC website), Jen, Carrie, and I were invited to BHC to talk about assessment. For me, it was exciting because I would be able to talk about the writing placement and writing assessment I have participated in as a faculty member in the English department.

While at BHC and through sharing information about our Assessment Committee--and the integral work the AC does--, I was able to reflect on what Linda Suskie calls in Five Dimensions of Quality: A Common Sense Guide to Accreditation and Accountability (2015) betterment or "including cultures of respect, communication, collaboration, growth and development, and shared collegial governance" (p. 197). In Five Dimensions of Quality, Suskie contends a culture of betterment—one of the five cultures of quality--requires "your college community to work together to take your college on its journey" (p. 197). Little did I know when the spring 2017 semester began that part of my journey would include visiting the fine folks at BHC along with two senior HW faculty members I admire to discuss assessment—thoughtful, evidence-driven assessment for the betterment of HW and BHC.

What has occurred to me in the nearly half a year since Jen, Carrie, and I trekked across Illinois to join attentive, thoughtful, and delightful colleagues at BHC is simple: the AC, through its mission to assess students' learning, consistently contributes to the betterment of HW and the HW community through nurturing a culture of respect by communicating assessment findings (rooted in the AC's collaborative assessment endeavors), which has resulted in my growth and development as an instructor. And in turn, the AC work has contributed to my students' learning.

I should unpack those previous statement a little bit.

To Carrie and Jen's surprise, while we were at BHC over two enjoyable and affirming days, I spoke about how an oral communication assessment from a few years ago resulted in my renewed focus on oral presentations in ENG 101 and ENG 197. Specifically, from the AC "Oral Communication Report" (2014), recommendation 2 stated: "2. Faculty should consider varying the types of oral presentations assigned, clearly identifying the scope of the assignment and reinforcing the concept of "audience." As a rhetorician and writing instructor, I have typically focused on the rhetorical concept audience; however, I felt renewed energy regarding teaching audience to students. In fact, to complement the methods I was using to teach audience already, I also began to instruct my students on how to be better members of an audience.

And the oral communication and AC's impact on my professional development didn't end there. In the fall 2016, I interviewed speech professors Jennifer Armendarez and Sunny Serres about speech tips for non-speech faculty. You might remember it: it was a CASTpod! Since the AC communicated the oral communication findings regarding students and their perceptions about oral communication, I was able to "close the loop" with my own classes and even as CAST co-coordinator.

Carrie and Jen weren't aware that, even though (and even to date) I have only ever attending one AC meeting (as a CAST co-coordinator in 2016), I read the Assessment Times and work to regularly apply AC findings in my own classrooms. In other words, I don't think Carrie and Jen realized just how far the AC's reach is regarding individual instructor's growth and development based on sharing assessment findings. And I am unsure if the AC realizes the reach of the work—especially when the loop is closed—the AC does. Most sincerely, though, I hope the AC and Carrie and Jen realize how much AC work contributes to the betterment of HW.

On the way back from BHC, while Jen deservingly lounged in the back seat of the mini-van after two intense, worthwhile days in Moline and Carrie rode shotgun, we spoke about assessment, life at HW, and our lives. The impact of the AC on individual faculty members, like me, sometimes isn't apparent. However, through the AC's efforts to "close the loop" and communicate assessment findings, the Assessment Committee's work has most definitely resulted in my growth and development as an instructor (and I would guess, yours too), as well as enhanced my students' learning.

Reference: Suskie, L. (2015). Five Dimensions of Quality: A Common Sense Guide to Accreditation and Quality. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Research analysis: Affective assessments

Sarah Kakumanu

This year, I found that many of my conversations with unit assessment liaisons (and conversations with myself), centered on writing effective affective assessments. Affective assessments look to identify common attitudes and beliefs. How can we create short, pointed, meaningful assessments to gauge our classroom climate throughout the semester? Here are several guidelines that I have used and hope will be helpful.

(1) Refine your objective: Most of us approach writing an effective assessment with a general goal in mind. Further

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sharpening this goal to a small set of feelings or behaviors will help us better identify any distinguishing characteristics. For example, instead of assessing how students feel about math, focus on how students feel about a specific topic, such as factoring.

(2) Create the questions: Even with a well-defined objective, it is possible for our content to become lost in the construction of the question. I have the "right" questions but am I asking them in the "right" way? Assess one attitude or behavior per question. (This may mean, you will have to limit the number of attitudes assessed overall.) Be concise and specific. Finally, if possible craft questions that require that students "show" their response versus "tell".

(3) Identify the responses: We often consider if our questions are in agreement with our outcomes, but are our response options also in -sync with our objective? Will our response options be perceived the way we intend? Likert (or 5-Point) Scales are a common way to provide mutually exclusive response options. Action-based scales or intervals are another option and may allow us to better calibrate perceptions. For example, when asking "Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently" use intervals such as "0, 1-2, 3-4, 5 or more."

Research analysis: A new journey

Fernando Miranda-Mendoza

This semester I started serving, alongside professors Phil Vargas and Sarah Kakumanu, as a Research Analyst for the Assessment Committee. It has been, so far, an interesting transition from my previous role as a unit-level liaison from the Math Department. I have now experienced the unit-level assessment process from a different perspective. Moreover, I am also more exposed to the college-level assessment pursuits.

Even though my background is in applied mathematics and mathematical modeling, I had limited experience analyzing educational and, specifically, assessment data. However, I am currently learning about various statistical methods and strategies used in education and social sciences research. This semester I performed some exploratory analysis on data collected over the spring and fall semesters by the math unit-level liaison (professor Camelia Salajean). These data consisted of results from a pilot survey (given at the end of the spring 2017) and a pretest (given at the start of the fall 2017) administered to students in our General Education Math classes (Math 118). Statistical analyses were run to compare the performance between the three modes of instruction for this class: face-to-face, hybrid, and online. Moreover, another analysis was performed to compare the performance between those students that took Intermediate Algebra with Geometry (Math 99, one of our main developmental math courses) at City Colleges of Chicago and those students that did not take this class here or at all. This is still a work in progress and further analyses will be performed on posttest data later. Through experiences like this, I will expand my expertise and become better acquainted with the proper methods used to analyze data collected through assessment activities.

I look forward, in the upcoming semester, to further enhance my skills and contribute to the committee's ongoing assessment efforts. I hope my contributions help our colleagues better interpret and use the data they collected this year. Since our college is going through the reaccreditation process, it is of the utmost importance to have robust statistical studies to help us understand our students' learning.

Research analysis: It takes a village

Phillip Vargas

When analyzing results from our general education assessments, one of the more common investigations we perform is a correlation study between performance on the assessment and a student's course history. It has generally been expected that students will perform better on an assessment if they have taken more classes, and even better if they have taken classes in the discipline we are assessing. Previous analyses have shown this to be true, but the correlations have typically been weaker than we would expect or desire. However, with the Natural Science general education assessment administered in 2015, we collected student ID numbers for the first time. This allowed us to get much more detail and accuracy on a student's course history than what they have self reported in the past.

One of the big revelations from this data was the complexity of entry points and academic tracks through departments. Controlling for credit/non-credit courses and major/non-major tracks significantly affects these correlations, and thus better depicts the degree of how much students are learning in classes. The second big revelation this data showed was the challenges students face in credit courses if they start in development courses. Previous assessments have shown that students who place in developmental courses tend not to perform as well on general education assessments as students who have started in credit classes, even when controlling for the highest course taken in that sequence. The findings from the natural science assessment suggest that this is not confined to English and Mathematics, but affects performance in other Harold Washington College general education disciplines as well.

One of the recommendations in light of this finding is for instructors to be more intentional about reviewing and reinforcing concepts from other disciplines in their own courses. Giving students these additional opportunities to practice these skills in a different setting will emphasize their importance and provide more context to improve retention. It will also give students a better understanding of how to approach problems with a variety of techniques. While we may be apprehensive about teaching concepts outside of our disciplines; remember we have an incredible faculty body with a wealth of information. Having discussions on how to teach in each other's field and identifying intersecting concepts in our disciplines should be encouraged for our own professional growth and enjoyment.

General education: Quantitative reasoning 2017 data collection

Jeffrey Swigart

This semester we are collecting student learning data for the general education outcome of quantitative reasoning with a homemade tool modified from our 2009 homemade tool. One of the emphases in this year's tool is a series of questions about various methods of calculating unemployment rates. For example, one method known as the U-3 unemployment rate only takes into account the unemployed people who have actively sought work within the last 4 weeks, while leaving longer term unemployed people out of the calculation completely. The U-5

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unemployment rate takes into account unemployed people who have sought work within the last 12 months. It is therefore common for the different unemployment calculations to give wildly different results, and politicians and organizations may choose a certain method depending on their desires for portraying a higher or lower unemployment rate. In our quantitative reasoning tool this year, students are asked to make two different unemployment calculations and then write about which one would more likely be used for a certain political goal. Marilyn Frankenstein, in her 1998 article "Reading the World with Math," writes about the power of using political and social issues to teach math. She argues that not only will it better engage students to learn the math by connecting to the social issues they face, but it will make them more able to be civically engaged in society. We look forward to analyzing the data and sharing the results with you soon.

Reference: Frankenstein, M. (1998). Reading the world with math: Goals for a critical mathematical literacy curriculum. In E. Lee, D.Menkart, & M. Okazawa-Rey (Eds.), Beyond heroes and holidays: A practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education and staff development. Washington, DC: Network of Educators on the Americas. Available from http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~powellab/docs/gcedm-cmesg/frank_goals.pdf

(Jen Asimow, with President Ignacio López in audience)

Online learning: Update on assessment

Jen Asimow

Last year we conducted a college-wide assessment of student perceptions about their learning in their online classes offered through HWC. You may remember reading about it, but if you haven't, the full report can be read here: http://www.ccc.edu/colleges/washington/departments/Pages/online_learning_assessment.aspx.

This year, we have been focusing on ways in which we can look at the learning that is taking place in our online courses in organic ways. First, we investigated the places where assessments were already taking place. For example, we spoke to each of the Unit-Level Liaisons to see if the assessments they were designing, conducting or considering included the pertinent online sections. We were pleased to discover that several of the ongoing unit-level assessments already included online learners. Remember, the student learning outcomes for our courses should be the same regardless of the delivery format (face-to-face, hybrid, or online). This way, we can isolate the data that comes from the online learners and analyze it carefully.

One course that has multiple options of online sections and has recently been redesigned is English 102. In this course, students write an extensive research paper with four specific expected criteria definitions.

1. Rhetorical knowledge – the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts.

2. Critical thinking – the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis, through writing, reading, and research.

3. Writing processes – multiple strategies to approach and undertake writing and research.

4. Knowledge of conventions – the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing.

Many of the online sections of English 102 have adopted the same assignment prompt and are using the same assessment rubric, making it quite easy to collect data. So far, we have three English faculty who have volunteered to participate in an assessment process and to contribute their rubric data to us so we can look specifically at the SLOs related to the research paper. Ideally, we would have more participation, but it may take time to encourage faculty from across the district to become engaged in the assessment processes that the faculty at HWC have embraced so heartily.

Stay tuned for more exciting news from the Assessment of Online Learning at HWC.

Program assessment: Updates on liberal arts degrees

Paul Wandless

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

Other areas are in different stages of having program-level assessment and will 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 or is at least actively working towards that goal.

In Spring 2017, I focused on the Liberal Arts degrees and certificates. My first step was to identify six programs and contact the faculty that were responsible for the degrees or certificates within the programs. The six program areas chosen were Studio Art, Digital Media Design (DMD), Architecture,

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Theater, Music, and Philosophy. Three have some type of assessment in place that could be readily transformed into a program-level assessment. These areas are Studio Art, Digital Media, and Architecture. Studio Art has a cross-discipline assessment, and Digital Media and Architecture each have portfolio courses. The Theater, Music, and Philosophy areas still need more follow-up conversations to better determine their next viable step and what has the potential to be a program-level assessment.

Studio Art

The Studio Art area offers an AFA Studio Art degree. The program-level assessment for studio art is currently a pilot and focuses on critiques. Since all studio courses have critiques, this approach allows for a cross-discipline look at the studio art degree with the potential for a large sample size.

The Gen. Ed. Oral Communications Assessment measures how students across different Gen. Ed. areas are meeting SLOs associated with oral presentations. This assessment model was adapted and modified for studio art critiques. Art students orally present their artwork and then participate in group discussions that follow the presenting student's description of their artwork.

The Studio Art assessment focuses on the commonalities that exist across disciplines. Examples of areas in common include; overall preparedness, proper use of vocabulary, demonstrated understanding of project requirements, ability to answer questions about artwork and overall confidence in presented project.

Critiques happen at different times throughout the course of a semester and their frequency is dependent on the needs and pace of the class. Some courses only critique finished artworks. These courses have fewer multi-stage projects or long creation processes, and critiques therefore happen more frequently. Other courses critique works-in-progress and finished works due to long or multiple-stages processes. These courses critique less frequently.

In light of this, the optimal time to run a studio critique assessment would be towards the end of the semester. This gives students an opportunity to experience at least one critique earlier in the semester and become familiar with critique expectations. It also allows work that takes longer to be created and then be critiqued as finished works. One class period (or two if the instructor wishes) would be needed for the assessment. The faculty would have the participating students fill out assessment questions and then score the student critique using the supplied rubric that is part of the question handout. The handouts would be numbered and the student names would not be on them to keep the assessment results anonymous.

Digital Media and Digital Media Design

The Digital Media area offers an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Digital Media Design, an Advanced Certificate (AC) in Digital Media: Interactive Design & Development and a Basic Certificate (BC) in Digital Media: Interactive Design & Development. Rose Divita (DMD faculty & area coordinator) has created portfolio courses for the degrees and certificates offered in digital media. These courses are DMD 299 and DMD 233 and are currently in use.

The portfolio class, DMD 299, creates an online version of all of the work students have made within their time in the DMD program. It's the final class for the AAS degree and Advanced Certificate; however, it is sometimes taken concurrently with DMD 233. DMD 233 is the final class for the Basic Certificate, and students who are only getting the BC are encouraged to create a portfolio site for one of their projects, to better prepare them for employment or transfer.

A written history of the process is not recorded, but examples of student work that clearly show all of the main skills outlined in the DMD assessment rubric are saved. The outlined skills are in the form of a descriptive rubric that is applied to the portfolio. It has seven outcomes that are measured as exceptional, satisfactory or unacceptable.

A program-level assessment could easily be applied to the portfolio generated in DMD 299. Since this course is needed for the AAS and the AC, it would represent most of the digital media students who complete their coursework for the AAS and AC. The only students not represented would be those getting a BC. Since the class is already in place with a proven rubric, it is just a matter now of creating a system to record the data generated.

Architecture

Architecture offers an Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS) in Architectural Drawing and a Basic Certificate (BC) in Architectural Drawing. Currently, there is no formal assessment done on a unit level or program level in the Architecture area, but there is a capstone class titled ARCH 220 (Portfolio Class) that is used for both the AAS and the BC that could easily be their program-level assessment. Students are required to create specific works that will be used for the portfolio class. These are referred to as sequence works and student are aware of what these are and what they are used for while taking the courses in their pathways. The portfolio class takes the sequence works and combines them with new assignments to create a portfolio of work that is representational of their experiences.

This portfolio is a professional representation of what they need to provide or display to potential employers or to successfully transfer to a 4-year school to pursue a Bachelor Degree in Architecture. The students create this portfolio in both a digital and hard copy format. The architecture faculty keep examples of these portfolios that students create, but there is no official record keeping system in place.

A program-level assessment could easily be applied to the portfolio generated in ARCH 220. Since this course is needed for the AAS and the BC, it would be representational of all the architecture students who complete their coursework. With the class already in place, the guidelines for creating the portfolio can be the basis of the rubric for a program-level assessment.

Unit assessment overview: A common foundation for an uncommonly strong culture of assessment

Erica McCormack

If my calculations are correct (and I'm an art historian, so there's reason to be suspicious of any calculations I perform), there have been, to date, 22 separate faculty who have served as Unit-Level liaisons at Harold Washington College.* Only two departments have thus far had the same liaison serve consistently for the entire time their department has been involved in unit-level assessment.

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The 22 faculty I mention refers only to those who have served in the official liaison position, not all those faculty who have worked alongside the unit-level liaisons to ensure that meaningful assessment is taking place within each department in order to investigate faculty questions about student learning.

Those 22 liaisons have been or are currently involved in a variety of unit-level assessments that are smaller than the General Education assessments, which are run across the entire college, but larger than the individual class section, which is assessed by that individual instructor. While—as you can see from the articles in this Assessment Times—those units vary quite a bit in terms of scope and the questions being investigated, what remains the same are some of our core values of assessment at HWC. These core values include the fact that assessment is a faculty-driven process, it is never used as a means to evaluate individual faculty, and participation is voluntary. That common foundation is vital to the thriving culture of assessment that exists at our school.

If you have a question about student learning in your discipline that you're dying to answer, please reach out to the liaison in your department or to another member of the HWC Assessment Committee. We're always looking for the next meaningful assessment project!

*For those of you who want to "see my work" in the calculation mentioned above, here's the breakdown by department of the number of liaisons who have served thus far:

Applied Science (before their department joined Social Science): 2; Art & Architecture: 2; Biology: 2; Business: 2; English, Speech & Theatre: 1; Humanities: 3; Library: 1; Mathematics: 2; Physical Science: 2; Social Science: 3; World Languages/ELL: 2.

Thanks again to all of them for their hard work and for all others across the departments whose participation has been invaluable in supporting and improving student learning!

(Paul Wandless)

Unit assessment in art and architecture: Building on success

Paul Wandless

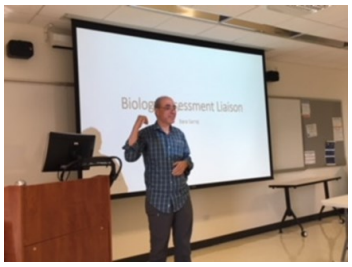
Art 144 (2D Design) and Art 131 (Beginning Drawing) have been assessed every semester since 2013 for the Studio Art Degree. They have been very successful in providing important data and feedback about how to improve student learning, which has benefitted instructors and students. Now that a history and process of assessment has been established in Studio Art, it is time to start building on that success. 2D Design and Beginning Drawing are two of the four IAI-approved foundational courses in the Studio Art degree. Art 145 (3D Design) and Art 132 (Advanced Drawing) are the other two. That makes both of these logical choices when adding to the assessment cycle in Studio Art, and we have opted to begin our expansion with 3D Design being the next course to be piloted.

Adding 3D Design as the pilot assessment for this semester was a natural choice because it's an IAI-approved foundational course and it's also the companion class for 2D Design. Once we are assessing both 2D and 3D Design, we will have a complete picture of this two class sub-cohort within the four-class cohort of the Foundation Program.

The other benefit of assessing this course is that 3D Design is also part of the 3D/Sculpture cohort. The other courses in this cohort are Art 196 (Beginning Ceramics), Art 197 (Advanced Ceramics) and Art 198 (Sculpture I). Up until now, all the assessments have been in the 2D area, so now we will have assessments in the 3D area as well.

The other pilot assessment this semester will be Art 196 Beginning Ceramics. This will be administered in just one section to get a good sense of the advance prep time needed and general logistics for this hands-on assessment. This prep time will involve pre-weighing and partially wedging the proper amount of clay each student will use to ensure standard conditions for students completing this assessment. Jess Bader is the Ceramics Professor and will be administering the assessment. Jess was also part of designing the assessment for both the beginning and advanced clay courses for her area. This along with the 3D Design assessment is a great first step in starting to assess the 3D/ Sculpture cohort.

So even though assessments have been successfully running in the Studio Art area for four years, there is always room to build on the gains achieved. Expanding assessment into other logical cohort areas makes the most sense for the Studio Art degree. The ultimate goal is to have all studio art courses assessed in a 5-year cycle. The addition of two new pilots this semester brings us a little closer to this goal. Building on success by closing the loop and finding new questions about student learning to assess is just as important as maintaining something successful.



(Bara Sarraj)

Unit assessment in biology: Template and rubric for writing assignments

Bara Sarraj

As a biology department liaison of the assessment committee, I worked on developing and implementing a tool to assess three Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) from Microbiology (Bio 233).

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These outcomes are being assessed specifically in lab report writing assignments, and the SLOs are as follows:

*Systematically collect, organize, and present appropriate data in graphs, tables, or figures.

*Assess the validity of the data collected and interpret it correctly.

*Exhibit, grammatically and technically, written communication competency through [lab] reports.

The first three stages of the six-stage assessment cycle were completed in the spring 2017 semester, in my two sections of microbiology. The preliminary work and analysis of the pilot resulted in a refined template and a rubric that will govern that template. There were two gaps that we bridged in our preliminary stages. The first was the template that we improved by adding more elaborated instructions. The second was the lack of a rubric that would have better guided students in writing according to the template. The performance of students improved immensely in the new template/rubric trial in the summer course of Microbiology. The fourth stage of full-scale implementation of the rubric is happening this semester and involves collecting lab reports. Collection has been from a total of seven sections of biology courses: Biology for non-majors (Bio 114), Cellular & Molecular Biology (Bio 121) and General Microbiology (Bio 233). The SLOs were adopted from Bio 233 syllabus, but applicable to Bio 114 and Bio 121 as well. Results of the project are expected by the end of the fall 2017 semester and will then be shared with the Biology department, Assessment Committee, and the larger HWC and CCC community.

(Bral Spight)

Unit assessment in business: Accreditation and student performance

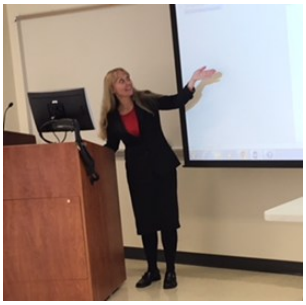
Bral Spight

The Business department has been busy this semester following up on previous work and piloting a new study on student attitudes in face-to-face vs. online and hybrid courses. The goal is to be able to show continuous learning and improvement both in support of accreditation and in improving the performance and experience of the department's students.

The first activity is an ongoing Blackboard based study to better understand and document the ability of students to demonstrate fundamental knowledge of business concepts and perform elementary business calculations prior to entering a department pathway of study (such as Accounting or Marketing). An additional objective is to show subsequent improvement over time for the same class-based learning objectives prior to transferring or graduating from a departmental pathway. Six classes have been utilized in the study with Business 111, Business 141 and Business 181 comprising the "early tenure" classes and Business 182, 269 and Economics 201 comprising the "late tenure" classes. The "early tenure" class assessment was administered in the beginning of the semester and the "late tenure" class assessment will be administered in late November. The early results have been promising and do show growth in student performance over time and highlight some differences between online and face to face. This semester the department is looking at refining the questions asked based on significance tests and seeking to expand the response pool to deepen the significance of the results shown to date.

The Business department is also creating an assessment that looks at students' perceptions and attitudes based on the type of class format (face-to-face, hybrid, or online). The roughly 15 question assessment is based on similar work being done college wide and asks students to reflect on quantity and quality of interaction with instructors, peers and other campus resources. The responses will then be investigated for discernable differences based on format. The assessment will be piloted in November for a select number of classes prior to being fully implemented across all business class sections in the spring of 2018.

The Business department is excited about the opportunity to better understand student learning via assessments, and we encourage all departments to strongly consider similar type efforts as a way to improve student learning and help bolster any documentation increasingly required by accreditation bodies.



(Amy Rosenquist)

Unit assessment in English, speech, and theater: Soft skills and fine arts

Amy Rosenquist

"All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts"

--William Shakespeare, *As You Like It, Act II,* Scene VII

Over the past three semesters, the English, Speech, and Theater department first assessed the relationship of soft skill development to fine arts course SLOs and then, more specifically, how and what soft skills were conveyed in Theater Arts performance classes. This fall marked the official Theater Arts/Soft Skills assessment, following the pilot assessment given last spring. In this assessment, students are asked early in the semester to rate their perception of

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the importance of having specific soft skills - presentation, teamwork, dependability, management, interpersonal communication, and effective expression - as well as how well they believe they have mastered the same set of soft skills, to date. Students are again asked for these ratings in Week 15, followed by an instructor assessment of this mastery, based on the students' Week 16 final performances in acting, directing, and improv classes.

Results from the spring 2017 pilot, which was administered to four sections of performance-based theater classes taught by the department's (then) two full-time faculty members, demonstrated that students' valuation of soft skills, as well as their perception of mastery, increased over the course of the semester. In addition, students who successfully complete one or more theater arts courses gain exposure to and develop some level of competence in many, if not all, of these skills.

Based on preliminary findings, we met with representatives from the Business Department, Career Center, and Advising. Our goals were to have the performance-based Theater Arts classes added to the GECC list; to begin the process of recommending that potential business majors consider including a transferable Theater Arts performance class in their gen ed or elective selections; and to convey the benefits of performance training for students who plan to pursue careers that emphasize presentation, marketing, interpersonal communication, and sales. The business faculty, administrators, and advisors received our ideas with enthusiasm, and plans were made to strengthen our Theater Arts offerings as well as to explore a recommendation to incoming business majors to consider an Acting or Improv class as part of their curriculum.

(Enter: the reality of community college teaching in a state with a budget crisis.)

This fall, the number of full-time theater faculty dropped to one, and our performance-based theater class offerings were significantly cut. Despite that numerous major U.S. companies, from Google to Weight Watchers to Pepsico, now incorporate professional training in improvisational comedy techniques and performance for their executives (Scinto, 2014), HWC students were not offered a single Improv class this fall. Adding to the tragedy, there won't be a college-wide theater performance this semester, as there is no funding for a fall Loop Players production. The "full" assessment running this fall has approximately one-third the number of participants as the Spring 2017 pilot.

Despite the current state of affairs, the performance classes we do offer continue to confer important transferable skills upon students who enroll, and our data suggests that over the course of the semester, students become more aware of the value and importance of these skills. As the budget crisis fades and we begin a new chapter at HWC, it is hoped that our Theater department will soon return to offering more classes and performance opportunities to benefit all students, for in the words of playwright Luigi Pirandello, "The drama is in us, and we are the drama. We are impatient to play it."

Reference: Scinto, J. (2014). Why improv training is good business training. *Forbes.* Available from https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2014/06/27/why-improv-training-is-great-business-training/#11e7eda86bcb

Unit assessment in humanities and music: The sweet sound of cacophony from documenting disagreements in assessing music performance

David Richardson

"De gustibus non est disputandum," goes the Latin saying—in English it means something like, "In matters of taste, there is no disputing." But our music faculty know that the quality of a musical performance is more than just "a matter of taste," and so a few years ago they set out on a journey to codify and develop consistent judgments among independent listeners about student musical performances. These performances are the culminating event in each of a series of private instruction courses that every music degree-seeking student completes on the way to their degree. While the other elements of the degree—knowledge of musical theory and aural skills—are verified by other means, the students' ability to perform proficiently with an instrument must be shown through a real, live performance in front of an audience. Ideally, the quality of the performances will not be disputable, but not because they are merely "a matter of taste"; rather the judgments should be indisputable because the process for making them is both well understood and consistently applied by faculty and students alike.

(David Richardson)

After a few necessary, good, and educational failed attempts to develop a measure and means for data collection, last spring marked the first full, successfully collected data set from music juries, and the analysis of the data by our stellar data analyst Sarah Kakumanu (Math) this fall showed us that the decision to focus on this area was a good and necessary one.

The music lesson series (Music 180, 181, 182, 281, and 282) features one-on-one instruction for students who prepare two performances for their jury. The jury takes place in the last week of classes; it is, basically, their final exam. At the jury, they perform a scale and then play two pieces for their instructor, who serves as a jurist, and another music department faculty member, both of whom have ipads opened to the Google Doc rubric. The jurists then enter their judgements about the Musicality and Technique of each performance and the overall Professionalism displayed, followed by the assignment of a grade for the performance.

Through Sarah's analysis of the data, we found that rater use of the rubric was less consistent than we accept. Data showed only about half of the judgements to be consistent, with variation across all categories and class levels, though there was slightly more consistency on a per student basis in juries for the 200 level courses. Nonetheless, by the Inter-rater Reliability norms of statistical analysis, even though there was more consistency in

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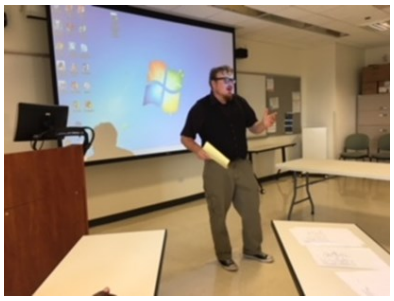
jurors' use of the rubric in Voice juries than Instrument juries, it is clear that there is need for improvement for both. There was more consistency of judgment about Musicality than about Technique in both Instrument and Voice juries, which is understandable given that some jurists might not be experts in the technique of the instrument that is being played, but, understandable or not, it is an interesting and important point for consideration.

Interestingly, there was a difference between the Instrument and Voice juries that had to do with the correlations of the categories and the grade. In Instrument juries we found a slight correlation of "Overall Professionalism" to the Grade. Voice juries, however, showed strong correlations among all categories to Grade (with Professionalism having the least correlation of the bunch!).

In both cases (i.e. Instrument and Voice students), the grade seemed to be more closely connected to the second performance than to the first, as shown by higher correlations, perhaps because the students' nerves allowed for a truer performance on the second piece. Or maybe the jurists had a better idea and fuller, more informed picture of the musician's skills by the time they were assessing the second piece.

Regardless, this assessment, while showing results that are counter to the ideal findings, has given the music faculty important insight to this key component of their degree program and, through discussion and clarification and creative problem-solving, as well as follow-up assessment, the program will be better for having gone through the process. And that, after all, is what assessment is all about—non disputandum est.



(Todd Heldt)

Unit assessment in the library: Updates on assessment

Todd Heldt

The results of our Spring 2017 One-Shot assessment effort showed broadly positive findings with room for improvement. After reading those results, we changed one of the questions on our assessment tool and talked about changing our teaching methods. When we completed the measure the second time in Fall 2017, we found virtually identical results. In both semesters, we assessed the same approximate number of students (206 and 212, respectively), and the mean and median scores overall were quite similar. The median score was 25 in both semesters, and the mean score dropped in Fall 2017, from 25.50 to 23.49. Obviously disappointed, we will revisit the tool and our teaching methods.

At the beginning of Fall 2017, one of the librarians voiced concern that the first question of the assessment tool might have been poorly worded. The original question and its possible answers:

Using the following research question as your starting point, which search strategy below would return the greatest number of relevant results?

What are the causes of terrorism?

A. What are the causes of terrorism?

B. (Causes or reasons) and terrorism

C. Bombings and terrorism

D. Causes or terrorism

E. Causes and terrorism

The concern was that terrorism was too broad and nebulous a concept and that it might lead to confusion or indecision among students. We therefore next tried the topic of heart disease:

Using the following research question as your starting point, which search strategy below would return the greatest number of relevant results?

What are the causes of heart disease?

A. What are the causes of heart disease?

B. (Causes or reasons) and heart disease

C. Heart disease and heart attacks

D. Causes or heart disease

E. Causes and heart disease

Regrettably, upon preliminary analysis, changing the topic of the question did not seem to make a difference. The discussion so far after this semester's assessment cycle is that the topic is not the problem but the expectations of the question, itself. Knowing that the correct answer is B depends on students having been shown the basic search function of the catalog, and some librarians only teach the advanced search function.

We have talked about the different ways we approach our outcomes in our one shots, and there is some disagreement about how deep we need to go into, say, the mechanics of the basic search. We continue to look for better ways to teach our outcomes and have scheduled a meeting at the end of this semester to talk more about it. Based on initial conversations we may decide that the assessment tool is too granular for the kinds of instruction we do. We may also decide to pursue a different path, altogether. For instance, we may decide that trying to assess all five outcomes after a 45 minute session is too ambitious, and we may try more targeted, micro-assessments. These ongoing discussions reflect the very nature of assessment.

Unit assessment in math: The latest and greatest in math assessment!

Camelia Salajean

During this semester the Mathematics Department continues the assessment cycle for Math 118 – General Education Mathematics. Math 118 presents a particular challenge when it comes to creating a unified and relevant assessment since for this course it is the instructor's decision which 4 out of 12 potential

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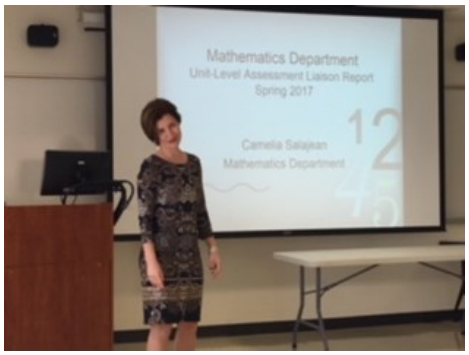
topics will be taught in a particular section. We selected "Interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics." as a student learning outcome to investigate.

The purpose of the assessment is to identify where students are struggling, and to determine if the students' results are influenced by the specific topics covered in the course. All this information will help us make recommendations for strategies faculty can consider to enhance our teaching and curricular design, with the goal of improving our students' learning.



(Camelia Salajean)

During the previous semester, a group of mathematics faculty volunteers researched and reviewed different assessment tools and processes for our specific student learning outcome. Based on a Quantitative Reasoning Test available through Madison Assessment LLC we created a pilot assessment called "Spring 2017 HWC Math 118 Survey." The survey was designed using Google Forms, a free service, browser independent and mobile friendly. In collaboration with instructors who were teaching Math 118, this pilot assessment was administered to students before Spring 2017 semester ended. They were asked to solve three mathematical problems properly aligned to the student learning outcome chosen. Considering the advantages of Google and the incentives provided by faculty, we were pleasantly surprised to record about 170 responses.

To create a proper assessment, during the Fall 2017 semester, we decided to expand the pilot tool into two parts: a pre-test and a post-test. First, we reviewed the pilot and the raw data results, and we decided to slightly modify one of the questions to ensure it was content free. This means the question does not require specific content knowledge of any domain of science but rather only is testing students' general quantitative reasoning skills. Again, using Google Forms, we created the pre-test assessment called "Fall 2017 HWC Math 118 Survey". We were debating to find the best time for this test to be administered. After researching, we chose to administer the pre-test assessment during weeks 3 and 4 of the semester. Making sure the students taking our mini sessions classes were included, we kept the survey open only for them during the 5th week (that was their first week of school). Coincidently or not, we recorded once more about 170 responses.

We are now in Stage Five of our assessment cycle, data analysis, and we are eager to find out how well the students answered the questions, to compare the results of the two tests, to compare the results within the three formats: face to face, online and hybrid, and to examine the students' results who took developmental courses at CCC compared with those who were placed directly in Math 118.

The raw data from both the pilot administered in spring 2017 and the pre-test administered in fall 2017 are being examined by the Assessment Committee Research Analysts. Considering the data collected, we expect to have a representative sample of students. After the upcoming analysis, as well as discussions among the math faculty members, we will be able to draw conclusions and make pertinent recommendations for refining teaching of Math 118 and improving this specific student learning outcome.

(Allan Wilson)

Unit assessment in physical sciences: New directions for chemistry assessment

Allan Wilson

This year marks a period of exciting transition in physical sciences assessment. As we wrap up one two-year project, a new – and even longer – study is beginning to take shape.

Out with the old…

When the Physical Science department first began assessing its chemistry courses, the first step was a faculty survey to determine exactly what was being taught. Yes, there is the master syllabus that everyone follows, but once you move beyond (and even within) those eight SLOs, there is much potential for variety. Therefore, it was a relief when the survey results revealed that there is broad consensus about what should be taught, and at what level of difficulty. Moreover, these departmental expectations line up well with national standards established by the American Chemical Society (ACS). As a result, an assessment program was developed that leaned heavily on standardized exams provided by the ACS. Every course gave an ACS pretest at the beginning of the semester and a posttest at the end.

Initially, the pretests provided useful insight into the skills that our students already possess before they take a course. Our pretest for General Chemistry I, for instance, tests basic knowledge in both chemistry and math. Students often report that they feel that their deficiencies in math are hampering their ability to master chemistry concepts, and yet the math section of this test was actually the easiest for our students, on average.

The posttests were used to gauge the success of our students in mastering the important outcomes for the course. For instance, a key learning goal in General Chemistry I requires that students be able to predict amounts of a product formed from given amounts of reactants in a chemical reaction – a topic that goes by the imposing name of stoichiometry. The exam for General Chemistry I has several questions of varying difficulty about

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stoichiometry, and it was a relief to see that our students perform well on at least the relatively easy ones. However, they consistently struggle with those that were harder or more conceptual.

As interesting as these results were, we have started to feel that we have learned as much as we can from standardized exams to address these questions about student learning. Why do students feel that their math ability is not up to the task of solving chemistry problems when standardized exams seem to indicate otherwise? Why does student mastery of basic stoichiometry concepts not translate into successful strategies for solving harder problems? The results from the ACS exams allowed us to pose these questions, but they do not provide us with the means to answer them.

…And in with the new!

So we are embarking on an ambitious new program for chemistry assessment to further investigate these questions about student learning. We are moving away from the bird's-eye view of the whole semester that is offered by the ACS exams, and focusing on an in-depth assessment of one topic – stoichiometry. And once again, the first phase of the assessment is a survey. This anonymous survey was distributed to all chemistry faculty and asked numerous open-ended questions about how each professor teaches, reinforces, and assesses stoichiometry, what in their opinion are the hurdles students encounter in learning stoichiometry, and what aspects of stoichiometry are most important to professors in subsequent courses in the sequence. It was a lengthy survey – huge thanks to everyone who took the time to complete it!

Along with the survey, a request was distributed for submissions for a stoichiometry question bank that we would like to create and share among instructors teaching these courses. Many homework and test questions fit a predictable pattern – professors can easily make a "new" question by changing the chemical reaction used, or the unit of measurement desired for the final answer, but the underlying shape of the question is not new. If we are hoping to foster a deeper conceptual understanding of this topic, we need questions that students cannot answer using rote algorithmic strategies. Unfortunately such questions are difficult to write, but if every professor contributes one or two such questions, then we will have a more extensive and varied question bank from which professors can pull questions for in-class exercises, homework, and tests.

At the end of the semester, instead of a forty-question multiple choice standardized exam over the entire semester's material, students will be given a three-question assessment of free-response stoichiometry questions, with participation from six sections of General Chemistry I and another six from Basic Chemistry. We hope that the results of this assessment will give us new insights into what our students can do and how our students solve chemistry problems. Stay tuned for further developments in this new phase of assessment in physical science!

Unit assessment in social and applied sciences: Pro/con assessment

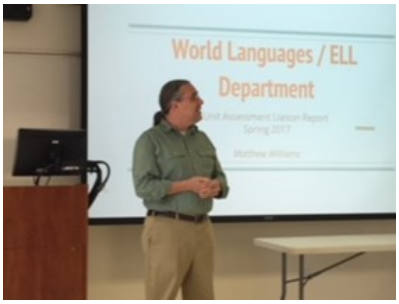
Ingrid Riedle

This semester, the Social and Applied Sciences department (SAS) continues its unit-level assessment with a new liaison (Ingrid Riedle) and a new project. Last semester, Dr. Nick Ceh completed an assessment of students' essay writing skills in history courses; please see the Assessment Times Spring 2017 issue for details and findings. For fall and spring, SAS shifts the focus to the political science discipline, specifically to an individual course assessment of POL 201, The National Government.

POL 201 is a multi-section course involving eight faculty members and roughly 240 students per semester. Usually, seven sections of POL 201 meet face-to-face and four online during a 16-week term. The student learning outcome (SLO) at the heart of this assessment addresses students' ability to formulate pro and con arguments on various current debate issues. Are students able to see a controversial topic from both sides (pro/con)? Can they provide at minimum two informed arguments for either side of several of such issues? Which tools can be implemented to measure success and progress toward this learning goal?

Foreseeably, tool designing, piloting, and implementation will take consecutive semesters. By the end of this term, a descriptive SLO assessment rubric will be finished and a short pilot test based on it will be administered in several sections of the course. Some preliminary findings are expected before the end of the year.

Next steps include aligning course SLOs across all sections, as they are currently divergent from the master syllabus, soliciting feedback from colleagues on the initial data findings, and ensuring the expansion of participant numbers in the spring.



(Matthew Williams)

Unit assessment in world languages and ELL: Language acquisition

Matthew Williams

This semester, the World Languages and ELL Department is working on two unit-level assessment projects. Last semester, we began work on a World Languages project, which has been focused on Spanish 102. Specifically, the department is interested in students' ability to produce the past tense in a narrative context. During the spring semester, a tool was designed and piloted. Problems in the design and in the construct became apparent, so full-time faculty have been providing valuable feedback on the pilot version in order to improve it. The plan is to pilot the revised tool by the end of this semester and, if all goes well, to run a full unit-level assessment of Spanish 102 sections in the spring of 2018.

This semester, we have also begun work on an English Language Learning unit assessment that will focus on the speech courses which are divided into three levels of credit courses: 98, 99, and 100. The full-time ELL faculty members are currently discussing

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two alternative ways to carry out the assessment. One option is to assess several sections of one level of speech, which would involve choosing an SLO form that level to measure student learning. The other alternative is to assess one or more sections of each speech level (98 - 100) and use an SLO from level 100 as a program-level outcome in order to measure student progress as they develop their speaking ability to approach and eventually meet that 100-level SLO. Our plan after settling on an approach to the assessment (i.e. what particular classes to assess) is that we will choose a task that is used in all speech class sections (such as a short individual student speech) and build off of existing rubrics to generate a tool. By the end of the semester, we plan to run a pilot of the assessment.

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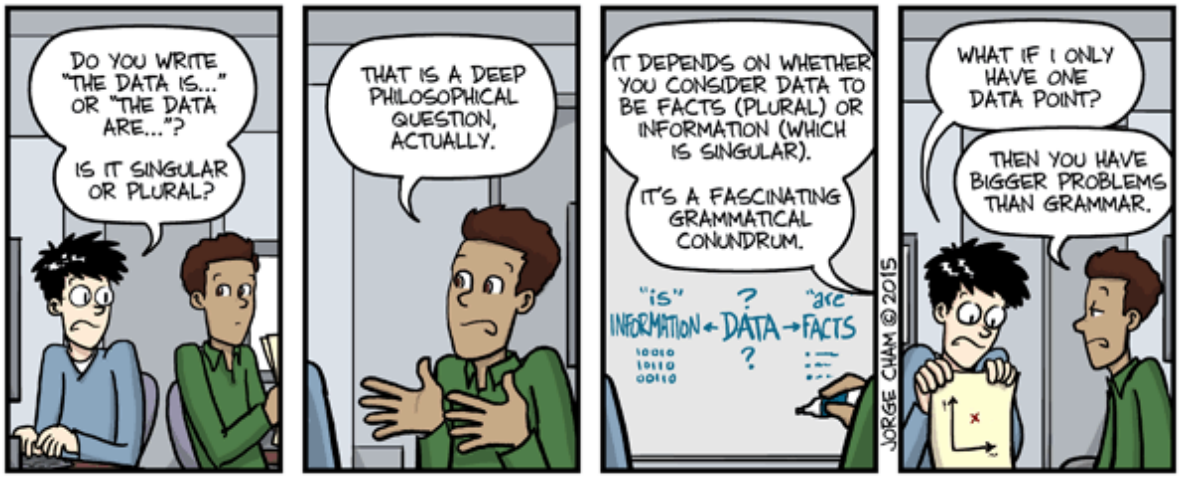

PhD Comics. (2017). Available from http://phdcomics.com/comics.php?

HWC Assessment Committee General Info

Website: http://www.ccc.edu/hwcassessment/

Chair: Carrie Nepstad of the Social & Applied Sciences department at cnepstad@ccc.edu or 312-553-6095.

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 our committee chair at the contact info shown below.

Assessment Times: We produce this publication each fall and spring. You can find an archive of older editions on our website.

Our Mascots: The question mark represents our asking of questions about student learning. The infinity symbol represents our continual cycle of assessment, including collecting data, analyzing the data, supporting evidence-based change, and then starting again by asking more questions. ? ∞

Our Charge

The Harold Washington College 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.