The Assessment Times

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC)
Spring 2018

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

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Program Assessment Coordinator: Paul Wandless

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Unit Liaison for Business/ CIS: 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

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HWC Mission

Harold Washington College is a student-centered institution that empowers all members of its community through accessible and affordable academic advancement, career development and personal enrichment.

To fulfill this mission, Harold Washington College focuses on the following core values:

We

- *embrace human diversity*
- *care about the whole student*
- *offer responsive and relevant education*
- *pursue academic excellence*
- *assess to improve learning*
- *build community*
- *foster global citizenship for social justice*

Through these core values, we strive to embody and honor the vision of Harold Washington, former Mayor of Chicago.

From the chair

Carrie Nepstad

Harold Washington College is known for its assessment program within our community, across the state, and even at the national and international levels. Yet, I often wonder what it means to each of us as individuals. Do faculty, staff and administration see "assessment" as something the Assessment Committee does and therefore everyone else is "covered" and we don't have to really think about it as individuals? Do we see it as a chore or a checkbox to tick off for accountability purposes and we don't really have to think about it beyond that? Do we think of it as our responsibility to participate in the process? Do we think of it as important to our teaching? Do we think of it at all?

It seems to me that after fifteen years of working on assessment at HWC, and completing a graduate certificate in Higher Education Assessment perhaps I have a unique relationship to the process. It's no surprise to anyone reading this that I personally find assessment to be pretty interesting and even kind of fun. What comes as a bit of a shock (even to me) is that at this point in my career I've spent as much time studying assessment as I have in studying my own discipline. So, I recognize that I tend to see the academic world, at least partially, through an assessment lens. I'm always trying to figure out what learning really looks like and to experiment with various ways of capturing at least some of the learning process so we can look at it together and consider how to support it further. That's my relationship to assessment, but I realize that everyone has their own relationship to it and that's exactly as it should be.

As a college, we have all been preparing for the HLC report and peer visit and the Assessment Committee has engaged in many conversations about "closing the loop", and how we make use of assessment information, and what does it all mean anyway? Sometimes it can be stressful. I think the committee wants to live up to its reputation and do a good job for this accountability process. But, what I really hope is that each of us in the HWC community thinks of assessment as a tool that we all can use just as we use other tools to support student learning. The committee takes care of the the formal reporting part of the process, but all of us can make use of assessment in the work we do for students. I invite you to think about what assessment means to you, and to reflect on how you would answer the question: what is your relationship to assessment and how do you make use of it in your work to support students?

In This Issue

Assessment Activities this semester

TLC Lite: 1/12/18

The Assessment Committee joined with CAST and the Office of Instruction under the umbrella of the Teaching and Learning Community (TLC) to provide content for a faculty meeting in January where we discussed the importance of Information Literacy and Civic Engagement while also examining General Education SLOs and Assessment Committee Recommendations.

Adjunct orientation: 1/12/18

The AC presented assessment committee recommendations to new and returning adjunct faculty.

Natural Sciences report approved: 2/14/18

http://www.ccc.edu/colleges/washington/departments/Pages/Assessment-in-General-Education.aspx

Assessment Fair: 2/23/18 Joliet Junior College

The AC presented recent findings on student perceptions of their learning in the online environment. See report http://www.ccc.edu/colleges/washington/departments/Pages/online_learning_assessment.aspx

HLC Prep session: 3/14/18

VP Armen Sarrafian visited the AC meeting to provide updates regarding the HLC process and worked with the committee on preparing for the HLC visit.

District wide assessment committee:

This group is facilitated by Brandon Nichols, District Director of Assessment and Accreditation. It includes the Assessment Committee Chairs from each of the City Colleges and it meets regularly throughout the year. This semester, we focused on supporting colleges that are going through HLC (that's us!) and thinking about various opportunities to come together as a District to consider student learning outcomes.

TLC Day: 4/6/18

Programming for this event was focused solely on AC recommendations and all presentations aligned with those recommendations to provide a full Closing the Loop day. 18 presenters: 11 full-time faculty, 5 adjunct faculty, 1 administrator, and 1 guest.

Mock HLC Visit: 4/26-4/27/18

The Assessment Committee will participate in the Mock Visit and will meet with guest peer reviewers to answer questions about assessment of student learning at HWC.

How a Rubric-Resister became an Assessment Officer

Erica McCormack

When I first joined the faculty at Harold Washington College, there were few words I hated reading or hearing as much as "rubric." I had never met a rubric that I liked, and I had been exposed to top-down "assessment" efforts that were devoid of anything that felt relevant to me and my students. The things that I thought were important to know about student learning were not included in the assessments I saw at other institutions.

I think my reservations about rubrics always stemmed from a fear that they would not accommodate my personal priorities as an instructor, and I thought that my authority and autonomy would be compromised if I were to use a rubric. And indeed a one-size-fits-all-rubric would not fit my assignments and my goals the way that I want. But I have learned that it is possible to make a rubric that works for a particular instructor and particular assignment within the individual classroom setting.

I've also learned in my time working on the Assessment Committee that it's quite eye-opening for faculty to have conversations both within and across disciplines about what they look for as evidence of student learning. That's what a rubric is for. So when faculty within a discipline assemble an assessment tool and rubric for a unit-level assessment, or when faculty across disciplines assemble one for a Gen-Ed assessment, I now see this as an important opportunity for all of us to reflect on what it is we really want and expect our students to do. Instead of sticking with an "I'll know it when I see it" approach to grading that I entered HWC with, I've now embraced rubrics as a useful tool for measuring what it is possible to measure, bearing in mind that some of the most important aspects of learning are impossible to measure. A rubric is not a be-all, end-all solution to the challenges of teaching and grading, but it does have the potential to be quite useful if we invest the time and commit to engaging in conversation with our colleagues that will make an assessment and a rubric meaningful to us.

Erica in 2010 would be as surprised as anyone to see my name among the list of officers on the Assessment Committee in 2018. Have I just sold out? I'd like to think there's more to it than that. Rather, I've come to better understand the myriad possibilities for assessment and how it can be done well, which to me means how it can be done in a way that is meaningful to faculty so we can improve student learning. Reading through the articles in this and other issues of the *Assessment Times* about unit-level assessment work at HWC, I hope you can see how diverse questions about student learning are being approached in a variety of ways that are nevertheless unified by our collective commitment to a faculty-driven, recursive process of inquiry. This is something I now take great pride in and that I think bolsters our student-centered HWC mission.

If the questions you have about student learning are not yet represented in these efforts, please reach out to me or your department's unit-level assessment liaison so we can initiate the next conversation about student learning and figure out ways to improve it together.

Research Analysis: FREEDOM!!!

Phillip Vargas

When the humanities assessment was administered in 2016, one of the questions developed to measure learning in the humanities was drafting an essay interpreting a specific artifact (an artistic production of human creativity). In this process students had a choice of analyzing a painting by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, a poem by Paul Laurence, a musical composition by Scott Joplin, or a philosophical text by John Dewey. Additionally, one of the affective question sets that was included asked how strongly students self-report to be artists, writers, musicians, actors/performers, and philosophers.

One of the research questions for these data sets was whether we see any correlation between how strongly students identify as these particular types of artists and which artifact they chose to interpret. The results showed moderate correlations between students identifying as specific artistic archetype and the aligned piece, e.g. students that strongly identified as philosophers were more likely to choose the philosophical text to analyze. It was reassuring to see that the results supported these intuitions.

While this may not be one of the flashier findings we have uncovered in our analysis, it does reinforce a tried and true pedagogical tool: providing students with some degree of freedom in assignments allows them to both pursue ideas that they are interested in and become more self-directed learners. We pride ourselves in the fact that we educate a diverse student body in demographics as well as ideas. While it is probably not possible to tailor assignments to align with the spectrum of our student body's diverse interests, we may be potentially able to provide the space to pursue them. So as we consider final projects and papers for our classes this semester, ask yourself, "Are your students free?"

Report on the Assessment of Learning Online

Jen Asimow

You may have noticed that two assessment reports have recently appeared in your in-boxes; the first was a Report of the Perception of Learning Online in Child Development Courses, and the second was a Report on the Pilot Assessment of English 102, focusing specifically on the final paper and associated learning outcomes. If you haven't had a chance yet, take a look at these, as there is always something new we find out about our students' learning at HWC.

I won't go into the details of the reports here but I will describe two major "takeaways" that should interest you. The survey we created last year that delved into student perceptions about their learning in the online environment, offered through HWC on behalf of the entire City Colleges system, provided a lot of food for thought about what students think about their own learning and how we can support it. For example, they reported that thoughtful and intuitive design, responsive and sensitive feedback, and meaningful discussions were important to their learning while group projects were not. Although we had a huge sample size for that survey, we didn't learn a lot about student perceptions in specific programs or departments. For that reason, the Child Development Program decided that we would replicate the survey and seek out student perceptions specifically in Child Development Online courses. The results of that survey are in the above-mentioned report.

This brings me to the first "takeaway." If you are interested, you can administer this survey specifically to your program, unit, or department and see what students think about their learning in those specific online courses. It is easy to do. Simply ask me to set it up for you, and then you can ask your online faculty to include the link for the survey in their Blackboard sites. I will send you the text options that faculty can include in their messages to students, and then once the semester is over, we can analyze the data and compare it to the college as a whole. Next semester, you will get a report that details the findings.

The second "take-away" comes from the Pilot Assessment of Online English 102. Although there were 12 sections of Online English 102 in the fall semester, only three faculty volunteered to share their data with the committee. The data sample was quite small and therefore revealed little about student learning. However, if we could broaden the sample size, it is possible that we could learn a lot about how students are performing in meeting the learning outcomes for the course.

Therefore…..

1. Would you like to hear what your students think about their learning in your (program, unit, or department) online courses? If so, contact Jen Asimow at jasimow@ccc.edu

2. Encourage your friends in the English Department to get involved and volunteer the data from their online English 102 courses. Remember, writing across the curriculum is everyone's responsibility, so the more we learn about our students' writing, the better we will be able to support our students throughout their entire college career.

Unit assessment in art & architecture:

Assessing Ceramic Art

Paul Wandless

Assessing studio art courses are not only a challenge for Harold Washington College, but for all colleges around the country. The challenge is what to focus on as a measurable outcome to assess. As a ceramic artist myself, I'm able to speak to my colleagues from around the country, who teach ceramics, about assessment at our yearly conference. I attended the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) Conference this March in Pittsburgh, PA and found this to be a subject of interest for many people. Most of our conversations turned centered around the choice of what is actually best to assess.

All agree that basic skills can be assessed, but anything to do with the subjectiveness of creativity should not be assessed. So that was a great starting point to determine which outcomes we wanted to use in a syllabus. Since there are a variety of technical skills that need to be learned as part of meeting the syllabus outcomes, the next question was which skills would yield the most valuable information. It came as no surprise to any of us that making pottery in a beginning-level class would be the most common starting point for most programs. The steps, parameters and expectations are clear, definable and measurable. So that is where we decided to start at Harold Washington.

The Ceramics Program is one of the oldest and largest studio disciplines at Harold Washington College. The ceramic courses count towards the studio art elective credits for an AFA Studio Art Degree. The Art 196 Beginning Ceramics course is an introduction to the foundational skills, processes and techniques in clay. The course covers basic handbuilding processes, throwing techniques on a pottery wheel, underglaze/slip use on greenware and glazing techniques for bisqueware. Proper use and understanding of materials, tools and equipment are part of the foundation-level experience in all beginning ceramics classes.

Basic skills introduced for throwing on the pottery wheel are: wedging clay; centering clay; throwing cylinders, bowls and lids; and trimming thrown vessels on the wheel. Since these are skills that can be measured, using thrown vessels created on the potter's wheel makes an effective candidate for a pilot assessment. It has definitive steps from start to finish, and all must be done properly to create a successful vessel. These are skills that are introduced and reinforced with the expectations that students will be proficient with the forms by the end of the semester.

Creating assessments for specific disciplines are challenging, no matter what the area of study. We are all fortunate to have our own departments to work with in creating meaningful and relevant assessments. But sometimes input and suggestions from outside of not only our departments, but our school is equally important. When creating the ceramics assessment with Jess Bader, who teaches these courses, we were able to come up with a pilot that we were very comfortable using. But when we shared the pilot with colleagues at other institutions, it helped affirm our approach and also modify it further to be even more effective. This feedback affirmed our idea to start with assessing wheel thrown pottery for the first pilot. This by far, was the most common assessment being done by other schools. We modified how we will prepare for the assessment based on the experience shared by a colleague of mine from Saint Mary's College, Prof. Sandra Ginter. She has her work study students pre-weigh, but not wedge the clay that will be thrown for the assessment, just like we had planned. But she does not score that step due to many variables involved in scoring this task with any consistency. We have decided to follow her advice on this and not score this step as well. This will be the first semester running the beginning ceramics pilot, and we are excited to see what happens. We are equally excited to share the results with colleagues in the field and see how they align with their assessments.

Unit assessment in biology:

Assessing Core Concepts in Introductory Biology

Aigerim Bizhanova

At the start of the semester, under the initiative of Yev Lapik, the Biology department decided to form our own departmental Assessment committee, which currently consists of four full-time and one part-time faculty. After consultation with the members of the departmental committee, we decided to continue unit-level assessment work in BIO 121, Introductory Biology for science majors. This course has the highest number of sections and serves as a prerequisite for Biology 122, and all 200-level biology courses offered by the Biology department.

A pilot assessment survey is currently being designed that will assess student learning of the core concepts based on a select number of student learning outcomes of BIO 121. The assessment survey consists of twenty concepts that are closely aligned with the student learning outcomes focusing on the following fundamental topics: basic principles of atomic structure, chemical bonds, organic macromolecules, cellular organization, major metabolic pathways, enzyme function, flow of genetic information, mutations and their role in cancer.

The core concepts were chosen based on the survey, designed and administered by Yev Lapik to all full-time and part-time biology faculty during her sabbatical in the Fall of 2017. The survey asked faculty to identify core concepts that are emphasized, covered, marginally covered or not covered in their biology courses. All of the selected core concepts were shown as either emphasized or covered by all ten faculty that completed the survey.

Following discussion with the members of the biology assessment committee, a recommendation was made to focus only on certain student learning outcomes with the goal to design a survey consisting of 15-20 questions due to the concern that any assessment that takes students more than 20 minutes to complete may affect their answering effectiveness and may interfere with instructors' class time. The pilot assessment survey is expected to be administered to 3 or 4 sections of BIO 121 taught by two full-time and one part-time instructor of BIO 121 towards the end of the semester.

Unit assessment in business/ CIS:

Moving forward with business assessments!

Bral Spight

This spring the business department wanted to continue its progress in documenting student performance over time as well as trying to better understand business students' perceptions of learning in on-line versus face-to-face environments. To do that this spring, three separate rounds of assessments were conducted.

The first two assessments conducted were a continuation of previous rounds of a thirty-question assessment given over the last two semesters. The assessment was given early in the semester to three classes which were judged to be typically taken early in a business student's tenure, followed by a separate later effort in the semester with three other classes which were judged to be typically taken later in a business student's tenure.

For this semester the department refined the questions previously given based on responses collected to date and further peer review and input to make sure the questions covered a reasonably broad set of business student learning objectives. The early results indicated there was an improvement in results between the two rounds of assessments. The hope is that the additional sample size will further improve the confidence in our conclusions in anticipation of using the results as part of our reaccreditation effort this fall with the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs.

The third assessment conducted was part of a larger school effort to look at students' perceptions of their learning online versus in more traditional face-to-face formats. An indirect assessment previously used within Harold Washington was modified and adapted last semester for the department's particular use and was given to a sub-set of business classes (separate from the above effort) as a pilot assessment this semester. The results will be reviewed in anticipation of a department-wide assessment rollout to be given in the fall.

Unit assessment in English, speech, and theater:

Assessing Student Perceptions in English 102

Amy Rosenquist

The English, Speech & Theater department this spring has focused its efforts on English 102, aka "the research paper class." It may be anecdotal, experiential, or grounded in factual data, but around the water cooler, English 102 is perceived by many faculty as well as students to be a - if not the - general education course in our department that students most often struggle with, fear, and/or tend to drop. Some decrease in attendance is due to the same personal and life factors we see college wide, but, again anecdotally, we think we're also seeing something specific to English 102, or rather, the perceptions that students have about the class and their ability to complete it. Even with two thirds of the paper completed, a kind instructor (that's me), and a passing course average, I've had students become overwhelmed about finishing and choose to drop. This is an extreme example, but it's concerning, and not without precedent. Based on these ongoing departmental anecdotes and conversations, and heavily inspired by the 2017 Student Perceptions of Online Learning Report, this semester's unit-level assessment focus is on student perceptions of factors that lead to retention (or attrition) in their English 102 classes.

For the pilot, an indirect assessment will be administered during Week 15 in select English 102 classes to students who are still attending face to face, hybrid, and online courses that asks them about what factors they deem to have contributed to their ability to persist in the course. The survey won't be linked to a passing grade in the class, but rather the fact that they continued to actively pursue the course through the end of the semester. What helps a student persevere, even in the face of perceived great challenge? What qualities do students bring to those challenges that help them continue to try, regardless of the final outcome? The inherent subjectivity of perseverance aside, the assessment aims to identify what factors, specific to English 102, students perceive as being important in their ability to persist. In the fall, a full assessment will be conducted, with both a pre- and post-perception survey, sent (and hopefully administered!) to all sections of English 102. In the end, we hope to obtain useful information about what our students experience, what influences or strengthens their ability to persist, and what factors may play a role in attrition when it is specific to English 102 content.

Although we aren't able to offer our students less academic rigor, better knowing what they perceive as their needs, we can perhaps use this information to enhance their experience. Despite the inevitable challenges present in writing what may be their first formal academic research paper, ideally they would be inspired to enact the words of the late Stephen Hawking: "However difficult life may seem … It matters that you don't just give up."

Unit assessment in humanities & music:

The Philosophical Farmer and the Counting

Dave Richardson

Sometimes a farming metaphor is helpful. This may be one of those times. It also may not be one of those times. I shall employ one anyway. If teaching is seed planting and student learning is the bounty of fruits and flora blooming, then assessment is something like the counting of the pecks of pickled peppers that Peter Piper picked, which is all a way of saying that this semester in Humanities, unit assessment was all about the counting and measuring and the quantification of the results of those efforts in the field.

Analysis focused on last fall's Philosophy Assessment, which measured students' abilities to read critically and surveyed them for information about their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to reading and learning. Thanks to the phenomenal data analysis skills of Fernando Miranda-Mendoza, we learned some things.

Our harvest yielded 134 valid submissions out of 141 completed surveys, which included 110 students who subsequently successfully completed the class last semester and 24 who did not. Of those students, 101 had not previously taken a philosophy course, while 24 had completed one, and nine had completed two or more. We discovered that 64.9% of our students reported engaging in 50% or more of our list of key (research-based) "Before reading behaviors," such as previewing the text, activating prior

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knowledge, and consciously selecting a reading purpose. 74.6% reported engaging in more than half of the listed "During reading behaviors," like questioning, visualizing, and predicting. And 77.6% of the students reported deliberately engaging in more than half of the "After reading behaviors" like summarizing, and engaging in metacognitive reflecting. These numbers suggest that students took the assessment seriously and broadly engaged in the activities that are demonstrated to be important contributors to effective reading.

When broken up into groups based on their previous experience in philosophy, the cohorts show some interesting fluctuations; the numbers for students who had not completed a philosophy class track closely with the overall numbers. Students who had previously completed one philosophy class were less likely to engage in Before reading behaviors—only 58.3% said they had, but they were more likely to engage in During and After reading behaviors (87.5% for both). And students who had completed two or more philosophy classes were most likely to engage in Before (77.8%) and After (88.9%) behaviors, and more likely than average to engage in During behaviors (77.8%). Given the small samples for the latter two groups, it's hard to get a good idea of whether what kind of looks like a pattern actually is one, so caution is more appropriate than confidence, but it will be interesting to watch as we gather more data in future semesters.

Student abilities were varied and somewhat disappointing—only about 1 in 5 students correctly identified the conclusion of the argument featured in the excerpt, and less than that evaluated it correctly. Somewhere around a third to a half of the students were able to correctly answer Inference and Analysis questions. That might sound surprisingly low, but keep in mind that the text and questions were adapted from an LSAT question set, and so it's not terribly surprising to find out that first and second year college students had trouble with it.

Other findings include the fact that 63.4% of the students answered questions in such a way that they could be identified as having a "Growth Mindset" while only 6.7% qualified as "Fixed Mindset," and 42.5% of the students answered questions suggesting that they hold beliefs that are characteristic in literacy research of "Independent Readers" while only 8.2% agree with beliefs typical of "Dependent Readers." Finally, 11.9% have reading beliefs that suggest they take a "Transmission Stance" into their reading tasks, which means that their expectation is that the author or text will transmit a specific meaning to them—an approach typical of both passive receiver-readers and search-and-retrieve type readers. Just under 30% of our students think of their reading as being something more like a transaction—a give-and-take between reader and text/author, where both parties come together to construct the meaning of the piece, which means just under 60% don't fall neatly into either category, which might mean they are uncertain about how to approach reading or might mean that they know that different stances are appropriate for different reading tasks and skilled readers can do both depending on their needs.

This data set is going to be the basis for a conversation among the philosophy faculty in April, and should lead to some interesting reflection about what we do (and don't) encourage students to do, what we need to consider teaching more explicitly, and what we can stop worrying about quite so much.

While awaiting the analysis, like the farmer waiting for word from the scale and banker, I spent some hours developing new assessments to be piloted this spring, to see if any patterns persist (or show up) when students work with different texts. For the new pilot assessments, I picked texts by Karl Popper, Martha Nussbaum, and Gary Gutting, all three of which make arguments about Liberal Education, and all three of which are unlikely to be featured in any of our classes. Should those assessments prove usable this spring, they will be deployed next fall for another round of data gathering, and our first shot at some longitudinal information, which will help us better understand what changes are occurring for individual students and what patterns, if any, show up in the data sets, hopefully giving us abundant and rich 'fertilizer' for our summer fallow period of recovery and preparation for the teaching and learning season to come.

Unit assessment in the library:

Assessing Library Outcomes in One-Shot Instruction Sessions

Todd Heldt

The library began assessing student learning outcomes in 2008, but what we assessed and how we assessed it have remained more or less unchanged since. Updating our methods became more pressing with the advent of the 2016 ACRL Framework for information literacy. After revisiting our SLOs in 2016, we decided collectively to try a different approach. Instead of assessing several outcomes at once, as in past measures, we decided to focus on one outcome at a time. The advantages of this approach are multiple. The singular assessments allow us to spend more time on tricky concepts, they ensure that students who receive library instruction at three different times are exposed to different concepts, and they will take less time to administer.

In order to make such a change, we decided to tie individual SLO instruction to specific classes. Librarians Katie Karlin and Caterina Mazzotta reviewed departmental outcomes and noted areas of overlap between our outcomes and other departments'. Inspired by their work, the rest of the librarians met and decided that we would include a lesson on the concept of authority in all College Success classes, additional instruction on keywords in Speech 101 classes, and extra work with Boolean operators in English 102 classes.

Creating a new assessment practice was not always easy, and doing so required two face to face meetings as well as a number of group emails. There was some confusion over which tools we were going to use, when we would administer them, and what

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the scoring rubrics would look like. However, the key seems to be keeping clear lines of communication up and welcoming the input of all department members.

Though the assessments are skills-based, we also nod to the theoretical complexities of the field acknowledged by the 2016 Framework. We do so, for example, by recognizing that either "government" or "popular" could be the correct answer (see figure below), depending on how the student intends to use the source. For the record, this is technically a government source because A) The author is the President and represents that authority, no matter in which medium he happens to be communicating, and B) All of his recorded communications are archived as such. However, the argument could be made that the source is actually a popular authority because of the medium and the speaker's past role as a reality TV star. Beyond that, a student may argue that the numbers cited in the Tweet represent a misunderstanding of the actual numbers from January 2017, and thus should not be used regardless of how people have constructed the individual's authority.

You are writing a paper for a sociology class on gun violence in Chicago. You come across President Trump's tweet:

1. *What type of authority does this source have? Why would you consider using or not using this information source?*
2. *Should you consider other information resources as well and what type of authority (personal/ societal/ academic expertise/ journalistic/ government) may you want to use and why?*

We are keenly interested in reading how students think about these issues. Thus, for each multiple choice question, there is a short answer question asking students why they would or would not use the source in question for their research. This portion of the assessment will allow students to expound on their decisions and give us insight into their thinking process. The short answers will be scored by different librarians each using the same rubric. After we pilot the measures we will be able to read the results, create a scoring scale, and norm our grading before the actual assessment begins in the Fall of 2018.

Unit assessment in math:

The Latest and Greatest in Math Assessment!

Camelia Salajean

A year ago, the Mathematics department decided to assess one of the Math 118 – General Education Mathematics common SLOs: "Interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics." For Math 118, each instructor selects 4 out of 12 possible topics to be taught, which presents a unique challenge when it comes to creating a unified and relevant assessment. This is one of the SLOs we think students can meet no matter what topics are covered in the course.

In spring of 2017 we created a pilot, a survey on Google Forms, and administered it at the end of the semester. This pilot consisted of three mathematical problems designed to assess how students get the information and draw inferences from a formula, a table and a graph. We were trying to limit the number of words of the contextual problems to make sure students would focus on math, rather than on reading comprehension of the text. Students did very well on using the temperature formula and getting straightforward information from the table. However, they struggled with interpreting information, particularly percents, from the table and with drawing inferences from the graphs. It seems that hybrid students performed the best, but there was a very small sample, only 7 students out of 122, so no statistically significant difference was detected.

During the fall 2017 semester, we decided to expand the pilot into a pre- and post-test version of the assessment. We kept the same three problems from the pilot, but we slightly modified one of the questions to ensure it did not privilege students who had access to a particular piece of information that we were not trying to assess. For the formula problem in the pilot we had asked students to determine the temperature in degrees Celsius at which water boils. The question was changed to ask students to convert one of the highest temperatures ever recorded in Chicago from Fahrenheit to Celsius degrees.

The pre-test and post-test had exactly the same questions. We changed the order of the problems only to give the impression of a "new" survey. We didn't want students to immediately realize that they were solving the same problems twice in a semester. The pre-test was administered during weeks 3, 4 and 5 of the semester since we wanted to include the mini-session students into our study, while the post-test was given during the last three weeks of the semester. We had a high participation rate from the students for these two tests. We collected over 170 responses.

Right after the pre-test was administered, we were comparing its responses with the ones from the spring 2017 pilot. (Since we modified one of the questions a direct comparison of the correct responses was not appropriate.) Students performed similarly in most questions except in the one involving graphs. The pre-test of fall 2017 had only 35.62% of students answering the question correctly compared to 44.16% in the pilot. As a consequence, we decided to revise this question for the spring 2018 assessment.

The results for the fall of 2017 post-test were not so different from the pre-test. Students still struggled with interpreting a percentage from a data table (instead of computing 50% of 66 people, which amounts to 33 people, students selected the percent itself, 50, as an answer for the number of people). For this particular question, students performed poorer in the post-test (only 5.06% answered correctly) than in the pre-test (when 9.59% answered correctly). It seems that in the post-test more students selected the total number people, 66, as an answer than in the pre-test. This was somehow better, even though erroneous, than answering with a percent since they were supposed to find out an actual number of people.

From the analysis of the fall 2017 Math 118 assessment, we found out there were only 59 students who took both the pre-test and the post-test. Therefore all comparison analyses for these two tests

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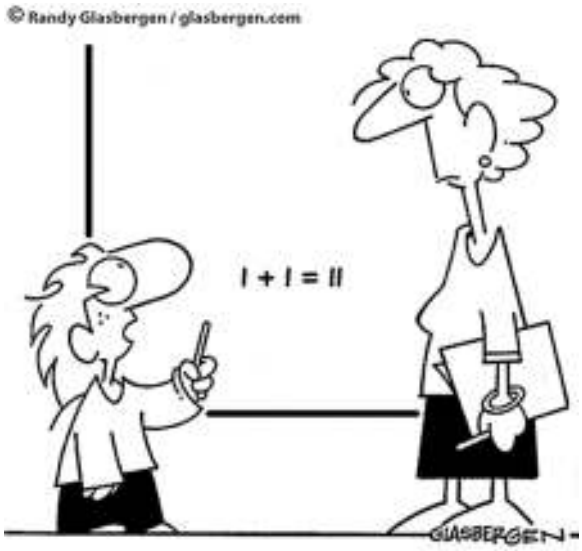
were done on these students. No statistically significant difference was detected between the two tests results. We were hoping students would do better in the post-test compared to the pre-test, however that didn't materialize. They performed almost the same. It is still unclear why the results were as such, therefore my colleagues and I are still discussing and analyzing this assessment report. Further examination of these data may reveal some underlying causes, so that we can make adjustments to future versions of this assessment. The online students were the most consistent with their answers between pre- and post-tests. Since no statistical difference was detected while comparing the students' responses between the three instructional modes: face-to-face, hybrid and online, no conclusion can be made. We will need more data to complete the analysis for this assessment.

Students also had some difficulty with addressing the question related to graph interpretation. Consequently, for the spring 2018 Math 118 assessment, we decided to create a replacement for this question to see if it was the type of question or the specific example used that was the source of confusion. For the revised question, I found real data about the high average temperatures in Chicago and Anchorage, Alaska, and created two graphs in Excel. These graphs look somewhat different from the graphs used before. However, I kept the same wording (question and answers) for the problem to be able to compare the results with the ones collected in previous semesters. I also decided to hide the name of the cities (under City 1 and City 2 names) to make sure students were not biased by a place they know very well, Chicago. As we did in the previous semesters, we invited all faculty members teaching Math 118 (face-to-face, hybrid and online) to help us in this process, by encouraging their students to take the assessment.

The Math department consensus is that we need to gather more data, a sufficient sample size, to draw conclusions and make pertinent recommendations for refining the teaching of Math 118 and improving this specific SLO. Therefore, we will continue the cycle on Math 118 Assessment for this semester and also for the fall 2018 semester. We are now in Stage Six of our assessment cycle, Supporting Evidence-Based Change, and we are enthusiastic to start the same process anew.



"If you want a better answer, ask a better question!"

Unit assessment in physical science:

Learning to Love Grading

Allan Wilson

I will open this report with a possibly controversial position about one of a professor's most hallowed activities: grading sucks! I know I am in the minority with this opinion. I am sure most of my colleagues love spending their weekends adding commas and decimal points to student work. But I hate it! It is tedious and time consuming and so very negative. So please forgive me in advance if this report occasionally displays a slightly whiny tone.

Last semester marked a shift in the physical science department's strategy to assess our chemistry courses. In the past, we had used standardized exams from the American Chemical Society (ACS) as post-tests. These tests had some very nice qualities to recommend them. They cover the entire semester's worth of material, assessing almost all of our SLOs. Each SLO is paired with at least two questions on the test, and these questions have been carefully chosen and worded to remove biases. Because these exams are implemented across the country, we can compare HWC results with national norms. And, if I'm being honest, the fact that they are multiple choice tests makes them very attractive during crunch time at the end of the semester.

But this final point, so attractive to me when final grade deadlines are breathing down my neck, is also these exams' biggest weakness. These tests tell us what problems our students are struggling with, but they provide very limited insight into the deeper misconceptions that were prompting students to select their answers. This concern, coupled with the observation that our students' scores on these exams were relatively constant from semester to semester, led to a regrettable conclusion – we had learned everything these standardized tests had to teach us, and the time had come to give our students some free response questions.

So last semester I worked with my colleagues in the department to design a short free-response assessment on stoichiometry. This topic is a central one in introductory chemistry classes; furthermore, according to the ACS exam results, students understand this topic well enough to answer easy multiple choice questions, but they struggle with challenging ones. The assessment we designed had three questions of increasing difficulty, starting with a purely conceptual question, moving to a typical algorithmic problem (the category into which most homework and test questions fall) and ending with a real-world situation that was expected to be quite challenging. The assessment was given to CHEM 121 (Basic Chemistry) and CHEM 201 (General Chemistry I) classes at the end of the fall semester – we received assessments from 171 students, so huge thanks are due to everyone who participated!

And this semester has been spent grading a sample of those tests to make a rubric. And then grading all the tests according to that rubric. And then regrading them when I realized my first rubric was insufficient. And pretty much regrading them again when I decided to enter the results into a spreadsheet for easier

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data analysis. (I did warn you that things might get whiny!) The good news is that I think I have figured out how to do this work more efficiently for next time!

We had several questions, both about our students' performance and our method of assessing it. Do students in CHEM 201 classes do better on average on this assessment, compared to students in the more introductory CHEM 121? Do they perform "as expected", doing fairly well on the easy question, and struggling with the harder one? Will specific incorrect responses appear frequently enough that recommendations can be made? I am pleased to report that the answer to each of those questions is yes!

The results of the final question were particularly interesting. I was worried that the question might be so difficult – and student responses so varied – that no trends could be identified. It turned out, however, that my concern was unfounded – there was one mistake that stood out far above all others. It seems that in a "real world" problem, which typically involves many substances, students struggle to identify the substance with which to begin a calculation. Many students correctly performed a stoichiometric calculation, but started with the wrong compound because it was not highlighted in the text of the problem! In retrospect, this almost seems obvious, but the assessment has highlighted the true scope of the problem. It has prompted a search for more real-world problems of this type (which professors find almost as challenging to write as students find them to answer!), and once enough have been found, a question bank can be created and shared amongst the faculty so we can all give students more practice.

I am excited about the results and implications of this assessment, and I hope that they will lead to true improvements in student learning. The grading might have been annoying, and my progress needlessly inefficient, but it has reinforced in my mind what many of us already believe – there is no substitute for assessing authentic student work.

Unit assessment in social and applied sciences:

Toward a Civic Engagement Assessment

Domenico Ferri

In case you didn't know it, the Social and Applied Sciences Department (SAS) is one of the largest departments at Harold Washington College and within City Colleges of Chicago. To be sure, we offer more courses and serve a larger population of students than the entirety of Olive Harvey College. I believe that is something of which we all can be proud, but at the same time, the sheer enormity of a department such as ours can present challenges in terms of pinpointing a chief emphasis. Prior to absorbing the Applied Sciences department during the summer of 2015, the previously-named Social Sciences Department housed Anthropology, Economics, Education, Geography, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. When we combined into one unit, the Applied Science Department brought into our fold Child Development, Criminal Justice, and Social Work.

As all of our talented and wonderful colleagues continue growing into this massive and awesome cohort, many conversations developed and were aimed at identifying a common conceptual thread that unites such a diverse array of disciplines. Out of this ongoing self-analysis and dialogue, we arrived at the realization that our courses, colleagues, and content - in their own innovative and time-honored ways - pursue some form of social justice and a broader dynamic of equality as we analyze and address countless domestic and international social problems.

With the enormity and importance of these shared goals in mind, I recently learned that HWC's Assessment Committee had begun prioritizing civic engagement as a new category for General Education SLOs. Seeing how this dovetailed with the very core of the Social and Applied Science Department's mission, I began reflecting on how course completion can lead to the tangible and individualized actualization of the aforementioned goals, eventually landing upon civic engagement as a kind of cumulative result. With SAS learning outcomes already mobilizing students within their respective communities and beyond, our esteemed colleagues aspire to provide students with the knowledge and tools needed to positively impact the world around them in myriad ways, ideally channeling the various skills they learn in our classes into a career path that they find fulfilling or toward a career that's specifically geared toward social justice.

Seeking to measure this phenomenon, my research on the subject led me to many different portrayals of civic engagement. Ultimately the one that I consider to be most relevant, concise and comprehensive is Thomas Ehrlich's, which can be found in Civic Responsibility and Higher Education. Ehrlich notes that "civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes." With a renewed sense of how this concept aligns with the hundreds of courses that SAS offers, I began compiling our existing SLO's, highlighting those I regarded as "civic engagement-oriented."

This left me with a massive list of well over two-hundred student learning outcomes, all of which in some way speak to civic engagement, which in itself was an encouraging discovery. Trying to introduce some semblance of organization, I settled upon three categories and corresponding "universal" SLO's to help make better sense of what our students are learning across a dozen disciplines:

1. Reflection and Awareness (Examination of Self and Society)
   a. Departmental SLO: Compare and contrast one's cultural identity with local, national, and international paradigms.
2. Examination and Critique (Deconstructing Policy and Power)
   a. Departmental SLO: Analyze how and the extent to which activism has led to social and/or institutional change.
3. Public Activity and Engagement (taking action and interfacing beyond the classroom)
   a. Departmental SLO: Interact with community members in order to reveal chief concerns and to develop appropriate action.

What I had produced, in effect, was a concentrated list of learning outcomes derived from the department's collective course level SLO's. As encouraging as it was to discover these three meaningful threads connecting our department's disciplines, there were real concerns surrounding how to best develop a tool

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that could measure student learning in each category. Herein, the sage advice of Erica McCormack and Jeff Swigart inspired a more manageable adaptation that could utilize Likert Scale-based questions in an indirect assessment. In doing so, I felt that we could establish the starting point for a multi-tiered Civic Engagement Assessment as a preliminary step prior to expanding our assessment efforts toward more direct measurements of students demonstrating their civic engagement learning. This strategy led to the drafting of questions suitable for an indirect assessment surveying students' perceptions related to three dimensions of Civic Engagement:

1. Reflection and Awareness (Examination of Self and Society)
   a. Popular depictions (TV, movies, news, and social media) of my racial and ethnic identity are accurate.
   b. Yours and the well-being of your friends and family is supported adequately by government, related agencies, and their associated outreach.
2. Examination and Critique (Deconstructing Policy and Power)
   a. In my Social and Applied Science course(s), I learned about how protest and activism have led to improved living conditions.
   b. I have the power and ability to influence and improve living conditions within my own community.
3. Public Activity and Engagement (Action and Interface)
   a. My Social and Applied Science courses have led me to interact with community members in order to understand their most pressing concerns.
   b. My Social and Applied Science courses have inspired me to contribute to an organization's ongoing efforts to enhance living conditions in a local community.

Each of these questions will be followed by an open-ended question asking students to elaborate or provide an example in response to their answer. As we approach the end of the spring 2018 semester, my intention is to finalize and deploy a tool/survey derived from the questions noted above. I plan to use my own students and a volunteered course from each of our remaining disciplines to establish the first sample set for the assessment pilot. Much more will have to be done in the way of planning and refinement, but I am confident that we can conclude the semester with a data set that can serve as a solid foundation for future, conceptually related measurement tools and learn a great deal from them. Last but not least, my intention is to feature these Civic Engagement SLO's on our department's website. Moreover, if any instructor would like to include them alongside required course-level SLO's, they would be welcomed to do so.

Unit assessment in world languages and ELL:

Moving ahead with Unit Assessment Projects

Matthew Williams

This semester, a team of adjunct and full-time faculty of the World Languages / ELL Department has been working on the two ongoing unit assessment projects.

One project is focused on a sequence of ESL Speech courses (ESL Speech 98, 99, and 100). During this semester, the faculty team made up of Michal Eskayo (ESL Speech 100), Karen Smith (ESL Speech 99), and I (ESL Speech 98), have chosen to examine how well our students do introductions in their speeches. We have met several times this term to discuss essential issues. We agreed on a task type (in this case, an individual speech) for the students to perform that would demonstrate their ability to do an introduction. We also agreed to do a summative assessment only in order to provide our students time to develop their skills before we assess them (the assessment will be carried out in the final two weeks of the semester).

We also agreed to create a workable and effective rubric (Professor Eskayo contributed one that she has used to evaluate an entire speech, and I adapted it to focus only on the introduction part of a speech). We agreed, as well, to administer the assessment individually with only our own classes (in an effort to maintain the authenticity of the speech-giving), but we also agreed to film those speeches so that each of us could view the speeches of the students in the other two classes and assess them as well. Our goal is to have each ESL Speech student's final speech of the term be assessed by each of the three ESL Speech instructors. In order to ensure inter-rater reliability and construct validity, I will pilot the filming method in my own class with an individual speech my students will give during Week 12. This will hopefully enable us to tweak any logistics regarding the administration of the assessment and the process of filming and scoring the end-of-term speeches. Data analysis will be carried out over the summer and in the Fall, 2018 term.

The other project is an assessment of student learning of irregular past verb forms in Spanish 102. Initially, I adapted the assessment from a project done by Professor Margarita Chavez of HWC and with help and advice of Professor Maria Muralles-Ball of Malcolm X College, and Professor Gabriela Cambiasso of HWC, I was able to carry out an effective, if small scale, assessment. The project is now in the data analysis phase.

One aspect of Spanish grammar that I did not consider when I ran the assessment was the use of 'accents' which indicate syllable stress. (These accents are considered part of the spelling of Spanish words). In order to include data regarding student use or misuse of accents (despite the fact that I had not worked them into the assessment design), I plan to include an 'implications for future assessments' section that will be separate from the main 'results' section where I will provide separate analysis of the use of accents by the Spanish 102 students who took the assessment. Data analysis should be concluded by the end of this term.

Available from https://i.pinimg.com/564x/4e/0f/f6/4e0ff6a23fde756929c1457238a87c9d.jpg

All the photographs featured in this issue are from January 12, 2018 TLC LITE event

ASSESSMENT

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.

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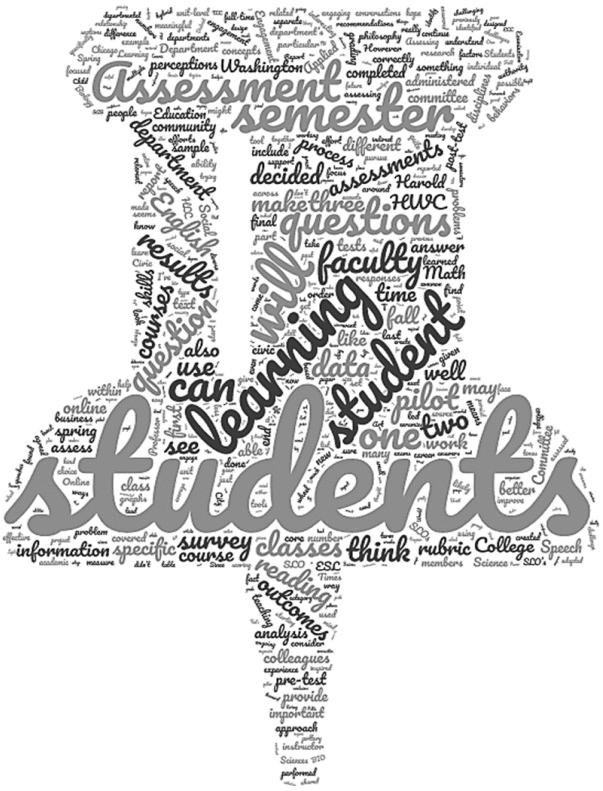

Our Charge

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.

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