

Assessment committee
work as a form of
faculty development

By Carrie Nepstad and Jeffrey Swigart
Harold Washington College
One of the City Colleges of Chicago

The Big Ideas

1. Meetings
2. Infrastructure
3. In the spirit of learning
4. Collaboration and Mentorship

Brief Story: 2003-2012

- 2003 - We were dinged! Began to revamp
- 2005 - requested an extension
- 2008 - progress report to HLC/NCA
- 2012 - CHEA award

“For use of 11 college wide assessments of general education student learning outcomes that have influenced course sequencing, prerequisites, teaching strategies, faculty development, and institutional policies”

Brief story cont: 2013-present

- Committee positions with release time or stipend have grown
- Fall FDW, Spring Assessment Day
- Assessment Pilot/Summer
- Assessment Times newsletter, 2x per year
- Standing agenda item
 - Departments, Faculty Council, Shared Governance, Strategic planning, etc.

HWC Assessment Committee



Current Committee Positions

Chair

Secretary

Vice Chair, General Education

Vice Chair, Unit Assessment

Research Analyst(s)

Ten Unit Liaisons, all departments

Coordinator assessment of online learning

Coordinator co-curricular assessment, Staff

Full-time and Adjunct faculty and in the spring, one staff!

Release Time Stats

Spring 2003: No Release

Spring 2004: 3 hours

Fall 2004: 6 hours

Fall 2009: 11 hours

Spring 2011: 12 hours

Fall 2012: 24 hours

Spring 2013: 27 hours

Spring 2015: 33 hours

Fall 2015: 42 hours

Spring 2016: 48 hours

Fall 2016: 60 hours

of Different People Trained in Leadership

*43 different people in committee leadership positions from spring 2003 to Fall 2019.

*30 of these from Fall 2012 to Fall 2019.

*This is natural professional development! (organic, homegrown, small batch, homebrew, grassroots, artisanal)

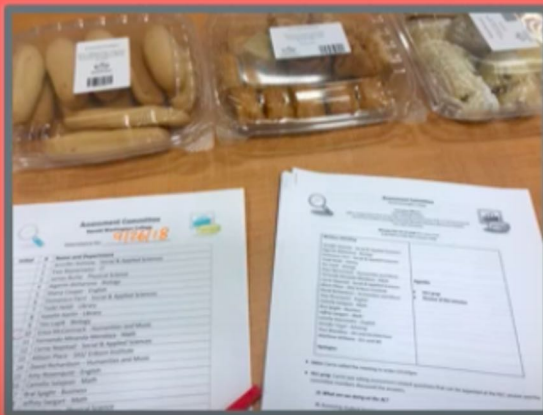
Meetings

Weekly,
one-hour,
productive work
sessions.

Wednesdays 3-4
Every semester

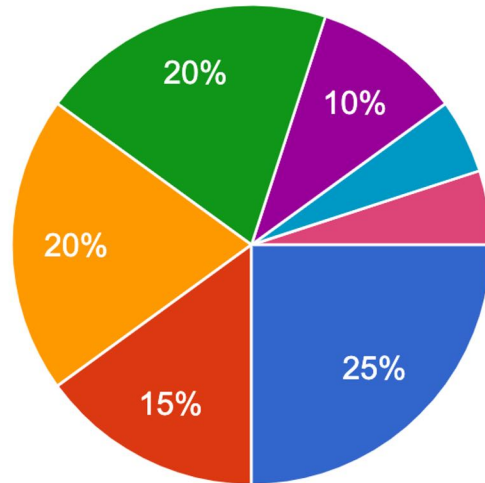
Creating a sense
of community

Snacks!



Roughly, how many years have you attended weekly Assessment Committee meetings at HWC?

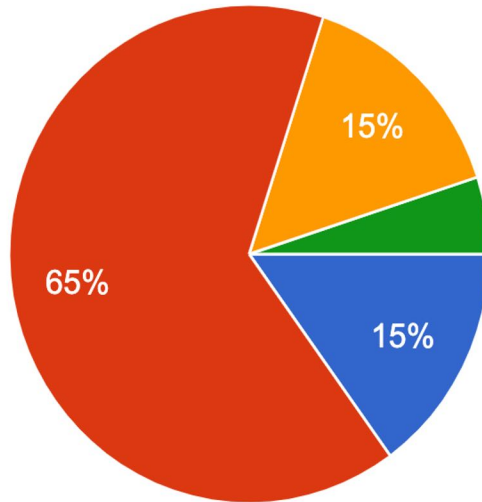
20 responses



- less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- more than 10 years
- I attended for a few years at the inception of the original committee and am no longer at the college.
- occasional guest

What is your department/role at the college?

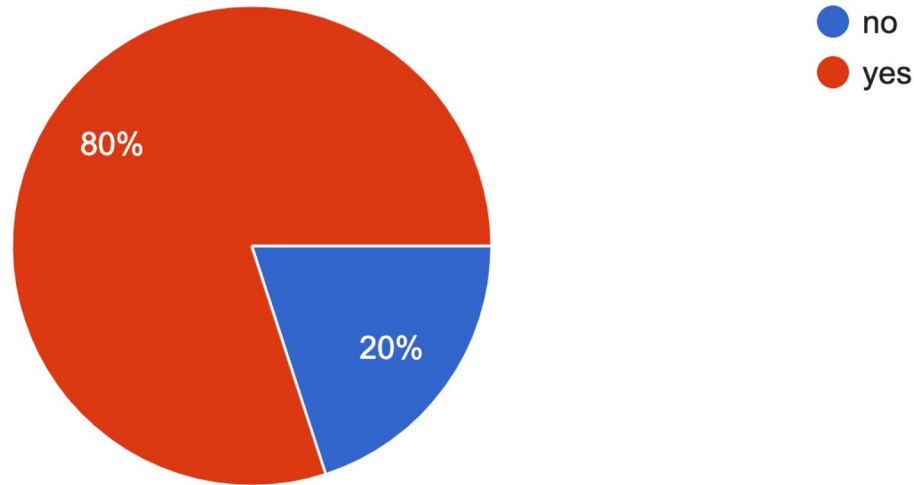
20 responses



- Academic Department: Adjunct faculty
- Academic Department: Full-time faculty
- Academic Affairs, Student Services, Career Services
- Full-time Faculty initially and later Academic Affairs

Have you ever spent time attending AC meetings without release time or stipend?

20 responses



What's in a meeting?

Chair plans the agenda, 16 week semester

- ▣ Chair: updates on projects, other meetings
- ▣ Committee member: reports, findings, recommendations
- ▣ Assessment Times newsletter planning
- ▣ Dialogue: article, concept/term, procedural changes, review core documents
- ▣ Wordsmithing is limited - eat a donut!

Infrastructure



Assessment of student learning is a comprehensive, faculty-driven process that is ongoing systematic, structured, and sustainable as well as fun.

HWC Assessment Committee Charge

Built to live beyond any one person

- Core Documents reviewed annually: the Charge, master calendar, semester calendar
- Assessment Times Newsletter
- Website: Reports, agendas, newsletters
- Revised College Mission/values includes assessment
- Standing agenda: dept, Faculty Council, Curriculum, CAST
- Tenure and post-tenure review process
- Adjunct Orientation
- Strategic planning: Shared Governance
- Grant work includes assessment
- Sabbatical Projects: new modules under development



The Assessment Times

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC)

Spring 2019

Website: www.hwc.edu/hwasassessment



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.

Committee Members

Chair:
Jeffrey Swigart
Vice-Chair of Unit Level Assessment:
Erica McCormack
Vice-Chair of Gen Ed Assessment:
Carrie Negstad
Research Analyst:
Fernanda Miranda-Mendoza
Online Learning Assessment Coordinator:
Yves Lapil
Coordinator of Co-curricular Assessment:
Michael Heathfield
Secretary: Yves Lapil
Unit Liaison for Arts & Architecture:
Paul Mendosa
Unit Liaison for Biology:
Algerine Sybilic
Unit Liaison for Business:
Brigitte Mithen
Unit Liaison for English, Speech, Theater:
Kristin Sivens
Unit Liaison for Humanities & Music:
David Richardson
Unit Liaison for the Library: Todd Hults
Unit Liaison for Math:
Carmela Salas-Juan
Unit Liaison for Physical Sciences:
Alan Wilson
Unit Liaison for Social & Applied Sciences:
Domenico Fanti
Unit Liaison for World Languages & ELI:
Matthew Williams
Working Members:
Amy Roussiquist
Larretta Vicars-Jirak
Janelle Vogel

From the Chair

Artisanal Assessment as Professional Development

Jeffrey Swigart

Our Assessment Committee is, among other things, an informal form of professional development for those involved in our weekly meetings and ongoing work. Since 2012, we have had 31 different faculty members serve on committee positions, with even more participating in the meetings without official positions. This is as far back as we have carefully counted, but the number is even higher when looking all the way back to the creation of the committee in 2003. These faculty members, including myself, have learned so much about assessing student learning, and they have brought that training back to their departments and students in everything they do. We need to have a culture of assessment running through all aspects of our teaching, not out of compliance, but rather out of an understanding that it will improve us and our students. We know this will only happen if we make it a priority, and so we are thankful for the support we receive from our administration through release time and stipends. We need this structure of assessment built in, to give us structured space to slow down and consider what we already know about student learning, what we wonder about student learning, and to translate what we learn into efforts to improve student learning, including how we might adapt our own instructional methods.

We were also glad to see assessment mentioned so many times in our college's recent positive evaluation on accreditation. But what matters most to us is how the assessment process benefits our students.

Our committee's unit liaisons are like the grassroots organizers in this process, working with their academic departments to keep assessment as close to the students as possible. The liaisons look at highly specific issues of learning while avoiding broad generalizations. They plan, collect data, analyze, reflect, and recommend. Since it is all faculty-driven, the work is very personalized to our institution. We like to think of unit-level assessment as our artisanal, handcrafted, or small-batch assessment. Unsurprisingly, this work has often influenced departments to recommend curricular and pedagogical changes, including what content to focus on or how a rubric is written.

We are always rejuvenated by new members at our Wednesday meetings at 3PM in Room 1046. One-time visitors are welcome too, even if you simply want to grab one of our famous artisanal snacks. We hope to see you there.

In This Issue

From the Chair
Artisanal Assessment as Professional Development
Jeffrey Swigart

Research Analysis
Analysis of Open-Ended Responses
Fernanda Miranda-Mendoza

Gen Ed Assessment
Civic Engagement: Student Perceptions
Carrie Negstad

Co-curricular Assessment
A Student Love Fest?
Michael Heathfield

What's in a Name?
Kristin Sivens

Online Assessment
What Can We Learn About Learning from Our World Languages Online Courses?
Yves Lapil

Does Assessment Spill Joy? Is it a Waste of Time?
Erica McCormack

On the Slippery Slope of Henry: The Verb "Understand"
Jeffrey Swigart

Notes on Online Discussions
Yves Lapil

From the Secretary
Yves Lapil

Newsletter each semester

- Every committee member writes for the Assessment Times newsletter as one deliverable
- Distributed to the community and posted
- When faculty were surveyed, the newsletter was the highest form of engagement for non-committee members



In the Spirit of
Sharing & Learning

One of the first lessons

Assessment is NOT evaluation

We do not evaluate or compare courses, programs, teaching methods or effectiveness, student success, program relevance, or faculty.

Not ever.



It's about the learning!

Assessment as a developmental process

New

Healthy skepticism

New Language

Trying things out

Lots of questions

Experienced

More confident

Using language

Experience with
trying and often
failing

Questions but also
answers

Supports others

Senior

Grounded

Experienced
practitioner

Provides
leadership,
mentorship, and
advocacy

Sustains a process
of inquiry

What have you learned about assessment?

The process of assessment at the collegiate level is very new to me, so the language is very new but I'm learning how critical it is to assess learning.

How intertwined the outcomes of different disciplines are.

Faculty-driven is just like community development - nothing about us without us!

To challenge myself and think more about student as a whole.

Cookies should be a part of every meeting everywhere.

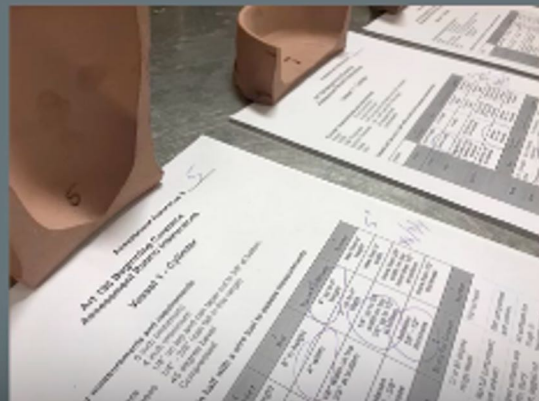
Collaboration and Mentorship



We don't say, *hey we know everything*.
We are all learning. We don't all agree.
And that's ok. We wrestle, we choose a
path, and work together.

Sharing results, and trying it out!

You can't assess everything



Learning happens within the context of relationship

It became an opportunity to meet people outside of my own department. I have built relationships with faculty that I feel comfortable referring students to.

On the flip side, faculty from the committee have also reached out to me to help their students. Committees like this which allow collaboration across disciplines help create a supportive environment for our students.

What do you value most about the experience?

The connection to and camaraderie with like minded colleagues

The opportunity to meet and collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines.

Applying lessons learned to my teaching more intentionally, along with what the committee and institution were doing.

The opportunity to learn from the assessment tools and processes utilized by fellow faculty members and to implement these skills in my own unit level assessment process development.

Relationships (and the food)!

Building Leadership: faculty

Skills you naturally learn as an assessment leader:

collecting data, inviting/convincing faculty to be part of data collection, leading a meeting, overseeing other faculty, meeting with admin, writing a tool, working well together (developmentally being softened around the edges), be a spokesperson/advocate, moving from feeling like we're wasting time to seeing the value of committee work...many different ways

Building Leadership: Administration and staff

The people who are no longer on the committee, they are still sharing their assessment experience with others.

Assessment, and our way of thinking, has been a source of stability in a context of changing leadership, major initiatives, and enrollment changes

Recommendations

- Don't underestimate the power of frequent, short, productive, and fun meetings with snacks!
- **Build infrastructure** that supports commitment, but lives beyond any one person, and is reviewed annually

Recommendations

- In the spirit of learning: support colleagues to muddle through the process. This is not a battle. It's more like a family (a family of artists, philosophers, scientists, poets, analysts, teachers, and administrators all trying to figure things out together)
- Focus on Collaboration and Mentorship short-term and long-term
- Be kind!

Your turn!

Turn to the person next to you:

1. How do you see any of this working in your own context?
2. What's one thing you might try?

Thanks!



Any questions?

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