

Why change it?

A (Brief) Review of the Argument for Change

Why change it?

What We're Supposed to Do:

“[E]ffective assessment can take a variety of forms and involve a variety of processes...**with meaningful input from students...**”

“[A]ssessment strategy should...include explicit public statements regarding the knowledge, skills, and competencies students should possess as a result of completing course and program requirements...”

“Moreover, while **strong assessment should provide data that satisfy** any externally mandated **accountability requirements, its effectiveness in improving student learning relies on its integration into the organization's processes**”

Excerpt from: The HLC Statement on Assessment of Student Learning, 2003.



Source: Assessment Times, March 2006

Why change it?

The Charge:

“The Harold Washington College Assessment Committee (HWCAC) is dedicated to fulfilling the HWC core value of **conducting assessment activities to improve learning**. As such we plan, execute, and support the assessment activities of the college and share our findings and recommendations.

“The HWCAC maintains an annual cycle of General Education assessment in order to **collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant student learning data and... recommendations** to the greater faculty and administration **aimed at the improvement student learning.**”

Why change it?

What We've Done and Been:

- Faculty Led
- Voluntary Participation
- Annual Assessments for 15 years
- District Model
- Growing (Gen Ed → Unit/Program)
- National Recognition
- International Recognition

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

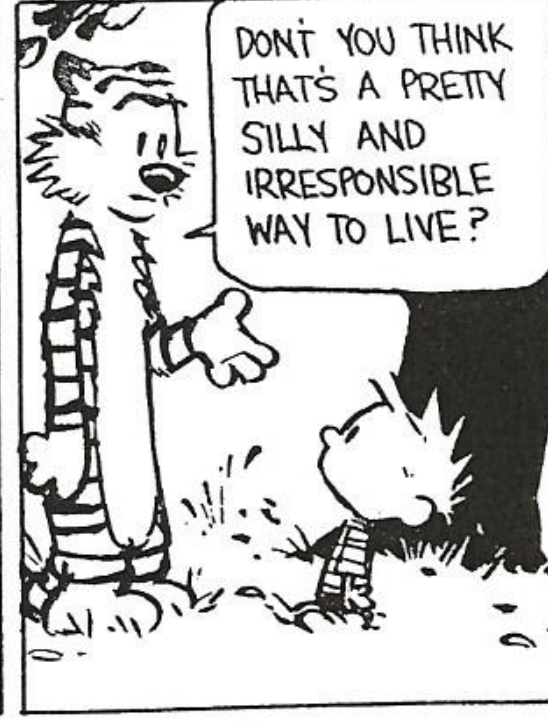


Source: Assessment Times, Dec 2006

"If it ain't broke..."

So, it's all good, right?

"Right???"



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Why are we changing how we do things, anyway?

2018: A Natural Reflection Point

- 15 years
- Accreditation Complete
- Leadership Transitions
- Call to “Assess Assessment”

Why are we changing how we do things, anyway?

In our reflections, four points stood out:

- 1) 'Closing the Loop' has been a struggle for 15 years, along with "student input;"**
- 2) Our commitment to volunteerism and to technology usage led to sample issues;**
- 3) We could collect 'output' data, but absent of 'input' data, it was useless;**
- 4) Program Assessment works!**

All of which led to Primary Recommendation #4:

"We should radically rethink general education assessment."

SOURCE: *Not Again: The Humanities Assessment*, Full Report (February 2019, p.3)

One Perpetual Challenge (i.e. The Bad Penny):

*“Our assessments, which focused on our general education learning outcomes, **have helped us understand much more about what our students learn**, how they best learn, and some of the key influences on their learning outcomes. HWC’s Assessment Committee has a solid decade of this kind of research.*

“I know all Assessment Committee members remain acutely aware that the most difficult aspect of this process involves what we have frequently called “Closing the Loop.” ... we have disseminated and discussed the findings of our assessments. Yet have no supervisory or managerial responsibility for implementing any changes...This is not within our charge, and it would be impossible and unhelpful to make it so.”

Source: Assessment Times, Spring 2012

Our “Closing the Loop” Problem

- Lack of implementation power
- Vagueness of recommendations
- No/limited student engagement

One New Challenge:

Did we break our model?

“It turns out that nearly half (46.6%) of the students who completed the assessment had ... successfully completed English 102. That compares unfavorably to the general student body for the fall of 2016, of whom, less than 20% had successfully completed English 101, and just under half had no record of English completion...

This disparity between the sample and the general population raises problems with generalizing from the abilities, attitudes, behaviors, and choices of the sample to the general HWC student body, and also highlights a significant data blind spot with respect to the general student body. In short, it seems that the self-selection built into the methodology led to a sample make-up that make any generalizations of interpretations of the data highly suspect.

Source: Not Again Humanities Report, 2019 (p. 12)

Methodology Choices:

- Way back when, we chose volunteerism as a key principle, precluding “Random Sampling” of classes or students.
- Justifiable Generalization requires *adequate sample size* and *representativeness*.
- The move to asynchronous deployment has led to problems with the latter in *at least* our last two assessments.

“The implementation of Openbook has provided this assessment with the most accurate, detailed, and exhaustive view of a students’ academic histories. **However, even with this data, it is still difficult to arrive at strong quantitative conclusions.**

“The students entering Harold Washington College fall along a long spectrum of academic preparedness, access to recourses, and outside support. Their learning in the natural sciences is directly affected by the diversity of the curriculum, as well as their quantitative literacy, and reading comprehension. **They enter our college at multiple points, and their academic paths are nonlinear.**”

SOURCE: Phil Vargas, Natural Sciences Report, 2016, (pp. 6-7).

Another Persistent Problem: “Outputs without Inputs”

- Student Starting Points & Data Interpretation
 - Course Credit Proxy = Invalid
 - Natural Science Assessment Report, 2016 (p.7)
 - Limited OpenBook Effectiveness because Regression Sample Sizes = No confidence
 - Humanities Assessment Report, 2019 (p. 16-18)
 - Interpretive Problems
 - e.g., Survivorship bias

Exciting findings!

One Important Development:
Program Assessment Works!

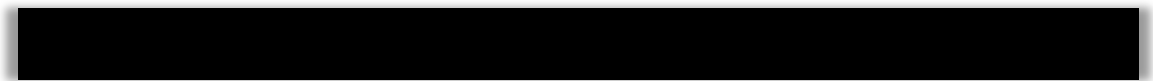
Direct Assessments that Matter!

Actionable, specific
recommendations!



What to do?

- Keep doing what we're doing.
- Give up one of our principles
- Try something new.





So we did.

Proposal for New Assessment Process

And how does that fit with Assessment trends?

~Keys to Assessment for Equity and Social Justice

- “Be mindful of the student population(s) being served and involve students in the process of assessing learning” (NILOA, “Embedding Equity in Assessment Practice,” 2020).
- “There is a need for assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning in various ways while also being transparent about the learning that is taking place, help students reflect on their learning experiences, and allow students to actively participate in the learning and assessment processes” (NILOA, “Equity and Assessment,” 2017).
- “Make evidence-based changes that address issues of equity that are context specific”(NILOA, Assessing for Equity Webinar, 2020).
- Integrating Critical Race Theory framework, e.g., asking, “What are the actual experiences of students of color? Do students of color have different experiences than White students? Are students perceptions of diversity and inclusion different by race?” (NILOA, Capital University Case Study, 2020)

But why stop there?

(we said)

One Object, Two Schemes

Current Objectives

5 GECC + Crf Thk, Diversity, Civic Engm't

Positives

- Familiar, Intuitive (i.e. discipline first)

Drawbacks

- Siloed, Less understood (advising changes-electronic, not faculty; completion focus)

Proposed Objectives

- **Organic:** Interrelated and overlapping
- **Interdisciplinary / Omni disciplinary:**
All disciplines relate to all categories
- **Asset Based Conception:** Capabilities students hone and develop, not receive
- **They rhyme:** Rhyming is fun, like assessment

What are they, already?

(right after this break)

Four Minutes of Self Care

(when the song is over, we're back)



The List

Proposal Ate

Students who experience HWC's General Education Curriculum will have opportunities to:

- Initiate
- Investigate
- Evaluate
- Create
- Participate
- Appreciate
- Communicate
- Contemplate

Proposed General Education Goals:

The broad goals below have been proposed by the HWC Assessment Committee* as a set of aims that collectively entail the form of empowerment described in our mission, as provided by General Education:

1. Initiate: Purposeful learning activity involves personal agency and both builds on and refines prior knowledge, interest and curiosity, and foundational literacies including reading, numeracy, and informational literacy as well as problem solving skills and strategies.

2. Investigate: A systematic process of exploring issues/ objects/ works through the collection and analysis of evidence that result in informed conclusions/ judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

3. Evaluate: Critical evaluation is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

4. Create: The capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, materials, or expertise in original, skillful ways by thinking, reacting, and working in imaginative ways, i.e. characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.

5. Participate: To participate constructively is to engage in action under the control of individual group/team members that facilitate progress toward shared ends and include their effort put into group/team tasks, their manner of interacting with others, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to discussions, deliberations and other activities; this objective includes civic engagement, understood as the ability to participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community and entails intercultural knowledge, understood as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts."

*This is actually a lie—the committee has seen (and conditionally approved) seven, not including definitions, which are adapted (stolen) from ACUE Value rubrics.

6. Appreciate: To grasp the full nature of and recognize the value, significance, quality, and implications of the various bodies of learning, disciplines, methods, and activities of human endeavor, distinguishing 'worth' and 'importance' from 'preferences.' As such, it is a form of global learning, including the critical analysis of and engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and 3) build a basis to address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably.

7. Communicate: Effectively expressing oneself through various media and means, to differing audiences, with purpose and effectiveness is both a foundational skill and perpetual challenge. Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum. Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

8. Contemplate: This is a form of Integrated and integrative learning, an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and cocurriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus. It is the capacity to connect and consider various ideas, theories, and forms of being, knowledge, thought, and action.

** Bennett, J. M. 2008. Transformative training: Designing programs for culture learning. In Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations, ed. M. A. Moodian, 95-110. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.