

Closing the Loop Anecdotes for General Education Assessment

Harold Washington College Assessment Committee, April 2018

Our committee has been assessing general education since 2003, usually one category per year followed by a report including recommendations. At an April 2018 college-wide meeting called Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), we decided to share these recommendations again, asking faculty and staff to reread them and share with us any anecdotes that pertained to them. We chose to focus specifically on the years 2007 to 2014. We wanted to close the loop, to see if our recommendations were happening throughout our college. We believe we do this in many ways throughout our committee work, yet this was a special moment that looked more broadly over many years of work.

Each bolded category below includes italicized recommendations from that specific general education report, and each recommendation includes bulleted anecdotes we collected from faculty and staff.

INFORMATION LITERACY (Assessed in 2014):

Assign mandatory library workshops in order to strengthen information literacy skills across the curriculum.

- Initially I did this in response to the results. I no longer do due to substantial student feedback.
- this is done voluntarily in our dept. I usually schedule an appointment at the library to take my classes there once a semester
- I began assigning mandatory library workshops for my US History 111 and 112 students to focus on use of various databases, evaluating potential sources, and working with Chicago Manual of Style citation.
- I used to bring my students to the in-class Library sessions when I was teaching College Success.
- I think this is important for certain first year courses.

Embed teaching information literacy skills into various classes and programs across the curriculum.

- I changed my courses to include more emphasis on this type of research and writing and less on other topics.
- I designed a discussion for the online Bio 107 (nutrition) that focuses on student identifying scientifically reliable information sources.
- We need to include this more often in course.

Provide opportunities for students to self-assess information literacy skills in order to build a stronger connection between students' confidence and actual skill level.

- I did this but in a more informal way - class activities.
- I designed a discussion for the online Bio 107 (nutrition) that focuses on student identifying scientifically reliable information sources.

ORAL COMMUNICATION (Assessed in 2013)

Assign oral presentations throughout the HWC curriculum, not only in the Speech Department.

- I used to avoid assigning oral presentations but now I assign them in all of my classes.
- I added a 5 minute speech to 2 of my courses. In addition to creating a rubric for the content, I introduced the Oral Communication Rubric (from the General Education Assessment) and worked with my students on meeting those outcomes as well.
- In response to this assessment I designed oral presentations for all of my classes. Previously I had offered this as extra credit on the last day of class (sharing some writing) but now my classes include both studying strategies and presenting.
- yes- critiques are oral presentations
- I assign oral presentations in my US History courses and in my linguistics courses.

Vary the types of oral presentations assigned, clearly identifying the scope of the assignment and reinforcing the concept of "audience."

- I now include an elevator speech in addition to the formal presentation assignment.
- Since the assessment, I have designed both individual persuasive projects based on photos students take of their neighborhoods and small group projects where they present a learning game to the class, in addition to traditional presentations.
- Our critiques vary through the semester on the emphasis of conversation.

Make every effort to put students at ease before their oral presentations.

- We now have two practice sessions before the formal presentation. My students also practice reading children's books out loud several times before they must do it for a grade.
- "This is connected to the new 5 minute speech assignments I included in 2 courses. We spent a lot of time talking about building on strengths. I also used time to encourage fellow classmates to be an encouraging audience and to use ""active listening"" skills so they could support one another and build confidence.
- I offer students options for how to design their presentation that they are comfortable with. They can create a video of their presentation and play it for the class, for instance, so they are not standing up and speaking (yet, they are). They can also use voiceover powerpoint and/or work in pairs where one person presents and one does tech.
- I try to achieve this by providing clear guidelines and instructions well in advance of the event. I also create student support groups in my History and linguistics classes so that students can work together to solve common problems with preparation. These groups also are venues for members to practice presentation skills.
- Yes we do practices and we talk about planning and strategy. We did not do this before.

Prioritize confidence building in students' abilities to prepare oral presentations well and to present orally in class.

- I now have students practice and we do deep breathing exercises and fun games with each other to reduce stress and build confidence

- We work on strategies ahead of time. 1/3 of their grade for the final presentation is based on being a supportive audience member, which I elaborate on in great detail - what it is and how it affects the speaker. I think knowing their audience is required to be supportive or they'll fail their own assignment is actually pretty helpful, and the audience is then quite supportive.

Encourage further assessments about the efficacy of the HWC speech program are encouraged.

- We do talk about career situations when students will need to do various types of presentations.

Provide professional development for non-speech faculty about creating strong oral presentation assignments, assessing those assignments, and teaching the skills associated with those assignments, ideally from the HWC Speech Faculty.

- TLC event on April 6, 2018

Encourage further cross-disciplinary discussion about the purposes of assigned oral communication assignments in general.

- TLC event on April 6, 2018

Investigate whether or not oral communication skills are being taught in non-Speech classes if oral communication assignments are required.

- yes - critiques for each project completed
- Yes. I require my US History and linguistics students to do oral presentations based on research they have done.

Encourage further cross-disciplinary discussion about what is emphasized in oral communication assignments in terms faculty expectations of content versus delivery.

- TLC event on April 6, 2018
- This has also been discussed at length during Assessment Committee meetings.

HUMAN DIVERSITY (Assessed in 2012)

Create artifacts and opportunities to celebrate, remark upon, and represent our exceptional human diversity.

- Students are required to observe and write about Culturally, Linguistically, and Ability Diverse children in a variety of settings. Each of the new Key Assessments include expectations for students to show competence in planning for and including all children in their planning.
- I always incorporated that, so I can't say I've increased it since the assessment. Terms and understandings change over time, so I try to stay updated and respectfully share/teach the current terms and thinking about certain topics in this area.
- In linguistics, students focus on the acquisition, structure and use of various world languages. They explore how language is an artifact of culture and how it is affected by social factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and class. Linguistics students conduct research on particular languages that fascinate them and present their research findings in written and oral formats.

- Designed an online discussion for ALL sections of online Bio 114 course (intro bio for non-majors) that focuses on gender and sex determination."
- Always try to pick artifacts that push these boundaries.

Commit time and resources for ensuring the continuation and development of new celebratory events (such as Black History Month, Women's History Month, etc.) that highlight and expose students to cultural diversity.

- I offer extra credit for attending these events and writing a summary.
- yes - done within the context of class, but not specifically stating the event name as direct tie-in.

Create opportunities for students to engage in community-based experiences with diverse populations and to reflect on those interactions both personally and academically.

- Child Development students must do observations in different settings and with different age groups. During the Practicum, they are also required to visit a fellow student's site – one that is different from their own.
- I now assign a Family and Culture Interview in which students must interview a classmate who they identify as different from themselves and they go through a series of agreed upon questions that focus on culture and family traditions.
- Small group work, sharing experiences and opinions on various topics.
- My linguistics 101 curriculum includes a requirement that students work with a native speaker (or speakers) of a language they wish to explore and to reflect on their interactions in writing and through an oral presentation.

Highlight HWC's strong culture of respect for and engagement with human diversity in marketing the college.

- I manage the Child Development Facebook page and I am sure to choose postings that are reflective of our diverse student population. This is also the case for flyers we create as well as photos we share.

Broaden gender categorization choices beyond the simple binary choice of female or male.

- I teach this as a vocabulary fact/issue. Pronouns are part of my job description.
- yes- an environment is created in class where this happens organically when the situation arises for this to happen
- Linguistics 101 explores the relationship language has on perceptions of gender and how gender norms affect language.

Review teaching materials, perceptions and practices, and acknowledge and broaden human diversity categorizations and labels that adequately reflect considerable social change.

- I now use materials from the Human Rights Campaign and Teaching Tolerance to provide resources that include language specific to the LGBTQ community to help students practice using accepted nomenclature with the understanding that terms will change over time.

- This is in process. I am hoping to do this next year for at least 4 of our program courses. Our program has always considered Human Diversity in the resources we use, but we are always looking for more inclusive and global materials
- Yes, have switched books/eliminated readings many times for this reason.
- as best as possible

Build an ongoing partnership with the Student Government Association and all other student organizations.

- I'm working on building a partnership with the VA. My classes have signed cards for vets (which I brought to HW).

Establish plans to support student groups as they reach across boundaries to increase connectivity among diverse student groups.

- when appropriate, I do

EFFECTIVE WRITING (Assessed in 2011)

Encourage the expansion of “wraparound” support services for English students.

- Yes -- embedded tutoring, for one thing.

Re-examine the criteria for successful course completion from remedial courses to college-level

- I focus more on teaching strategies than writing now. Students who can't learn to be good writers can learn strategies (tutoring, online grammar programs, peer review) to help improve their papers.

Review how and where student writing is currently expected within courses across the college, and require more frequent writing assignments in all disciplines, especially math and science.

- I now use materials from the Human Rights Campaign and Teaching Tolerance to provide resources that include language specific to the LGBTQ community to help students practice using accepted nomenclature with the understanding that terms will change over time.
- I am now requiring research-based writing assignments in linguistics 101 and 102 which will provide students opportunities to build critical thinking in the subject.
- Introduced ten online Reflection writing assignments in f2f Bio 121 course (intro bio for majors). Currently two sections.
- Concentrated much more on writing and skills and have added writing rubrics into my courses. We now do an essay planning exercise on the board with all contributing to show some of the work required. All of these changes are my direct response to our Effective Writing assessment results.

Provide specific feedback to students about where the strong areas and problems are in written work as well as recommendations for how the student can improve in those areas rather than providing broad statements about written work.

- I provide in-text feedback to students on their papers that include highlighting strengths and making suggestions for how the student can make a specific sentence, or section stronger.

- "I thought I did this before the college-wide assessment, but I have stepped this up even more. In some cases, I focus on one specific aspect of the writing (i.e., sentence structure, or tense) so the student can work on one thing at a time. In other cases, I not only provide feedback about the writing, but I also provide links to support services for writing and encourage students to seek the help of a writing tutor, when warranted. I now also make Smartthinking available to my students.
- I do this in both the US History and the linguistics courses I teach.
- Now try to give very specific feedback and refer them to additional supports and resources.

Provide professional development to all faculty regarding strategies to give more useful feedback to students about their written work.

- TLC April 6, 2018

QUALITATIVE REASONING (Assessed in 2009)

Connect basic math skills and students' perceptions of relevance to their daily lives.

- Yes, when appropriate
- Nutrition: students count daily calories and calculate their BMI and BMR.
- Continue to use percentages in all my classes with assignments loaded differently. I try to explain this with a pie chart in my syllabi. I still believe points systems dumb down math requirements for all students.

Discuss the "Math counts everywhere" initiative.

- Grammar is surprisingly like algebra. I point that out frequently.
- Yes, when appropriate

Change the cultural resistance our students have to math and lift their confidence levels outside of math classes.

- This is very important to child development. I now include more children's books about math in our children's library and we discuss how our math anxiety can influence the children we teach so we have to overcome those fears.
- I've been trying to look at current events that involve data and math as often as possible, such as articles about trending topics on Reddit and measuring those trends mathematically. I think I'm seeing students become more positive about math, at least in those moments.
- We talk about quantitative language and how it substantiates research papers unlike anything else a lot. I draw parallels and make analogies to math concepts a surprising # of times in English class.

Provide students opportunities to apply math skills in classes such as calculating their final grades.

- I now take the time to explain to them how their midterm grades are calculated. Then, I ask them to calculate their final grades using the same criteria
- I have included more opportunities for "real-life" math calculations such as when reading nutritional labels on food items and in calculating BMI and calorie usage.

- Yes. I provide a number (eg 14/20) and assist them in figuring out what percent/letter that translates to.
- When we do scoring exercises on large feedback lists (like evaluative comments) I always get students to use their phones and do the calculations for me.

NATURAL SCIENCES (Assessed in 2008)

Emphasize conceptual learning and engage students using active learning activities.

- Child Development students design activities for children. I now include an assignment the focuses on science activities and math activities in the Language and Literacy course as well as in CD 120.
- Created multiple active learning activities requiring conceptual understanding: image crossword puzzles, puzzle-like arts and crafts assignments, case studies.

Change instructional and curricular design to help HWC's students develop more sophisticated beliefs about learning and science.

- I started putting much more emphasis on introducing the "bigger picture," rather than numerous details....

HUMANITIES (Assessed in 2007)

Create more opportunities for students to develop a broad emotional vocabulary to support affective and interpretive tasks.

- Yes, when appropriate

Increase opportunities for students to provide evidential support for their reasoning, encouraging them to apply technical or discipline-specific vocabulary whenever possible.

- Yes, and to determine when it needs to be defined/explained for a non-disciplinary reader vs. when it can be considered general knowledge.
- I do this in linguistics courses.

Introduce students to a wider array of critical tools for explaining, interpreting, evaluating, and contextualizing humanistic artifacts.

- I have changed an art interpretation assignment in the Creative Activities class to include terms used in the Humanities Assessment rubric.