ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Ron Boyer
Shirley Dubman
Samantha Fay
Julie Fraser
Sandy Frey
Joan Warren
Dedric Lee
Betty Linneman
Mike Logan
Trish Loomis, Chair
Patty McDaniel
Mindy Selsor

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the committee shall be to serve as the campus-wide conduit for assessment. The committee will review data pertinent to ongoing assessment of student outcomes and make recommendations to the Administrative Cabinet. Recommendations from the committee shall be forwarded to the Academic Affairs Committee.

You Cannot Not ...

Most of us did not make it through our coursework without hearing at least once Marshall McCluhan’s declaration, “You cannot not communicate.” That is, even when you are not communicating, you are communicating—you are communicating that you are not communicating (or something like that). Yes, long live the 60s and the 70s! As a college freshman, I found that intriguing. Now, I find it a simple truth and a constant challenge. It is frequently expressed on our campus and on many other campuses that it is something we do not do effectively—communicate.

The 80s and 90s brought educators another “cannot declaration”: “you cannot not assess” – not so intriguing; we knew this long before “they” told us. Educators have always known that assessment is as inherent to teaching and learning as the “medium is to the message” (thank you, McCluhan). In this article the two “cannot nots” come together: communication and assessment. How do we communicate about assessment at Jefferson?

College Reports Tab on STARS

Actually, there are many ways we communicate about assessment. Currently, Institutional Assessment is communicated primarily through the College Reports tab on STARS. What? You don’t go there? “You cannot not go to the College Reports tab” because that is where we post relevant assessment efforts of the college and our outcomes, including the following:

• Annual Summary of Institutional Assessment (WorkKeys, CAAP and C-Base student outcomes)
• Transfer Outcomes
• New Students and Primary Risk Factors Study
• PACE and SACE Survey Result (Personnel and Student Assessment of College Environment)
• Graduating Student Opinion Survey Results
• HLC Self-Study
• HLC Assurance and Advancement Reports

Program Assessment is also communicated on the College Reports Tab. All of the current Institutional Effectiveness Reviews are posted on the Tab. IER data is also available in the Division Chairs’ offices and the CAO’s office.

CTL Website Assessment Tab

Many of our procedures for Course Assessment are communicated on the CTL website under the Assessment Tab. Yes, “you cannot not go to the Assessment Tab” because there you will find many assessment resources, including the following:

• Assessment Plan
• Assessment Updates (published by the Assessment Committee)
• Action Research
• Multi-Section Assessment
• Best Practices in Assessment Resources
• Assessment Guidebook (includes sample rubrics, examples of expected student learning outcomes and corresponding assessment measures, etc.)
• Institutional Effectiveness Review templates and 5-year schedule

The CTL website is a public website. Colleagues at other institutions have expressed their gratitude for the resources posted there. The Director of Teaching and Learning also hosts brown bag lunches and other activities to encourage sharing of assessment efforts and student outcomes.

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Spotlight on Faculty Assessment Efforts

**ACTION RESEARCH**

Instructor **Imran Shah** identified that most of his mathematics students weren’t doing their homework. To address this problem, Imran decided to try a modification of a colleague’s practice of utilizing more homework assignments and grading only selected problems. The colleague assigned an overwhelming number of problems, so Imran modified the homework assignments to about 25 problems each. Imran grades a portion of the problems he assigns, for example 8 out of 25. Students do not know ahead of time which problems will be graded. For each assignment, he grades the same problems for every student. He began this practice during the middle of the fall 2009 semester and continued the practice in the Spring 2010 semester. He has seen improvement in students’ learning as measured by quiz scores. Additionally, he largely attributes a 6.8% increase from the 2008/2009 academic year to the 2009/2010 academic year in the number of his students passing with a grade sufficient to move on to the next course to the new homework strategy. These positive results have led Imran to continue the use of this homework strategy.

**General Biology** students have a difficult time comprehending a cell and its internal functions because it is abstract. By researching many articles, and speaking to other faculty, Biology Instructor **Marialana Speidel** has been introduced to a variety of technology teaching tools that may be able to help her biology students better comprehend the intracellular processes involved in making proteins. By incorporating technology into the lesson plan students may find the topic of protein synthesis easier to understand.

Specifically, students in Marialana’s Fall General Biology sections will access the Blackboard Course Page to experience DNA and Protein Synthesis interactives, complete online practice problem sets, create analogies, and view animations, simulations, and videos. These technology based activities are free and available through several websites. The University of Illinois Merit Immersion for Students and Teachers (MIST) website was a valuable resource for Marialana as she worked to provide technology based experiences for her General Biology students.

To determine whether incorporation of these technology based activities impacts student learning, Marialana plans to make comparisons between the 2010 summer General Biology students who were not provided with the technology based activities and the 2010 fall semester students who were. She ran a Scantron Item Analysis of the exam that covers protein synthesis for the summer students and will compare that analysis with a Scantron Item Analysis of the exam that covers protein synthesis that the Fall semester students will take. Marialana will also compare the comments of both groups of students regarding their understanding of protein synthesis. Based on Fall 2010 student comments, she has already anecdotally observed that students are benefiting from the technology based activities.

In the Electronics Department two sections of DC/AC circuits are being taught. These courses are the first and prerequisite courses offered for the Electronics Certificate and the AAS degree in Industrial Automation.

With increasing requirements for third party certifications, the department wanted to compare the two sections being taught by having each student take the ETA (Electronics Technicians Association) certification exams. ETA is a nationally recognized organization. One section of the course is using new curriculum and trainers that were purchased last year. This curriculum has a CAI (computer aided instruction) component that eventually will allow the course to become a hybrid course. With this curriculum, the theory will be delivered on-line and the students will only attend class for labs and other needed exercises. The other section of the course is being taught using traditional means, including lecture, power points, and integrated labs.

At the end of the courses the ETA exams will be administered and the results will be compared. This will allow the instructors the opportunity to look at the scores of each section and adjust teaching methods as needed to give the students the greatest advantage in achieving a passing score on the exams. This project is in the beginning stages; more information will be reported on in upcoming issues.
Professor Amy Kausler and Assistant Professor Leslie Buck are conducting a Multi-section Assessment in PSY 101: General Psychology. During the Spring 2009 and Fall 2009 semesters, Amy and Leslie designed and ran a pilot study in which students in all sections of their General Psychology courses took some of the same test items throughout the semester. The common test items were selected to represent a variety of content areas. Analysis of the data indicated relative weaknesses in two areas: neural communications and correlations. They found that students across all sections struggled with the concept of neural connections. They also found that students in online sections struggled with correlations more than students in face-to-face sections.

Amy and Leslie brainstormed ways to improve instruction of neural communication and online instruction related to correlations. One example of a modification to instruction was a change in the correlational data given to students. Instead of hypothetical textbook data, students are now given a scatterplot showing the relationship between the previous semester’s General Psychology students’ quiz scores and final course grades. The goal is for students to see the positive relationship between quiz scores and final course grade. Since quiz scores account for only a small portion of the final course grade, students should hypothesize that learning the material consistently throughout the semester is related to a better final course grade. This small change to instruction will hopefully increase students’ comprehension of correlations and their motivation to study consistently throughout the semester.

Another result of the pilot is the newly created Online Adjunct Community which provides a forum for adjunct and full-time instructors to share ideas about effective ways to teach specific concepts such as correlations. Perhaps more significantly, the Online Adjunct Community will serve as a medium for adjuncts to be included in multi-section assessment. Common test questions will be used again this semester, but the questions will be selected based on the course expected learning outcomes. Additionally, the pilot is being expanded to include all adjunct instructors so that students in all sections of General Psychology will respond to the same 14 questions, administered throughout the semester.

The quiz function of Blackboard will be used for collecting data. For each of the fourteen common test items, each adjunct will record the number correct, number incorrect, and the total number of students completing the item. Adjunct instructors who are teaching more than one section of PSY 101 General Psychology will combine results from all sections and report one time for each test question. When adjunct instructors are ready to report the results for a test item, they select the “Assessments” link on the Online Adjunct Community faculty page, then select the link for the test item they are ready to report. There are fourteen links available, one for each test item. Utilizing the Blackboard quiz function for data collection will expedite data analysis. Amy and Leslie plan to use the results to determine students’ relative strengths and weaknesses in meeting the expected learning outcomes and then address areas of weakness through changes to curriculum design.
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**Browsetab on STARS**

Also, adjunct faculty share assessment efforts in student outcomes logs and narratives posted on the Faculty tab of STARS under Class Course Assessment Browse. These logs and narratives are posted within STARS so that only Jefferson faculty will have access. This ensures that the forum is a safe place to share both strengths and weaknesses found through assessment.

**Minutes and Assessment Update on STARS**

The Assessment Committee’s monthly minutes are posted on the Employee Tab of STARS. The Assessment Committee serves as the campus-wide conduit for assessment. Also, the committee invites different faculty each month to attend the meeting and present their assessment efforts. In addition, the committee publishes the Assessment Update (on STARS and CTL) twice a year and also awards the Linda Johnston Excellence in Assessment Award each year to a faculty member who meets the following criteria: 1. Communicate a positive attitude about assessment, 2. Help to foster the concept of assessment at Jefferson College, 3. Use a variety of assessment measures and techniques 4. Use results of assessment to impact the curriculum and/or student learning. At the end of each academic year, the Assessment Committee develops an annual report to summarize and share ongoing efforts as well as new assessment efforts. The annual reports are shared with the Cabinet and constituent groups.

**Strategic Planning Tab on STARS**

The Strategic Planning Initiative is another important means of assessment and ongoing improvement. The Strategic Plan and results of survey responses by community members and employees are posted on the Strategic Planning Tab on STARS. Ongoing assessment of programs and services is central to the Strategic Planning process. The Planning Committee is currently developing measurements and benchmarks which will be posted on the Planning Tab.

**College Web Site**

We have worked together consistently to revise Official Course Syllabus to clarify and share expected learning outcomes and assessment measures for each course. These syllabi are posted on the website for the benefit of students, faculty, transfer institutions, and employers. You can find these syllabi on the web by clicking on the discipline.

As you see, there are many ways we share expected learning outcomes, assessment efforts, student outcomes, and institutional effectiveness data on our campus. Our goal is a meaningful culture of assessment, not a compliant culture of assessment. To that end, we need to continue to share our efforts, our successes, and our challenges.

So clearly, “You cannot not communicate about assessment” at Jefferson. Do you think some freshman will be intrigued by that statement someday? (No, I don’t either.)

- Dr. Mindy Selsor

**Exit Exams**

Each semester the Testing Center conducts exit exams in an effort to monitor and improve the academic achievement of Jefferson College students. This testing is a requirement for graduation, and students’ transcripts are held until the requirement is met. Exit exam testing is scheduled at times which will not conflict with midterms or finals. Fall exit testing is done in November; spring exit testing is completed in April; and summer exit testing is done during the middle four weeks of the eight week summer semester. Exit exam testing is conducted at Hillsboro as well as at the Arnold and Northwest sites. In fiscal year 2010, the Testing Center administered 799 exit exams including both the CAAP and the WorkKeys assessments.

Students completing the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Arts Teaching degree and the Nursing RN program complete the CAAP assessment. The CAAP assessment evaluates knowledge and skills in Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing, Science and Math. Students do not take all five tests; rather, each student takes the Critical Thinking component and one of the other four assessments which are randomly assigned. ACT awards certificates to students who score at the 50th percentile or better on the CAAP assessments, an accomplishment which could be listed on their resumes as an academic award achieved. Exit exams which are not tied to a specific course grade are often classified as “low stakes testing” which can translate into a universal problem known as “low effort testing.” To prevent low effort testing, Jefferson educates the CAAP candidates about the possible certificates, thus providing incentive for a student to try his or her best.

Students completing the Associate of Applied Science or a Certificate program take the WorkKeys assessment which include all three of the following tests: Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information. The WorkKeys assessment is given online, and students receive their results immediately. Students who take the WorkKeys assessment can receive a National Career Readiness Certificate. Based on the student’s scores, this national credential is issued in one of four levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. In the past, the Testing Center has collaborated with the Missouri Career Center, so our students could register and receive the earned certificate. This process is currently changing; however, Jefferson College is working with ACT, so that students who achieve the necessary score levels are awarded the National Career Readiness Certificate. More information about the CAAP assessment can be found at www.act.org/caap. More information about the WorkKeys assessments can be found at www.act.org/workkeys. Information about how Jefferson College students perform on these assessments can be found on the Reports tab in STARS.
Linda Johnston Excellence in Assessment Award

Mr. Terry Kite, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, is the recipient of the 2009-2010 Linda Johnston Excellence in Assessment Award. Terry, a 1995 graduate of Jefferson College is in his third year of full-time community college teaching. Before coming to work for Jefferson, Terry taught fifth grade math and science for 11 years. In the past he also taught education courses for Missouri Baptist and UMSL.

According to Terry, “I believe that assessment is an integral tool in the teaching and learning process. By using informal and formal formative assessment tools, I am able to adjust my instructional plan to best suit my students’ needs. I can determine what outcomes the students are struggling with as well as the outcomes that the students have already mastered.” He professes that a lesson that tailors teaching and course activities to the outcomes of the students provides a quality, student centered, education.

Terry helps foster the use of assessment at Jefferson College in many ways. Working together with the Teacher Education department members, he regularly discusses course projects and assessment methods with full-time and adjunct instructors. Together they identify areas that their students seem to be struggling with and develop new activities and methods to emphasize particular objectives within their courses. Terry asserts that this has been beneficial to the department, and says he has noticed a marked improvement in his students’ attainment of the course objectives through this process.

As a champion of assessment, Terry also emphasizes the use of assessment with his students. When students complete activities for his course, he gives feedback to the students about their achievement of the specific outcome desired for the course. Together Terry and his students have conversations about the assessments; he stresses to the students that the assessment is not only for his benefit, but for their benefit as well. The students use the assessments, both informal and formal, to determine what course outcomes they need to work on outside of class.

Terry reports that he routinely uses a variety of assessment measures. The technique he uses most often is student paraphrasing or summarizing. He often has students discuss specific topics within groups, requiring each student to take notes about their group’s discussion of the key points of the topic; he then has each write a summary of the discussion. This is an excellent strategy for students to engage in the course material, because it allows him to informally assess the groups’ progress on the concept. His instructor evaluations often reflect that students not only learn from this assessment technique, but they feel that it encourages them to participate more fully in the course than they normally would.

Another strategy he uses is directed reading assessments. Prior to discussing a topic in class, he assigns a chapter/section reading assignment and gives students questions that require them to truly read the material by giving an analysis or application of the material read. This helps students focus on the material that is most important, and helps him determine what concepts the students already know, and on what areas students need to spend more time. Students have commented that this technique really helped them better understand and assess what they already knew and what they had learned.

Terry also conducts action research to increase student learning. His action research related to the Missouri Standards for Teacher Education Preparation (MoSTEP) competency that teachers must be reflective practitioners is detailed in the April 2010 Assessment Update. For an update on his use of results, please see page 3 of this issue.

All in all, Terry Kite exemplifies the spirit of assessment at Jefferson College. He explores multiple avenues of assessment, listens to student comments, analyzes student work, evaluates their grasp of outcomes and changes curriculum as a result. And to top it off, students have shared with Mr. Kite that incorporating assessment techniques into his courses assures them that he is concerned with their success.
High Impact Educational Experiences at Jefferson

High impact educational experiences aren’t new at Jefferson College, but tracking of them began recently. Last spring Jefferson College faculty members were asked to report students’ High Impact Educational Experiences (HIEE). When faculty submitted final course grades, they also considered whether students had participated in one of seven types of high impact educational experiences as defined by the Missouri Department of Higher Education. These definitions are detailed in the November 2009 issue of the Assessment Update.

Based on faculty members’ submissions, 271 students participated in one or more high impact educational experiences. The most prevalent types of high impact educational experiences at Jefferson are Focused Field Experiences (77.9%), followed by Collaborative Assignments and Projects (7.4%) and Service Learning (5.3%). The majority of the high impact educational experiences reported were in courses in the Career and Technical Education Division of the College.

Do students benefit from high impact educational experiences? Students in Don Boyer’s Business Intern I & II courses work a minimum of 280 hours in a paid position in the community during the semester. They reflect on their work experiences weekly and each week submit a written reflection in which they describe a problem they faced during the week, tell how they solved it and consider whether it was the best solution to the problem. Don believes students in the Intern courses “gain valuable work experience while relating course concepts to real world business situations.”

According to Cindy Rossi, students in her Salesmanship course learn how to make two types of sales presentations through their participation in Focused Field Experiences. Students are able to demonstrate the proper methods of motivating clients by conducting and completing sales transactions. They demonstrate their ability to sell a retail and industrial product to the class. Students are able to define selling as an extension of marketing, list the opportunities of a career in sales, and explain relationship strategy. Students are also able to explain communication styles, describe personal ethics and values, and list sources of product information. Cindy believes that the Salesmanship class teaches students skills that they can use in many areas of business management.

Students also find value in high impact educational experiences. Bill, a student in Shirley Dubman’s English Composition II course said, “[The Service Learning project] helped me mature as a person and a writer.” Liz, a student in Amy Kausler’s Psychology of Personality Adjustment course said that the Service Learning project gave her a deeper perspective into life transitions. Matt, a student in Christy Cornelius’ Children’s Health Nutrition and Safety course said he had more pride in his assignment because it felt useful since it would actually be used in a child development center. To see videos of Liz and Matt talking about their experiences, go to http://www.jeffco.edu/ctl/, click on the Teaching Tips tab and scroll down to Service Learning Video Portraits and click on the Psychology and Early Childhood Education links.

Faculty interested in taking steps to incorporate an HIEE component into a course are encouraged to contact Sandy Frey at szak@jeffco.edu or ext. 348.
Assessment in Non-Academic Areas of the College

Viking Woods—More Than Just a Place to Sleep

Viking Woods Apartments have been a part of the Jefferson College landscape since 2001. The complex was originally supervised as a contract service owned and operated by an off-campus corporation. Later the College took over the ownership and management of the facilities. Viking Woods has 56 apartments providing housing for a maximum of 210 students. In addition to living and sleeping space, the complex provides recreation areas, a computer lab, laundry facilities, and a clubhouse designed for leisure and social activities.

Viking Woods is staffed by a Director, an Assistant Director, a Maintenance Technician, a part-time Secretary, and four Residential Assistants. The housing staff strives to create a community which provides a student-centered learning environment that supports expectations of academic achievement and personal development. To that end, staff members have developed multiple methods to solicit feedback from residents and other members of the campus environment and to utilize that feedback to enhance the living environment.

Residents of Viking Woods are queried each year at check-out about their impressions of the facilities, staff, and programs. Some recent changes that have occurred based upon resident surveys include the following:
- Including electrical billing in housing lease fees as opposed to separate account billing through AmerenUE
- Increasing the number and diversity of programs provided by housing staff
- Transitioning to high-speed internet
- Implementing e-mail communication between housing staff and residents

In addition to student surveys, housing staff members meet weekly to discuss residential issues and discuss staff perceptions/concerns as well as feedback provided to them by residents. Some initiatives developed through staff meeting discussions include:
- Collaborating with Public Safety during evening rounds and other hours
- Involving faculty and staff in residential educational programs
- Renovating laundry room and lounge areas

Lastly, Viking Woods staff members monitor the environment and make improvements as various situations and circumstances occur to alleviate anticipated future issues. These proactive changes include:
- Installing surveillance cameras in multiple locations on the property
- Improving handicapped accessibility of the buildings and grounds including the clubhouse, sidewalks, and doorways
- Improving Residential Assistant training
- Integrating housing student conduct records with those held in the Dean of Students Office
- Conducting criminal background checks for all housing applicants
REALIGNING CURRICULA

Since I had been in the automotive field for over 30 years, it never occurred to me how difficult it would be to understand the layers of information, both in theory and in practice that my students would need to become successful.

I thought I would teach them the theory, explain the angles, add in some diagnostic angles and that would be it. I assumed all of the students would have read the chapters, understood the concepts, and with minimal lecture we would be doing alignments at the rate of two per day. It wouldn’t be too difficult because it seemed simple. I did not see the freight train coming.

When I asked questions during the lecture, I realized only two or three students actually understood the concepts—the others were so lost they just stared with blank faces. No one—not one student—understood how the angles on one side of the car affected the angles on the other side of the car. It was then I realized I was being taught by my students. If I was going to provide students with the proper level of skill to succeed, I would have to “layer” their knowledge with their skill until they were at an industry level.

I first made the learning fun by poking fun at my inability to draw. They laughed which relieved some stress and I felt opened them up to learn. Then related the angles to shopping carts and ten speed bicycles because most people are familiar with them. I folded in some simple diagnostics to build confidence and to encourage interaction and then we went to the shop and restated the highlights of the lecture over and over until they understood how it applied to the vehicle.

Looking back on the day, I felt the students and the teacher learned quite a bit about education.

Gerard Uhls

ASSESSMENT RESOURCE

ION Illinois Online Resource
Assessment/Evaluation Topics
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/assessment/index.asp

This webpage includes strategies to minimize cheating in online courses.