2010-2011
Outcomes Assessment Report

April 2012

Harper College
Go Forward®

Overview

Outcomes assessment at Harper College is the process of collecting, analyzing and using data about student learning to focus institutional efforts on improving student achievement and the learning experience. Assessment at Harper is based on the following principles:

- The most effective assessment processes are faculty driven.
- Assessment is an ongoing process that leads to change and improvement.
- Assessment is never perfect.
- Academic freedom can be maintained while engaged in assessment.
- Assessment is not a task solely performed as a requirement of accrediting agencies; the reason for assessment is improvement.
- Assessment is not linked to faculty evaluation and results will not be used punitively.
- The use of data to support change leads to the most meaningful improvements.
- Course-embedded assessment is the most effective authentic method of conducting assessment.
- Assessment raises as many questions as it answers.
- Assessment focuses the attention of the College on continuous quality improvement.

The Nichols five-column model of assessment has been adopted by Harper College. This model organizes the assessment process by guiding programs through the process of developing an assessment plan, collecting evidence of student learning, communicating results and developing data-based action plans focused on continuous improvement. The five columns represent the following:

- Identifying the program mission (Column 1)
- Defining learning outcomes (Column 2)
- Selecting assessment measures and establishing the criteria for success (Column 3)
- Implementation and data collection (Column 4)
- Using assessment results to improve student learning (Column 5)

Academic program assessment follows an annual cycle in which the plan for assessment is developed during the fall semester, the assessment is conducted during the spring semester and assessment results and improvement plans are completed upon return the following fall semester (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Assessment Timeline

ANNUAL OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT TIMELINE		
PLANNING ✓ **Column 1 –** Mission Statement ✓ **Column 2 –** Student Learning Outcomes ✓ **Column 3 –** Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success	Early October to mid-December	Meet with Outcomes Assessment Office to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle.
	End of December	Submit assessment plan (columns 1-3) in TracDat. Assessment plan includes mission statement, learning outcomes, means of assessment and criteria for success. Plan for assessment shared with the program faculty.
IMPLEMENTATION	Mid-January to mid-May	Implement assessment plans.
ASSESSMENT ✓ Collect, analyze and interpret data	Mid January to mid-May	Data collection throughout academic semester.
✓ **Column 4 -** Summary of Data Collected ✓ **Column 5 -** Use of Results	May to September	Analysis of assessment data. Data collected is analyzed to identify trends, areas for improvement, and to generate initiatives to improve student learning.
	September to early October	Enter data and use of results (columns 4-5) in TracDat. Columns 1-5 completed.
CLOSING THE LOOP ✓ Initiate appropriate changes ✓ Report findings to appropriate constituents	Early October to mid-December	Meet with Outcomes Assessment Office to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle. New assessment cycle begins. Incorporate revisions from last year.

Career Program Outcomes Assessment

Program level outcomes assessment began at Harper College in 2004. Since then, participation in the outcomes assessment process has become a sustainable part of the Harper College culture. Involved in the academic program outcomes assessment activities are all Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, various certificate programs, developmental math, English as a Second Language, and the Department of Academic Success (developmental English and reading).

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the total number of academic programs/departments involved in outcomes assessment was 46. This number represents five certificate programs, English as a Second Language, developmental English and reading, developmental math and the 38 AAS degree programs. Five of the AAS programs and one certificate program were unable to participate in the outcomes assessment process due to new status or low enrollment. Table 2 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/departments.

Table 2 – Program Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2010-2011 (Cycle 7)

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Documented consultations	45/46 (98%)
Programs unable to assess due to new status or low enrollment	6* (these programs not included in data)
Columns 1–3 submitted	33/40 (83%)
Columns 4–5 submitted	31/40 (78%)
Results	**Number of Items (%)**
Outcomes process issues	12/149 (8%)
Criteria met, no further action	90/149 (60%)
Criteria met, action taken	14/149 (9%)
Criteria not met, action taken	33/149 (22%)
Total Assessments	149/149 (100%)

* CIS – Forensics and Security; CIS – Software Development; Health Information Technology; Human Services; Public Relations; and Graphic Arts Web Design Certificate

As compared with 2009-2010 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased from 62% to 78% with 31 programs completing the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2010-2011. Additionally, programs continue to identify actions for improving student achievement of outcomes in the use of results area. Data from 2010-2011 indicate that 47 of the 149 assessment results identified ways to improve to course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. Interesting to note is that of these improvements, 30% (14/47) occurred even though the criteria

for success were met. This trend was not observed in early cycles of assessment and demonstrates the commitment to using assessment results for continuous improvement. Following are samples of action plans, created to improve student learning, as a result of assessment findings.

Accounting Associate

Based on assessment results and in order to improve student achievement of the program outcome "Apply knowledge of basic accounting and bookkeeping procedures," a faculty workshop on techniques for teaching ACC101 will be held. Current assessment data is shared with all faculty and the outcome will be reassessed during the 2011-2012 cycle.

English as a Second Language

Grammar seems to be a strong factor in determining successful completion of the outcome "Write paragraphs and essays using easily understandable sentences." To address this concern, ways to more effectively teach self-editing and grammar are being investigated. These include working with department adjuncts to develop grammar/editing modules that would support the writing classes and offering a two-credit grammar review class that teachers could encourage students with weak grammar skills to enroll in.

Marketing

To improve student achievement of the outcome "Demonstrate strong team building, communication, conflict management and human relations skills," the number of peer evaluations will be increased and conducted a minimum of three times throughout the course. All students will be required to complete these assessments of their peers' ability to work effectively as a member of a team. Adjustments will be made to the current rubric to include more specific measurement criteria.

Paraprofessional Educator

Based on assessment results, lack of critical reading skills is apparent. In order to improve the outcome "Develop critical and creative thinking skills to become an effective decision maker and problem solver," continued practice with these types of questions in all education classes is necessary. Additionally, further ideas for improving student achievement include requiring students enrolled in educational psychology to utilize Success Services for either a test performance analysis or a study skills session and will be discussed with all faculty for input.

Radiologic Technology

In order to increase student achievement of the outcome "Perform non-routine radiographic procedures," the number of critical thinking scenarios the students are required to complete each semester have increased. Additionally, time has been allocated in the positioning lab to have students simulate trauma scenarios on each other or on a positioning phantom.

Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Technology

Significant changes that impact student achievement of learning outcomes have occurred. Faculty in the program are now providing more detailed information on skill competencies when scoring students. During 2011-2012, the program goals will be revised to better reflect current practice in the program. To improve the percentage of students who achieve the outcome "Operate a recovery machine to properly recover refrigerant from a refrigeration system to a recovery cylinder," the program coordinator will develop a step-by-step guide that will encourage faculty to better inform the students as they learn and practice the task.

General Education Outcomes Assessment

The General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee, a sub-committee of the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee (IOAC), sets the agenda for the assessment of general education learning outcomes across the curriculum. Each year, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee focuses on one of the 12 general education learning outcomes. An assessment plan for the coming academic year is typically established each spring by the committee. Plans for curriculum or teaching improvements are also completed during the spring semester for implementation in the coming academic year.

Based on the critical thinking work completed during the 2009-2010 academic year, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee continued to focus its efforts on the following general education outcomes related to critical thinking during the 2010-2011 academic year.

- Objectively identify and evaluate issues, positions and supporting evidence.
- Frame ideas within a larger context.

This focus began with an invitation for all faculty to participate in the Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum project to assess these outcomes through authentic course embedded writing assignments, scored using the SOLO taxonomy rubric. The SOLO taxonomy measures levels of increasing complexity in a student's understanding of a subject and focuses on levels of thinking specific to the subject matter.

During the fall 2010, part one of the training sessions were held to provide an overview of the SOLO taxonomy and assist faculty in developing prompts to elicit critical thinking in their own courses. As a result of the training, faculty learned to:

- Write a prompt that encourages critical thinking from students.
- Use the SOLO taxonomy to assess critical thinking.
- Analyze results to identify how to improve students' critical thinking abilities.

Training sessions were facilitated by members of the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee and attendees were eligible to receive CEUs or stipends through the faculty

development office. Thirty faculty members, both adjunct and full-time, attended part one of the training session.

During the spring 2011, part two of the SOLO taxonomy training was held. Hands-on sessions provided a variety of examples for practice in applying and using the SOLO taxonomy rubric to assess critical thinking in student essays. Upon completion of this training, faculty were able to:

- Identify levels of critical thinking ability according to the SOLO taxonomy.
- Apply the SOLO taxonomy rubric to student writing assignments.
- Conduct assessment of critical thinking ability using the SOLO taxonomy.

Once again, training sessions were facilitated by members of the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee. Twelve faculty members attended part two of the SOLO taxonomy training. As a result of the training, several faculty members submitted samples of student writing assignments. Samples received were scored, using the SOLO taxonomy, by the faculty or given to the subcommittee to be scored. The General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee will score and compile the results of this preliminary assessment during the 2011-2012 academic year.

Review and analysis of the SOLO taxonomy, along with assessment of the initial artifacts collected through this project, is a subcommittee goal for the 2011-2012 academic year. This analysis will provide the subcommittee with baseline data on student achievement of critical thinking outcomes, information to guide future assessment of critical thinking and feedback on using the SOLO taxonomy for future critical thinking assessments.

Faculty Needs Assessment

In June 2011, the Outcomes Assessment Office conducted a needs assessment of program coordinators involved in the outcomes assessment process. Nineteen coordinators responded to a survey regarding professional development needs as related to outcomes assessment. Results provided detailed feedback regarding faculty needs and interests. This feedback was used in the planning of the annual assessment conference and to guide faculty training conducted by the Outcomes Assessment Office. Program coordinators responded to a four question survey. A summary of results is detailed on the following pages.

1. Which of the following professional development topics are of interest to you? (select as many as apply)

Professional Development Topics	Response Percent	Response Count
Using assessment results to improve student learning	64.7%	11
Developing rubrics	58.8%	10
Designing activities for learning and assessment	58.8%	10
Incorporating student self-assessment in the classroom	58.8%	10
Using portfolios/ePortfolios	52.9%	9
Data analysis for outcomes assessment	47.1%	8
Curriculum mapping - ensuring that course curriculum aligns to program outcomes	41.2%	7
Using TracDat to manage the outcomes assessment process	35.3%	6
Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)/Formative Assessment	35.3%	6
Constructing effective multiple choice exams	35.3%	6
Using Clickers as an assessment tool	29.4%	5
Using the Five-column model to conduct course and/or program level assessment	23.5%	4
Constructing effective essay exams	23.5%	4
Creating program and/or course outcomes/objectives	23.5%	4
Assessing general education competencies/outcomes	11.8%	2

2. Which of the following professional development formats do you prefer? (select up to three)

Professional Development Formats	Response Percent	Response Count
Presentation with interaction/group work and discussion	64.7%	11
Workshops	58.8%	10
Formal presentation and discussion	47.1%	8
Problem based work sessions	29.4%	5
Mentoring Program	29.4%	5
Individual training	29.4%	5
Observation of faculty with debriefing	11.8%	2
Informal discussion	11.8%	2
Case study analysis	5.9%	1
Online sessions	5.9%	1
Journal/Book Club	0.0%	0

3. What is your preference regarding length of professional development sessions? (select up to three)

Length of Professional Development Sessions	Response Percent	Response Count
1/2 day retreat/workshop (3-4 hours)	68.8%	11
2 hour session	50.0%	8
1 hour session	37.5%	6
All day retreat/workshop (6 or more hours)	18.8%	3
Online session	18.8%	3

4. Please provide your preferred day and time for professional development offerings.

Preferred Day and Time
Any day time, even Saturdays
Mornings
Responses to question 3 and 4 depend entirely on my teaching schedule, other appointments and meetings
Monday-Thursday afternoons or Fridays
Thursdays
Friday afternoon
NOT at lunchtime since that is our busiest time 3-5 is usually good
Afternoons
Thursday or Friday mornings
Fridays anytime
It depends on the semester
Fridays; AM
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursdays. No Fridays please
PM
Any

Results indicate that faculty are most interested in professional development sessions on using assessment results to improve student learning. Other topics of interest are developing rubrics, designing activities for learning and assessment, and incorporating student self-assessment in the classroom. Most respondents indicated a preference for professional development sessions delivered as presentations with discussion and workshops. Additionally, the favored length for these sessions ranged from two to four hours.