

2011-2012
Outcomes Assessment Report

April 2013



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	October	Meet with Dean to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle.
	Column 2 – Student Learning Outcomes	November	Work with Outcomes Assessment Office to create assessment plan.
Column 3 – Means of Assessment and Criteria for Success	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. (Dean sign-off)	
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 - Results 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. Discuss results with department faculty.
	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	October	Meet with Dean to review findings and initiatives from previous cycle and discuss interventions and resources needed to initiate changes – initial planning for current cycle.
Report findings to appropriate constituents		New assessment cycle begins. Incorporate revisions from last year. Record these revisions in the action taken section of the previous year’s results.	

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 2011-12 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, 2011-12 (Cycle 8)

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Programs unable to assess due to new status or low enrollment	6* (these programs not included in data)
Documented consultations**	39/40 (98%)
Columns 1–3 submitted	37/40 (93%)
Columns 4–5 submitted	35/40 (88%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	6/172 (3%)
Criteria met, no further action	66/172 (38%)
Criteria met, action taken	38/172 (22%)
Criteria not met, action taken	62/172 (36%)
Total Assessments	172/172 (100%)

* CIS – Forensics and Security; CIS – Software Development; Financial Services; Health Information Technology; Nanoscience Technology; and Graphic Arts Web Design Certificate

**Includes meetings, working e-mails, etc.

As compared with 2010-11 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased from 78% to 88%, with 35 programs completing the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2011-12. Additionally, programs continue to identify actions for improving student achievement of outcomes in the use of results area. Data from 2011-12 indicate that 100 of the 174 assessment results (58%) identified ways to improve to course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. Interesting to note is that of these improvements, 38% occurred even though the criteria for

success were met. Following are samples of action plans that were 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 “Perform detailed work with a high degree of accuracy,” a new assignment was created for assessment in ACC 201 for the spring 2012 semester. The assignment was given to students as an extra assignment, not part of the student's overall grade. The following semester, the assignment was reviewed and integrated into the class. This assignment or a slightly revised assignment will be used for 20-2013.

Developmental Math

Assessment results and strategic planning work have led to a partnership with area high schools to improve outcomes in MTH 080, including “Students who complete Developmental Math (MTH 080) will be able to perform basic algebraic operations and computations.” Improvements include revising the final exam for the course through work with those schools, because students in those schools are now taking the Harper final exam for MTH 080 (for placement).

Dietetic Technician

Assessment results showed that students were having difficulty meeting the criteria set for the outcome “Perform nutrition screening and components of the Nutrition Care Process for people and groups from diverse cultures and across the lifespan.” To address this concern, the program has increased the number of days students spend on campus to include a simulation experience to better prepare students for application in supervised practice.

Fashion Design

To improve student achievement of the outcome “Demonstrate mastery of design principles and elements,” the program instituted a more integrated process of building knowledge from course to course. Collaboration among courses now includes beginning simple exercises in one class, sending those exercises on to advanced work in later classes, and having students create items which, if done well, will be sold in the new Harper student-run boutique (as an incentive to create their best work).

Practical Nursing

Based on assessment results, improvement of critical thinking skills is needed. In order to improve the outcome “Utilize critical thinking skills to improve client outcomes,” students not surpassing 850 on the Health Education Systems, Inc. (HESI) exam used a new remediation tool called Prep U. This tool helped the department ensure students in danger of not passing the later HESI had appropriate remediation in order to produce better critical thinking and higher results on the HESI exit exam.

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 twelve 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.

During the 2011-12 academic year, the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee chose to rotate its focus from Critical Thinking (assessed in 2009-10 and 2010-11) to Written Communication. The subcommittee chose to assess this outcome through a Writing Across the Curriculum assessment project. The general education outcome assessed through the project was:

- Communicate effectively and persuasively in writing.

During the spring semester 2012, faculty members from various departments participated in a writing assessment pilot project. In order to assess this outcome, faculty volunteers collected student essays (1-2 pages in length) and submitted them for scoring. Scoring was conducted by four faculty members who attended a norming session. Upon completion of the norming session, the scorers read 206 essays for organization, transition, control, support, word choice and mechanics. Scoring was based on a 4-point scale (4=excellent, 3=good, 2=fair, and 1=poor). Each essay was read by two scorers. Following are the results of the pilot project, which were also shared with the campus community at the Annual Assessment Conference as well as through the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee newsletter.

Table 3 – Results of Writing Across the Curriculum Pilot

	Mean	Score of 3 or better
Organization	2.3	17%
Paragraphs/Transition	2.2	18%
Control	2.5	28%
Support/Evidence	2.2	8%
Word Choice/Grammar	2.4	21%
Mechanics	2.6	40%

In the planning stages, the writing assessment team set the criterion for success as 50% of students will achieve a 3 or better in each rubric category. As the results show, the criterion was not met in any of the categories. Students scored highest in mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, spelling) and lowest in support/evidence (support for main ideas, articulation of claims).

A key challenge identified by the team was the lack of consistency in the type (e.g., narrative vs. argumentative) of essay collected. The team collected embedded assessments from volunteer faculty members as samples for this project. While this provided the team with a useable sample of essays, the variation in assignments made applying the rubric challenging. Thus, the team planned to use the 2012-13 academic year to rework the project and reassess writing across the curriculum in fall 2013. The team will work with the faculty volunteers to ensure collection of a more standardized sample of essays. Results of that project will be shared with the campus community and discussions on improving student writing will follow.

Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment

Outcomes assessment of student support and administrative units began at Harper College in 2004. During the 2011-12 academic year, the total number of student support and administrative units involved in outcomes assessment was 40. This included units that were part of each non-academic division, such as Health and Psychological Services, Success Services, and Workforce and Economic Development. One of these units, the Educational Foundation, was excused from assessment due to changes in leadership within that unit. Table 4 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/units.

Table 4 – Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2011-12 (Cycle 8)

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Excused from assessment	1* (this unit not included in data)
Documented consultations**	37/39 (95%)
Columns 1–3 submitted	30/39 (77%)
Columns 4–5 submitted	30/39 (77%)
Results	Number of Items (%)
Outcomes process issues	4/76 (5%)
Criteria met, no further action	32/76 (42%)
Criteria met, action taken	19/76 (25%)
Criteria not met, action taken	21/76 (28%)
Total Assessments	76/76 (100%)

* Educational Foundation

**Includes meetings, working e-mails, etc.

As compared with 2010-11 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased from 72% to 77% with 30 units completing the full assessment cycle in 2011-12. More than half of the assessments conducted led to improvements in service, programs, or other operations. Units continue to improve the action plans they develop; following are samples of action plans that were created as a result of assessment findings.

Center for New Students and Orientation

The Center for New Students and Orientation used feedback from baseline orientation surveys “in formalizing the plan for 'peak time' orientation (June - August 2012), and student input was shared with counselors and orientation staff in order to apprise all of the smooth transition to the extended orientation model.” Additionally, the center reviewed surveys on a weekly basis during the summer to monitor student feedback and make programmatic corrections as needed.

Child Learning Center

Although more than 80% of parents responded positively to the seven questions on the parent survey to assess the outcome “The Child Learning Center will fulfill the need for early education and childcare services for children ages 3-5 years,” the survey response rate was only 45%. The Child Learning Center will try to encourage more families to participate in the future surveys by sending the survey via e-mail and through reminders to all families. Additionally, the Child Learning Center is planning to send future surveys to the teaching staff and/or students hired at the Center in order to increase access to information for improvement.

Continuing Education

Based on assessment results and in order to improve the outcome “Continuing Education will enter the semester schedule of courses in a timely and accurate manner,” a new process was adopted to increase automation, reduce human error, and compress the schedule development time.

Institutional Research

In order to improve the outcome “Develop, deploy, and maintain functional delivery mechanisms for the delivery and interpretation of data and research findings that provides improved information for decision-making,” the department implemented a new LiveHelpNow tracking system. Project requests are now tracked through the system and reports can be provided to the supervisor related to various aspects of the projects.

Student Financial Assistance

Several challenges faced by Student Financial Assistance were able to be improved through additional staff training. Each financial aid advisor completed eight required training sessions and attended the Illinois Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators conference, in addition to other training sessions to improve knowledge and customer service in the department.

Other Assessment Efforts at Harper College

In addition to the assessment processes and outcomes analyses described above, the College has continued its assessment efforts through:

- The 3rd Annual Assessment Conference and Share Fair, which took place on Friday, April 13, 2012. The Conference featured Dr. Lynn Priddy of The Higher Learning Commission as keynote and included topics such as Authentically Assessing Student Learning; How Counseling Complements General Education; Student Performance in Online Classes; Mapping Your Course for Active Student Learning; and Concept Mapping.
- The Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellowship program. Fellows for 2011-12 were Joanne Leski (Nursing) and Margaret Bilos (Speech and Theater). Fellowship final reports can be found at MyHarper > Planning and Institutional Effectiveness > Outcomes Assessment > Fellows.
- Assess for Success newsletters, which are designed to share academic assessment information across the campus. Newsletters can be found at MyHarper > Planning and Institutional Effectiveness > Outcomes Assessment > Newsletter.
- Course-level assessment in a variety of academic programs, including Nursing, Philosophy, Chemistry, and Education.
- The Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee (IOAC), the purpose of which is to champion outcomes assessment at Harper College by promoting a culture of evidence and continuous improvement, supporting the assessment activities of the College, and engaging the entire College community in the outcomes assessment process.
- Outcomes Assessment Office support of faculty and staff assessment efforts, including individual consultations, workshops, drop-in sessions, and development and updates to assessment handbooks and other materials. The Outcomes Assessment Office also completed Summative Reviews of all academic and non-academic programs in order to create a greater understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in each unit.