2013-2014
Outcomes Assessment Report

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. Learning 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 and departments 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 or department mission (Column 1)
- Defining 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 or department quality (Column 5)

Academic program-level and course-level assessment, as well as student support and administrative services assessment follow 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	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.
	November	Work with Outcomes Assessment Office to create assessment plan.
	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 Report findings to appropriate constituents	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. 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

Participation in the outcomes assessment process has become a sustainable part of the Harper College culture. 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) are involved in academic program outcomes assessment activities.

During the 2013-14 academic year, the total number of academic programs/departments involved in program-level outcomes assessment was 39. This number represents four certificate programs, English as a Second Language, developmental English and reading, developmental math, and the 34 AAS degree programs. However, two of the AAS programs were unable to participate in the outcomes assessment process due to a transition or low enrollment. Table 2 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/departments.

Table 2 – Program Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2013-14

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Programs unable to assess due to new status or low enrollment	2* (these programs not included in data)
Documented consultations**	39/39 (100%)
Columns 1-3 submitted	39/39 (100%)
Columns 4-5 submitted	36/39 (92%)
Results	**Number of Items (%)**
Outcomes process issues	5/184 (3%)
Criteria met, no further action	84/184 (46%)
Criteria met, action taken	39/184 (21%)
Criteria not met, action taken	56/184 (30%)
Total Assessments	184/184 (100%)

* CIS – Software Development and Public Relations
**Includes meetings, working e-mails, and working phone calls.

As compared with 2012-13 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have increased, with 36 programs completing the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2013-14. Additionally, programs continue to identify actions for improving student achievement of outcomes in the use of results area. Data indicate that 95 of the 184 assessment results (52%) identified ways to improve course content, pedagogy or assessment methods.

Following are samples of action plans that were created to improve student learning as a result of program-level assessment findings.

Dental Hygiene
Assessment results showed students were not meeting the criterion for success on the assessment related to "[Using] evidence-based research to critically evaluate the validity of foundational knowledge, information, products and/or techniques and their relevance to the practice of dental hygiene." To improve students' skills in evaluating scientific literature, the department implemented non-scored practice critiques of research abstracts. Future assessments will determine whether the practice activities have had a positive effect on student success for this outcome.

Dietetic Technician
Upon inspection of assessment and licensure examination results, the department engaged in an extensive mapping project to align the curriculum to outcomes, competencies, and the licensing exam. The mapping process led to further discussion about changes that could be made to the curriculum to ensure all outcomes and competencies will be sufficiently covered at a variety of levels.

Nursing
The outcome "Provide safe, holistic care for a diverse population of clients" was identified as having relatively low assessment results among first year nursing students. The department used these results as well as additional data on student success to obtain a Student Success Foundation Grant. The grant is being used to offer enrichment workshops to first year students that meet certain criteria. Results from the grant project will be collected, and students will be followed longitudinally for success.

Welding
After several years of conducting assessment through a specific performance task, the department began implementation of an American Welding Society national exam: School Excelling through National Skill Standards Education (SENSE). The department chose to make this addition based on the SENSE exam's ability to evaluate both academic outcomes and hands-on skills. Use of combined assessment methods improves the department's ability to determine more specific areas for improvement as well as actions that can be taken to improve student success.

Course-Level Outcomes Assessment

During the 2013-14 academic year, academic departments not engaged in program-level assessment participated in the course-level assessment process.[1] The total number of academic departments involved in course-level outcomes assessment was 26. Table 3 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these departments.

Table 3 – Course Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2013-14

Assessment Submissions	Number of Departments (%)
Documented consultations*	26/26 (100%)
Columns 1-3 submitted	26/26 (100%)
Columns 4-5 submitted	26/26 (100%)
Results	**Number of Items (%)**
Outcomes process issues	6/62 (10%)
Criteria met, no further action	15/62 (24%)
Criteria met, action taken	12/62 (19%)
Criteria not met, action taken	29/62 (47%)
Total Assessments	62/62 (100%)

*Includes meetings, working e-mails, and working phone calls.

All 26 departments engaging in course-level assessment completed the full outcomes assessment cycle in 2013-14. Many departments have identified actions for improving student achievement of outcomes in the use of results area. Data indicate that 41 of the 62 assessment results (66%) identified ways to improve course content, pedagogy or assessment methods. However, improvements can be made to decrease the number of outcomes process issues as well as increase the number of departments that choose to make improvements even when criteria are met.

Following are samples of action plans that were created to improve student learning as a result of course-level assessment findings.

English—ENG101

Assessment results showed an improvement in students' writing abilities in the areas of "Analysis," "Control" and "Thinking." Thus, the department made the decision to maintain its policy of supporting non-standardized textbooks and materials for the course. However, discussions about the assessment itself highlighted the need for broader changes related to

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[1]Some departments conducted formal assessments at both the program and the course level: Accounting, Business Administration, Computer Information Systems, and Law Enforcement and Justice Administration.

revision of the course outcomes and refinements of the assessment protocol. Furthermore, in reviewing these results as well as the results of the General Education writing assessment (see page 7), the department agreed that additional support in written communication may be needed for students at the College, outside the first year composition sequence.

Geography—GEG111

Assessment results showed that students were not sufficiently meeting the outcome, "Apply an understanding of the geographic grid, scale, and map projections to map interpretation." The department reviewed the results, and instructors made adjustments to the teaching and review of the concepts of map scale, latitude and longitude. Changes in the assessment method were also implemented, including the addition of a time limit to improve consistency in results among sections.

Law Enforcement and Justice Administration—LEJ101

Based on assessment results, the department is working on a variety of initiatives to improve success in student learning outcomes. Faculty will receive additional support to improve their understanding and use of Blackboard. Department faculty members are also implementing a change to course materials, including adoption of a new book that will fully integrate with instructors' Blackboard materials.

Psychology—PSY101

In assessing the outcome, "Understand and apply basic research methods in psychology," results revealed that students were having difficulty with certain terminology and concepts. Department faculty discussed the areas for improvement and increased the emphasis on those topic areas. Additionally, the assessment tool was revised and reapplied in order to ensure accurate measurement of the terminology and concepts related to research methods.

General Education Outcomes Assessment

During the 2013-14 academic year, the Learning Assessment Committee and the General Education Outcomes Assessment Work Group[2] continued their work with written communication assessment. During the fall 2013 semester, faculty members from various departments facilitated a writing assessment project. Faculty volunteers collected in-class student essays and submitted them for scoring. Members of the committee and work group attended norming sessions, and then scored the essays for organization, paragraphs/transitions, control, support/evidence, word choice/grammar and mechanics. Scoring was based on a 4-point scale (4=excellent, 3=good, 2=fair, and 1=poor). A total of 392 essays were assessed, and each essay was read by two scorers. The tables below show the high-level results of the project.

Table 4 – Overall fall 2013 writing assessment results

	Mean	% scoring 3 or higher
Organization	2.7	44.6%
Paragraphs/Transitions	2.6	43.6%
Control	2.8	59.2%
Support/Evidence	2.7	42.6%
Word Choice/Grammar	2.8	53.1%
Mechanics	3.0	70.9%
Total	16.5*	34.9%**

* Of 24 possible.
** Scoring 18 or above.

Table 5 – Fall 2013 writing assessment results as students gain additional credits at Harper

Credits as of the end of FY2013	0 (N=176)	1-15 (N=51)	16-30 (N=57)	31-45 (N=43)	46-60 (N=36)***
Organization	43.2%	43.1%	50.9%	48.8%	47.2%
Paragraphs	40.9%	41.2%	47.4%	51.2%	41.7%
Control	62.5%	58.8%	54.4%	55.8%	52.8%
Evidence	47.7%	39.2%	38.6%	37.2%	36.1%
Grammar	53.4%	49.0%	59.6%	39.5%	50.0%
Mechanics	72.7%	68.6%	70.2%	67.4%	72.2%

Students scoring 3 ("Good") or higher.
*** Due to missing variables for some students, category Ns do not sum to total.

The Learning Assessment Committee and the General Education Outcomes Assessment Work Group will focus on using the writing assessment results for improvement in 2014-15.

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[2] Formerly the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee (IOAC) and the General Education Outcomes Assessment Subcommittee

Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment

During the 2013-14 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 Services, the Business Office and Institutional Research. One of these units, Workforce and Economic Development, was excused from assessment due to changes in leadership within that unit. Another unit, Dining and Conference Services, was excused due to transition to an external vendor. Table 6 contains an analysis based on the outcomes assessment activities of these programs/units.

Table 6 – Student Support and Administrative Services Outcomes Assessment Analysis, 2013-14

Assessment Submissions	Number of Programs (%)
Excused from assessment	2* (these units not included in data)
Documented consultations**	29/40 (73%)
Columns 1-3 submitted	40/40 (100%)
Columns 4-5 submitted	37/40 (93%)
Results	**Number of Items (%)**
Outcomes process issues	7/104 (7%)
Criteria met, no further action	32/104 (31%)
Criteria met, action taken	38/104 (36%)
Criteria not met, action taken	27/104 (26%)
Total Assessments	104/104 (100%)

* Dining and Conference Services and Workforce and Economic Development
**Includes meetings, working e-mails, etc.

As compared with 2012-13 data, the completion rates of columns 1-5 have remained fairly steady, with 37 units completing the full assessment cycle in 2013-14. More than 60% 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 plans and actions as a result of assessment findings.

Athletic Programs

Previous assessment cycles showed that student athletes did not perceive the required study hall as being important for their academic success. Based on these results and in order to ensure the value of the study hall to the student athletes, a Student Athlete Success Center Coordinator was added in 2013-14. This coordinator works with the student athletes and coaches to improve the overall experience in the study hall and increase compliance with study hall requirements.

Student athlete perceptions of the study hall improved, with 90% of student athletes agreeing that using the study hall helped them to study more effectively, 83% agreeing that using the study hall helped them to improve their GPA, 91% agreeing that using the study hall helped them to get their homework done on time, and 86% agreeing that using the study hall helped them feel more prepared for tests. Accordingly, the new Student Athlete Success Center Coordinator along with the Student Athlete Success Team will continue to make improvements by determining specific actions that can address the needs of the student athletes.

Center for New Students and Orientation
In assessing the orientations provided to new students, the Center for New Students and Orientation found that the weakest satisfaction rating related to students' understanding of the transfer process and developing a plan for transferring. The item "I know more about how to transfer to other colleges or universities" consistently ranked lower than other items in student satisfaction over the course of several cycles. In order to improve this result, the center developed a plan to partner with the College's Transfer Specialist to offer additional support to students regarding transferring to other institutions.

Child Learning Center
In assessing the outcome "Fulfill the need for early education and childcare services for children ages 3-5 years," the Child Learning Center examined survey results from the families it serves. Although overall results were positive, the survey provided information about areas that could be improved. Accordingly, the center is implementing plans to better inform parents about children's assessment results, hire a translator for its Japanese families, and work with parents on nutritional issues such as breastfeeding support and special dietary needs.

Library
The Library implemented a new database search tool designed to improve efficiency and use of online databases. In assessing the change in usage and return on investment over the course of two assessment cycles, the Library found that usage of databases linked to the new system increased 121%. However, further analysis revealed that the system did not improve efficiencies within the Library to the extent that was desired. The Library is using these results to inform future database purchases as well as a potential move to a more integrated system in the future.

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 5th Annual Assessment Conference and Share Fair, which took place on Friday, March 14, 2014. The Conference featured Dr. Peggy Maki, Higher Education Consultant and author of *Assessing for Learning: Building a Sustainable Commitment Across the Institution* (2010). Dr. Maki spoke about using assessment information to inform student-centric learning as the basis of curricular/co-curricular design, new pedagogies, and educational practices. Other presentation and poster topics included Math Alignment, Making Improvements through Self-Assessment, focused roundtable discussions, and results of the Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellows' research projects. Follow-up materials can be found on the Assessing Our Students page of the Harper Intranet Portal (HIP).

- The Outcomes Assessment Faculty Fellowship program. Fellows for 2013-14 were Abigail Bailey (Mathematics) and Malathy Chandrasekar (Economics). These fellows continued their work in fall 2014.

- Assess for Success newsletters, which are designed to share academic assessment information across the campus. Newsletters can be found on the Assessing Our Students and Assessing Our College pages of the Harper Intranet Portal (HIP).

- A change in shared governance structure, which included a move from the Institutional Outcomes Assessment Committee to the Learning Assessment Committee. This change allows the Learning Assessment Committee to focus on academic assessment specifically, while the Strategic Planning and Accountability Committee addresses non-academic assessment issues. The purpose of the Learning Assessment Committee is to champion learning assessment at Harper College by promoting a culture of evidence and continuous improvement supporting assessment activities, and engaging the entire College community in the 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.