

Hocking College Assessment Plan

The following chapter from Hocking College's North Central Association Report, February 2002 describes the assessment of student academic achievement. The history of assessment at Hocking College, the individual plan of assessment for each technology/program and an overview of the assessment process is included.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

HISTORY

While Hocking College for many years has employed assessment tools and strategies in determining its students' levels of academic success (for instance, use of the rubric-scored departmental test essay for communications courses, and entry assessment for determination of initial placement in reading, writing, and math courses), preparation for development of a formal program of assessment began in earnest in 1991. Three academic administrators attended the NCA annual conference to learn about North Central's assessment initiative and later shared information with faculty. That fall faculty and academic administrators heard a presentation by Dr. Jeffrey Seybert, "Assessing Effectiveness of Institution, Programs, and Students," and a faculty group was formed to study assessment issues. The following year, faculty developed mission and goals statements for each technology/program, and three academic administrators attended an NCA pre-conference workshop on assessment and a workshop on outcomes assessment given by Dr. James O. Nichols. Information from these meetings was shared with each department and the Assessment of Student Academic Achievement Coordinating Council was formed with representatives from each academic department.

In 1993, a half-time assessment coordinator was appointed to assist with development of the College's assessment plan and development of program outcomes and measures. James Nichols was brought to campus to present "Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and Institutional Effectiveness" and conduct faculty workshops. On the first annual Assessment Review Day, programs developed outcomes and measures of student academic success. The following year, an Assessment Council focus group developed a plan, which was submitted to the Council for review, revision, and final approval. Ninety percent of faculty subsequently approved the plan. In 1995, the plan was submitted to NCA and approved. In 1996 individual program plans were refined: exit competencies were examined and modified. Program Assessment Work Days continued each year followed by modification of curriculum and instruction in response to assessment results. In 1998 the assessment process became an essential part of the Academic Affairs ReVISIONing Learning process.

In 1999 the Hocking College Academic Assessment Coordinator led an effort to establish an annual Ohio Assessment Forum and a network among Ohio Two-Year College Assessment Coordinators. In 2001 the Assessment Council role was revised to include a review process. A new Assessment Coordinator was also appointed in 2001. In this same year all academic schools utilized NCA's *Levels of Implementation* tool to evaluate progress toward full implementation of assessment of academic outcomes.

CURRENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM AND PRACTICES

Key features of Hocking College's Assessment Plan

- Full faculty involvement

- Multiple measures of assessment
- A permanent part time (1/2 - 2/3 time) assessment coordinator
- An annual assessment work day
- Provisions for review of assessment plan/activities
- Annual documentation in notebooks

Each fall, faculty in every technology/program at Hocking College meet on a day set aside to report and analyze assessment data from the previous academic year. At this time, they discuss changes in curriculum and instruction designed to address weaknesses or areas of concern exposed by the assessments, and they plan the coming year's assessment efforts. Faculty members report information on two forms: the Annual Summary and the Individual Plan.

Assessment documents are kept in notebooks which provide easy access to any program's individual plan and annual summary. Full volume sets that contain all programs are kept by the provost, academic vice president, chairperson of the assessment council and assessment coordinator. Deans/Directors maintain notebooks of complete assessment history for each school while program coordinators' notebooks are program specific. Additionally, a full volume set is housed in the library for public review. This set is also available to other institutions through Ohio Link.

The Annual Summary

The Annual Summary form contains four reporting areas: 1) improvements to the program in the previous year brought about by study of assessment results; 2) expenditures of time, money, and materials for the assessment program; 3) requests for

assistance in implementing assessment; and 4) recommendations for altering the institution's assessment process. Annual summaries are reviewed by the Assessment Coordinator who identifies and addresses any problem areas.

The Individual Plan

The Individual Plan, unique to each technology/program, has three sections:

1) Mission Statements and Central Objective; 2) Institutional Success Skills and Program Exit Competencies; 3) Criteria for Assessment and Reporting of Results.

Mission Statements and Central Objective

The first section contains a hierarchy of mission statements (Institution, Academic Affairs, School, and Technology/Program), which demonstrates the consistency of purpose among all the organizational levels in the assessment endeavor. This section ends with a Central Objective for assessment.

Institutional Success Skills and Program Exit Competencies

The second section of the Individual Plan includes two sets of competencies:

Institutional Success Skills (formerly Core Competencies) and Program Exit Competencies.

Success Skills

The eight Institutional Success Skills represent work and life skills Hocking College considers necessary for all associate degree recipients.

- Communicates Effectively
- Demonstrates Math Skills
- Demonstrates Learning and Critical Thinking Skills
- Maintains Professional Skills and Attitudes

- Practices Human Relations Skills
- Demonstrates Knowledge of Science and the Environment
- Demonstrates Community, Cultural, and Global Awareness
- Maintains a Code of Ethics

Institutional Core Competencies (now known as Success Skills) were developed by a team of Hocking College educators in 1989, and were subsequently ratified by faculty referendum and approved by the Board of Trustees. An action team of the Academic Affairs ReVISIONing Learning Steering/Curriculum Committee reviewed and revised the competencies in 1999; both faculty and the board again approved the revised document.

Program Exit Competencies

The Program Exit Competencies are unique to each program or technology and represent knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should have developed by graduation and that are necessary for satisfactory performance in entry-level jobs in the field of study. The focus on Program Exit Competencies intensified in 1997. The competencies were derived from industry standards, DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) panels, consultation with advisory groups, outcomes published by professional societies, requirements of professional accreditation organizations, and work experience of Hocking College educators. They were reviewed in 1998 and then revised comprehensively as part of Academic Affairs ReVISIONing Learning Project between 1999 and 2001.

Criteria for Assessment and Reporting of Results

The remainder of the Individual Plan contains the Criteria for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement and the annual reporting of results. Faculty in each technology/program have developed criteria and instruments to measure each criterion, program exit competencies and some success skills. Measures used in the Individual Plan include a variety of approaches and data sources. As the assessment process has matured, care has been taken to review measures for variety; faculty are being educated over time to understand the desirability of multiple measures of competencies which include internal/external, summative/formative, cognitive/behavioral/affective, and direct/indirect measures.

Examples of measures commonly used include the following:

- Practicum, internship, clinical, or cooperative work experience evaluations
- Locally developed performance tests
- Locally developed paper/pencil tests
- Capstone course/experience evaluations
- Lab evaluations
- Learner developed products (research reports, hands-on projects)
- External certification tests

The reporting areas for assessment criteria are the following:

- Data gathered
- Analysis of data
- Program curriculum and instruction changes planned for the coming year as a result of the analysis
- Change (if desired) in the criterion for the coming year

Results of graduate and employer surveys are included in each Individual Plan, but one year later than results for other criteria because the College's survey process takes approximately 15 months to complete.

Consequently, for example, Individual Plans for 2000-2001 contained information gathered from survey results for 1999-2000 graduates. Reporting areas for survey-dependent criteria include

- Data gathered
 - Analysis of data
 - A comparison with other data gathered for the same academic year
- to determine if the analysis supports conclusions reached from those data.

While Hocking College's assessment program does not rely heavily on survey results to determine student success, there has been an attempt to make the surveys to graduates and employers as relevant as possible by requesting feedback about demonstration of Success Skills and Program Exit Competencies.

While the fall quarter reporting provides an annual marker of assessment work, the process is ongoing. Faculty have begun to internalize the concept of assessment of student academic achievement and, with greater frequency and consistency, incorporate consideration of assessment issues into discussions of curriculum development and instructional methodology and materials. This internalization has been encouraged further by the Academic Affairs ReVISIONing Learning initiative.

The Criteria for Excellence developed for approval of all programs have integrated both assessment and opportunities for assessment into the curriculum and instruction plan.

AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

Hocking College assesses student academic achievement in four areas:

technology/program, general education, developmental education, and transfer.

Assessment in the Technology/Program

Criteria and measures have been developed and refined over time to meet the central objective: preparing students for entry-level work in their chosen disciplines. Some measures have emerged naturally from existing courses, projects, and tests. Evaluations have served to generate data for both the assessment program and student grades. A number of new measures have been developed. Common measures are capstone evaluations, practicum/clinical/externship/cooperative work experiences, locally developed written and performance tests, and student products (reports, maps, presentations, and others). In addition, in some programs (usually health-related), students take licensure or certification tests, the results of which are analyzed. Graduate and employer surveys contribute additional data about graduate performance, and satisfaction with their preparation in institutional Success Skills and Program Exit Competencies; they also reveal whether graduates have found jobs or decided to pursue additional education.

Assessment of General Education

Though not as formally mature as the assessment of technologies/programs, assessment of some areas of general education has been ongoing in some areas for many years. One example is that beginning in 1987; the test essay process had been used for the composition courses, *Communications I and II*. This departmental exam is graded

using a scoring rubric. Students must write a passing essay in order to pass the course, in addition to completing course requirements. Following training to assure inter-rater reliability, the essays are blind scored by faculty. Two faculty members must agree that an essay passes (or does not pass) for the evaluation to stand, and a third instructor breaks a tie. The scoring rubric lists specific skills such as critical thinking, grammar, development, and organization.

General education includes not only courses such as writing, speech, and math, but also the Success Skills and the integration of their assessment throughout the curriculum. This richness of definition presents challenges to the smooth, structured development of assessments across the institution for general education; these are being met on several fronts, with plans for further strategies:

- The *Communications I and II* Test Essays will continue to provide quarterly feedback to faculty on program strengths and areas for improvement.
- An Institutional Core Competencies (now Success Skills) exam for math was piloted in 2000-2001. This test will be given to students taking *Introduction to Algebra*, a course required for all associate degrees. The test was developed by Hocking College math faculty and designed to address the specific sub-skills of the math competency.
- Beginning in fall 2001, artifacts will be collected for communicates effectively portfolios for students in the 21st Century pilot programs. Teams of writing faculty, non-writing faculty, and guest evaluators from outside the college will complete an evaluation of random samplings.
- Evaluation of Success Skills by graduates and employers will continue.

Programs are modifying their on-site supervisor evaluation forms for practicums/clinicals/externships/cooperative work experiences to include assessment of Success Skills.

- The ReVISIONing Learning process requires that capstone experiences are included and used both as synthesis building learning situations and opportunities for end-of-program assessment. As programs finalize plans for capstone courses/experiences, many are including assessment of Success Skills in the evaluation of student performance.

- A test to measure sub-skills of several institutional Success Skills is in development by the Social Sciences area. Success Skills addressed may include Practices Human Relations Skills; Maintains a Code of Ethics; Demonstrates Community, Cultural, and Global Awareness; Demonstrates Learning and Critical Thinking Skills; and Communicates Effectively.

- Methods for institutional assessment of Success Skills are currently being developed.

- Hocking College is one of sixteen colleges in the country selected to participate in the League for Innovation's 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project. As part of this project, further development, delivery, assessment and documentation of the Success Skills will occur. An excerpt from the project plan follows.

February 2001

- "Communicates Effectively" selected for first-year emphasis

May 2001

- Levels of student performance adopted

- Concrete indices of student work to demonstrate each level of "Communicates Effectively"

- Plan for assessment developed and rubrics for oral presentations and papers developed
September 2001

- Plan and materials developed and implemented to introduce the Success Skills to students during orientation and/or first quarter.

- Plan for integration of "Communicates Effectively" in six technical/general pilot programs completed

- Faculty development programs held during fall start week; mentors assigned to faculty in the pilot programs

- Plan for co-curricular integration completed

October 2001

- Selection of "Maintains Professional Skills and Attitudes" chosen for development, delivery and documentation

December 2001

- List of teaching practices used by faculty in the five selected programs compiled

February 2002

- Levels of student performance adopted for "Maintains Professional Skills and Attitudes Success Skill"

- Concrete indices of student work to demonstrate each level of competency identified for "Maintains Professional Skills and Attitudes"

- Plan for assessment of "Maintains Professional Skills and Attitudes"

June 2001 – September 2002

- Development of nontraditional methods for documenting student achievement

Ongoing

- Coordination of efforts with Assessment Council. (Note: Several members of the 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project team are also members of the Assessment Council.)

Assessment of general education documents are found in Volume I of the Assessment Notebook Master Set.

Assessment of Developmental Programs

Assessment of Hocking College's developmental programs - Reading, Writing, Math, Study Skills, and English Support - follows the same process as other programs. Each program's success in meeting the Central Objective - preparing students to complete college-level course work with success - is determined by using exit tests and by following students' progress as they attempt subsequent courses. In the reading program, for example, students take the Degrees of Reading power at the beginning and the end of each course to establish growth and to establish whether they are reading at the college level. They also are tracked for success in subsequent college courses. The English Support (ESL) program also assesses students at the end of each quarter for growth and level of competence and examines their success in Communications I, the first course they take beyond the English Support program. The other developmental program areas also assess student academic success.

Assessment of developmental education documents are found in Volume I of the Assessment Notebook Master Set.

Assessment of Transfer Education

Hocking College offers students a Transfer Module, an Ohio Board of Regents approved group of 54-60 quarterly hours of required and elective courses designed to transfer as a general education block to Ohio four-year institutions. While Hocking students do transfer to other colleges, few complete the Module. Most students transfer at the time of maximum transferability, taking into consideration the program and university to which they are transferring.

The best assessment measure is the success of transfer students at the subsequent institutions. This information is difficult to acquire from the universities. The advent of a statewide tracking system may help this situation.

ASSESSMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In 1996, responsibility for Assessment of Student Academic Achievement was added to job descriptions of faculty, coordinating instructors, deans/directors, and the vice president of Academic Affairs. Specifically, the duties carried out are as follows.

Faculty

Faculty members have the largest role in Hocking College's program of assessment. They have contributed to every stage of development of the assessment program, are members of the Assessment Council, have participated in professional development activities, and have designed and implemented assessment measures. Instructors design assessments congruent with their programs' exit competencies. While some criteria and measures are constant throughout the institution (e.g., graduate and employer surveys), most are unique to programs. Developing the measures has required extensive

education; numerous meetings with colleagues, the Assessment Coordinator, and deans/directors; and the acquisition of new skills (e.g., use of data bases, project-based instruction, role-playing for capstone experiences). Academic administrators guide and support the faculty in its efforts to create innovative measures and the learning experiences that provide those measures.

Vice President of Academic Affairs

Hocking College's Vice President of Academic Affairs has chief responsibility for assessment. The Vice President oversees all personnel and every part of the process.

Chief activities in support of assessment include the following:

- Proactive leadership in all important processes and initiatives related to assessment of student academic achievement (curriculum development, professional development, ReVISIONing, course design, and hiring of personnel)
- Financial support for assessment, including
 - o Salary for assessment coordinator
 - o Professional development activities for faculty, assessment coordinator, and Assessment Council members
 - o Support for assessment coordinator's participation in the Ohio Two-Year College Assessment Network
 - o Materials and secretarial support for development of Assessment Handbooks and a wide variety of print materials designed to educate and inform faculty
- Reports to the Board of Trustees and the President.

- Initiation and support of campus-wide education in assessment through development day/week activities.
- Communication with the Academic Affairs Council emphasizing the importance of assessment.
- Response to procedural issues related to assessment.

Dean, School of Arts and Sciences

The dean of Hocking College's School of Arts and Sciences supports assessment in the following ways:

- Chairing the Assessment Council
- Supporting general education assessment
- Meeting regularly with the Assessment Coordinator to discuss assessment issues and set the agenda for Assessment Council meetings
- Advising and reporting to the Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Providing continuity to the assessment program as one involved with the program from its beginning.

Assessment Coordinator

The Assessment Coordinator does the following:

- Meets throughout the year with faculty and/or coordinator in each technology/program to
 - o Discuss the most recent assessment reporting
 - o Help to develop opportunities for assessment
 - o Assist in the development of measures and tools
 - o Disseminate information

- o Promote sharing of skills/ideas/practices among faculty of different departments
- o Educate faculty about sound assessment practices
- Attends conferences and workshops for ongoing professional development
- Participates actively in the Ohio Two-Year College Assessment Network and the Ohio Assessment Forum
- Generates educational and informational materials for faculty and administrators
- Reports to the Assessment Council, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Academic Affairs Council, and the Board of Trustees as needed
- Maintains assessment plans and other documents
- Prepares annual reporting documents for faculty
- Serves as member of curriculum committee and Assessment Council

Assessment Council

The Assessment Council consists of 17 members including faculty from across the College, administrators from several departments, two students, and the Assessment Coordinator. The Dean of Arts and Sciences chairs the Council. Though membership has changed over the nine years of its existence, a significant number of original members remain, providing continuity to Council activity. The Council's role has evolved also. In the early years, the Council concentrated on generating the College's assessment plan, and on planning processes and procedures for assessment. For some time after the first

annual reporting in fall 1995, the Council played a somewhat smaller role as faculty and the Assessment Coordinator carried out the process, and academic administrators supported the faculty.

As faculty understanding and acceptance of assessment as an ongoing, integrated part of their daily work grew, the Assessment Council turned its focus to the broader issues of oversight and reporting. All council members have assessment council notebooks of readings, minutes, members, etc.

THE ASSESSMENT COUNCIL REVIEW

In Spring 2001, the Council piloted a process for giving feedback to programs and for formalizing reporting to all necessary stakeholders in the Hocking College Community. The Assessment Council Review is a four stage process for evaluating Individual Plans and providing guidance for improvement.

Self-Evaluation

A Self-Evaluation Packet initiates the review process. This document asks program faculty to reflect upon the state of their assessment program in the following areas:

- Individual Plan
- Communication
- Level of Understanding
- Successes/Challenges/Plans

Faculty also are asked to comment on the institutional assessment program, and they are invited to make requests for help or guidance in meeting any special challenges to their assessment progress.

The Self-Evaluation is designed to accomplish three things:

- Encourage reflection and discussion among colleagues in the program about both the history and the current state of their assessment work
- Help faculty provide the Assessment Council with information which will enable it to offer a useful interpretation of the program's progress in assessment
- Gather information on issues of importance from which the Assessment Council may derive a comprehensive evaluation of the state of assessment at Hocking College

A collaborative effort among faculty in completing the Self-Evaluation is strongly recommended.

Council Evaluation

During the Council Evaluation, a team of members led by the program liaison meet to discuss the program's Individual Plan and Self-Evaluation. An evaluation rubric is used to compare the program's progress against established criteria. The team uses a three-point scale to describe the program's status: planning, emerging, and mature. An aggregate score generated from scores in four areas of inquiry -Individual Plan, Communication, Level of Understanding, and Successes/Challenges/Plans - determines the current state of maturity of the assessment program.

Council Report

The Council Report is the written evaluation of the program under review. It includes the Evaluation Rubric, specific comments, an analysis of strengths, and recommendations for continued progress. It also sets the schedule for the next review or progress check.

Program Feedback

A Program Feedback form is given to the program under review along with the Council Report. Responses to the questions help the Assessment Council modify the review

process, when necessary, and determine how to assure that the process is useful to programs.

The Assessment Council Review process and reporting forms have been designed to meet several needs:

- To assure greater consistency among the assessment plans;
- To make clear the criteria most highly valued in assessment;
- To increase familiarity among faculty of assessment tools, practices, and nomenclature through a regular discussion/reporting process outside their own program;
- To address considerations published in NCA literature about successful assessment programs.

The criteria for successful evaluation may change over time as programs continue to mature in their assessment efforts.

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

The greatest strength of Hocking College's program of assessment is that faculty have the primary role in both development and implementation. With vigorous support from the Vice President of Academic Affairs, regular discourse with the Assessment Coordinator, and increased guidance from the Assessment Council, instructors are free to explore creative answers to assessment challenges. Exciting capstone courses and experiences are growing out of the need to measure not only technical skills, but also Success Skills. As faculty members grapple with measuring skills and attitudes, such as ethical conduct, concern for the environment, respect for the arts, and appreciation for cultural differences, they shoulder the responsibility for building opportunities to learn and demonstrate these skills in their courses.

The impact of assessment on curriculum design and instruction has been significant. Having learned to begin at the end (desired outcomes), the measures instructors have built into capstone courses and other end-of-program classes have begun to influence course content and instruction back through the programs to the first days students come to the campus. Instructors teach with greater confidence when they have clear, focused goals for student learning and well-designed instruments to gauge that learning. The College has focused its assessment efforts on program assessment informed by assessment of student academic achievement. The Assessment Coordinator works directly with technology coordinators and faculty teams. Assessment beyond the generation of grades has been almost entirely invisible to students. Students will, however, soon become conscious participants in the institutional assessment program as the 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project matures and alternative methods of documentation permit students to become partners in the assessment process.

In Winter 2001, faculty in each school utilized the *Levels of Implementation* as a tool to assess program progress in assessment of academic outcomes. Overall, most faculty members contend that their programs are at level two of implementation. However, there was a consistent rating of level one for certain areas: shared responsibility with students, institutional support structures, institutional support resources, and efficiency of assessment. These ratings indicate a need for additional information and improvement in these areas. The Assessment Council will review the results and develop an action plan to improve the ratings. The College plans to administer the Levels of Implementation again to measure progress.

CLOSING THE LOOP

The Emergency Medical Technology - Paramedic program is an excellent example of how one technology improved its program as a result of assessment of academic outcomes. In 1999 the pass rate of students was 60% on the licensure exam, an unsatisfactory percentage that jeopardized approval of the program. An intensive assistance team of faculty and administrators worked together to diagnose the causes of low learner success and to create strategies for faculty to institute change. As a result of assessment, students were formed into a cohort group that met together outside of regular class hours to address issues, answer questions and participate in study sessions. The faculty also initiated intrusive advising techniques by formally meeting with students three to four times each quarter and more if a particular student was at risk. An academy style schedule was established for the cohort group in which general and technical course content was combined into applied integrated courses. Writing, math and anatomy faculty came to the student cohort at the technology site rather than having the cohort disperse to classes elsewhere. Students were expected to wear professional uniforms from 8:00 to 3:00.

In labs, faculty began to use scenario-based classroom work to help students apply knowledge and skills. The program established a model for third quarter clinical experiences being supervised by on-site faculty followed by a four-hour review and debriefing session. The pass rate improved from 60% to 90% in just one year. "Closing the loop" - demonstrating patterns of evidence over time of student success (or lack of success) - is strengthening. Instructors pilot a project, a tool, a performance test, and then

discover ways to improve it for the next time it is used. Instructors (and, undoubtedly, students) are learning what works, and what works even better. Criteria, instruction, and measuring instruments continue to evolve each year. As faculty continue to mature in their understanding of constructing tools and criteria, major assessments will stabilize, providing the consistency over a number of years that is necessary to establish patterns of evidence. The analysis of data for the purpose of improving curriculum and instruction will continue to be emphasized.