

WAYNE STATE COLLEGE
RESULTS FORUM IMPACT REPORT

Wayne State College (WSC) has a long history of commitment to continual assessment of its programs and the successes of its students and professors. The College demonstrates this commitment through participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), a process for accreditation developed by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) as an alternative to the self-study/comprehensive visit cycle of accreditation. Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) encourages an institution to use the AQIP Quality Criteria to systematically examine how it is increasing its effectiveness in educating its students, accomplishing its other key purposes, and how it manages and improves the many other processes that allow it to pursue these primary goals.

The College created an Office of Assessment in 2007 to provide another key component to continued improvement of the college's teaching and learning environment. The College added this professional staff position of assessment director to coordinate and develop a centralized, systematic method of assessment procedures across the institution.

WSC Joins Assessment Academy

Wayne State College was accepted into the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning, sponsored by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), on September 19, 2007. The Academy offered Wayne State College a four-year sequence of events and interactions focused on student learning, targeted at accelerating and advancing efforts to assess and improve student learning, and designed to build institution-wide commitment to assessment of student learning.

Commitment to Assessment

A seven-member team from Wayne State College attended the Academy Roundtable, in Lisle, IL, on February 20-22, 2008. Team members were selected based upon their service to the General Education Committee and provided representation from each of the four academic schools. These participants have been continuous members of the Wayne State College Academy for Assessment of Student Learning team. Members include Dr. Patricia Arneson, Professor of Business; Dr. Gwen Jensen, Associate Professor of Communication Arts; Dr. James O'Donnell, Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities; Phyllis Spethman, Director of Field Experience and Teacher Certification; Sue Sydow, Director

of Assessment; Dr. Keith Willis, Professor and Department Chair for Counseling and Special Education; and Dr. Tamara Worner, Professor of Physical Sciences and Mathematics. Dr. Arneson and Sue Sydow also attended the Academy Information and Planning Workshop held in Lisle on January 10-11, 2008.

Academy Project

In May of 2007, Wayne State College hosted a regularly scheduled AQIP Quality Checkup team campus visit for reaffirmation of accreditation. The AQIP Quality Checkup team reported that the accreditation issue of systematizing assessment had not been completely addressed. Therefore, the directive to comply with the AQIP recommendation to address the issue of systematizing assessment across the institution was the driving force behind WSC's commitment to support efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution's assessment processes to enhance and improve the quality of student learning. Wayne State College felt the Academy could best provide the necessary mentoring that was needed to accelerate and advance efforts to assess student learning and build an institution-wide commitment to assessment of student learning for a systematic plan for continuous quality improvement. The Academy also served as a critical resource as WSC implemented a revised General Education Program during the fall of 2008 and needed a plan for assessing the program.

Wayne State College used the Academy of Assessment participation to serve a dual role as an AQIP Action Project and an Academy Project. An assessment plan was designed to assess the four goals of the General Education Program titled, "General Education Assessment--A New Perspective!"

The four General Education Program goals the project(s) assesses are:

*--**Develop expression** - Foster communication skills that facilitate effective expression of ideas; (e.g. writing, speaking, reading, listening, and visualizing).*

*--**Participate in methods of inquiry** - Advance ideas and concepts through applied critical, logical, scientific, and creative thinking skills and processes.*

*--**Expand knowledge** - Enhance awareness, understanding and appreciation of complex issues and diverse perspectives across a broad range of academic disciplines.*

*--**Encourage civic involvement** - Develop a sense of civic responsibility and involvement in a diverse society.*

The team designed the assessment plan by identifying the use of at least one direct and one indirect measure, following the guidelines developed for all institutional department program assessment plans. The selected indirect measure uses information gathered from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and locally created surveys. Two direct measures are being used. One direct measure utilizes ACT's Collegiate Assessment of Academic Achievement (CAAP). The other direct measure uses a unique assessment process using innovative, culminating courses of the General Education Program, called Educated Perspective Seminar (EPS) courses. Wayne State College is a member of the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) and has assessment data posted on the College Portrait Web site.

The Academy team has worked collaboratively with the General Education Committee, the Higher Learning Commission, and AQIP to create, accelerate, and advance efforts to assess and improve student learning through the Educated Perspective Seminar (EPS) courses. The institution's Network and Technology Services (NATS) Department has been instrumental in developing an electronic means for the data input and reporting of this assessment process.

Each EPS course is developed to provide an opportunity for students to conceptualize the integration of disciplines within the liberal arts program and to utilize the knowledge and skills emphasized in the General Education Program. All EPS courses incorporate knowledge, concepts, and philosophies from various disciplines by examining a topic of interest relevant to today's citizens. Students from a variety of majors come together in each course, bringing to their assignments and classroom discussions the perspectives advanced in their respective majors. All students graduating from WSC, including transfer students, must complete at least one EPS course which does not count toward a student's major or endorsement.

The process asks EPS instructors to identify primary project(s) or activity(ies) that demonstrate(s) student learning as it relates to the four General Education Program goals. Each instructor assesses student achievement of each goal on a rubric using a five-point Likert scale. To assure that similar expectations and criteria for scoring exist throughout the campus when assessing the EPS project(s), rubrics based upon the AAC&U's VALUE rubrics for the various performance levels have been identified and used. Students self-rate their achievement on each goal using the same process. In addition, faculty

and students are provided an opportunity to reflect on their experiences with the four General Education goals evaluated.

Assessment results are reported electronically to the Office of Assessment and aggregated. The General Education Committee, the Assessment Oversight Committee, and the EPS faculty analyze the aggregated data to determine areas for improvement. Action plans have been strategized and developed to improve student learning in targeted areas.

The first full analysis of all three methods of assessment selected to evaluate the General Education Program all seem to be showing similar data, which indicates that the tools are accurately reflecting the outcomes being measured. These initial baseline assessment findings (CAAP and NSSE) suggest students are slightly below the targeted level of meeting the communication writing goals. The EPS course assessment data indicates that students are performing slightly below faculty expectations for each of the four General Education Program goals. As a result, the College is targeting ways to improve the writing skills of its students. The College has completed a full Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle of ongoing, continuous, improvement using this process of outcomes assessment. This process will be continually monitored, assessed and revised to improve student learning.

Project Changes

The initial project goals were never changed. The consistency in the continuous participation and commitment of all seven original Academy team members throughout the Academy experience provided a solid foundation for developing and expanding the original project.

The General Education Committee provided feedback to the assessment process and asked the Academy Team to provide indicators for the five-point assessment scale used in the assessment of the four goals of the General Education Program. The Academy Team met, reviewed, and edited the five-point scale and added descriptive indicators approved by the General Education Committee. The first semester (fall 2008) WSC offered only two EPS courses, whereas the current fall 2011 term finds WSC offering ten different EPS courses, a total of thirteen sections.

During the fall of 2010, the original goals of the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning team were adjudged as being accomplished. These goals were met through the Academy team's original Action Plan that doubled as an AQIP Action Project, but the need still existed for these goals to be monitored, sustained, and expanded. Therefore, a new AQIP Action Project was developed and the Academy Project

expanded to include new initiatives. This new Action Project will assist in sustaining the previous accomplishments while adding additional assessment of specific General Education Program courses.

The new action project titled, "Enhancing General Education Assessment Using Specific Course Data Collection," will expand the assessment process previously developed and implemented for the action project "General Education Assessment—A New Perspective!" The plan includes a process to collect and measure data to determine if all General Education course outcomes are addressing at least one of the four General Education Program goals. The e-Database, the in-house electronic assessment reporting system, will be further developed and enhanced to allow for the collection of data directly from students and faculty. Thus, increased utilization of WebFOCUS® software will augment the e-Database to create a culture of visibility, accountability, and performance enhancement. This Action Project will advance efforts to assess the four program goals of the General Education Program and improve student learning.

Challenges

Through the Academy experience, Wayne State College has been able to accelerate the process of assessing the General Education Program and improving the culture of assessment at WSC. With a basic system in place, WSC now needs to reflect and evaluate the assessment tools being used and refine the process. Additionally, WSC needs to explore ways to correlate the information assessed in the Educated Perspective Seminar (EPS) courses to the General Education classes themselves as well as compare the results of continuing students to those of transfer students. Although this Action Project created a methodological system for data collection, the assessment process needs to be continually monitored and updated to ensure that information collected is used as evidence to revise goals and objectives. As WSC collects impressive amounts of electronic data, it is equally important that there is a clearly identified process by which these data are used to guide the College in making continuous quality improvement decisions.

Communication and collaboration with the General Education Program course faculty continues to be a challenge, although continuing the "Faculty Conversations" seminar started this spring and including additional General Education course faculty will help address this challenge. Gaining faculty commitment and understanding for the request for additional assessment work needs to be communicated. Another challenge is working with the adjunct faculty that teach many of the General Education Program courses

and may not be able to attend the meetings, seminars, and assessment retreats. To address this challenge, an online tutorial and webinar(s) will be created and used to distribute information.

In addition to implementing EPS courses and a revised General Education Program over the past three years, the entire campus converted to a new student information system called NeSIS. This was a collaborative effort between the seven campuses of the Nebraska State College System and the University of Nebraska System to purchase and utilize one student information management system. It has been a challenge for everyone to adapt to a new system using Oracle's PeopleSoft software. As economic conditions and flooding from the Missouri River plague our state and immediate geographical area, decreasing budgetary funds will also be a challenge for maintaining programs.

Achievements

The currently established direct measure of assessment of the four General Education goals using the Educated Perspective Seminar (EPS) courses has been successful. This assessment process will be followed for the new Action Project. In addition, the Chemistry Department will start their fourth term of data collection in the fall of 2011 using the e-Database to input, summarize, and analyze their rubric scores from direct measures of assessment. The Chemistry Department's data indicates that senior Chemistry majors exceed expectations. The Career Services Department has recently developed an assessment process.

The Academy for Assessment of Student Learning Team continues to lead assessment initiatives with continued collaboration with the General Education Program Committee. As the current Academy Team prepares to complete their four-year commitment, a new team will be established. Continuity will be sustained by maintaining the Academy leader and one or two of the current seven-member team. A rotation schedule will be developed to introduce new members to the team while phasing out current members.

This Academy team has been recognized nationally by presenting their project at the Higher Learning Commission's 2010 Annual Meeting and at the Association of American Colleges and Universities 2009 General Education Annual Meeting. This was the fourth year that the team has participated in the HLC Annual Meeting and the Academy Showcase and the fourth consecutive year of active participation. During the HLC Annual Meetings, WSC Academy Team members have led a table discussion in 2009, presented in 2010, met with Academy mentors each year, and participated in the showcase poster sessions in 2008 and 2011.

Our HLC mentor states: "Wayne State continues to make great progress towards the original project goals and they have made great strides in changing the atmosphere of assessment on their campus. They should be very proud of everything they have managed to do over the last few years."

This academic year the Academy team continued to host a full-day all campus "assessment retreat" in the fall with an opening general session that has been used to showcase departmental assessment, departmental curriculum mapping, and Educated Perspective Seminar course assessment. In 2008, the team sponsored Susan Hatfield from the HLC as a guest speaker to help build the culture of assessment at WSC. In addition, a half-day all campus "assessment retreat" is held during each spring term. The Academy Team hosted its first "Faculty Conversation" seminar in late March of 2011 on the General Education Program assessment process and allowed faculty to share best practices on teaching pedagogy for EPS courses. The event received very positive feedback and will be continued.

Effects and Evidence

The Academy for Assessment of Student Learning team has worked cooperatively with the General Education Committee, the Assessment Oversight Committee, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to assess, evaluate and implement the action project. The Academy for Assessment of Student Learning team members were focused on accelerating and advancing efforts to assess and improve student learning and were willing to assist in building an institution-wide commitment to assessment of student learning at Wayne State College.

A February 2011 mentor review states: "Wayne State has made remarkable progress. Despite my initial skepticism for the implementation of the EPS courses, it appears to be working well for their campus. They have not only managed to implement a very unique way to assess general education, but at the same time, improved the culture of assessment on their campus. Good Job!"

To engage the EPS instructors, small discussion meetings have been held each semester for EPS course faculty (previous and new) with Assessment Academy Team members. During the meeting, the electronic assessment reporting system is explained. For faculty with previous experience, new changes to the electronic assessment process are shared. Time is allocated for collaboration and sharing of "best practices" between the faculty members. This opportunity to converse with other EPS faculty members and share their perspectives on teaching EPS courses has received positive feedback. All faculty teach the

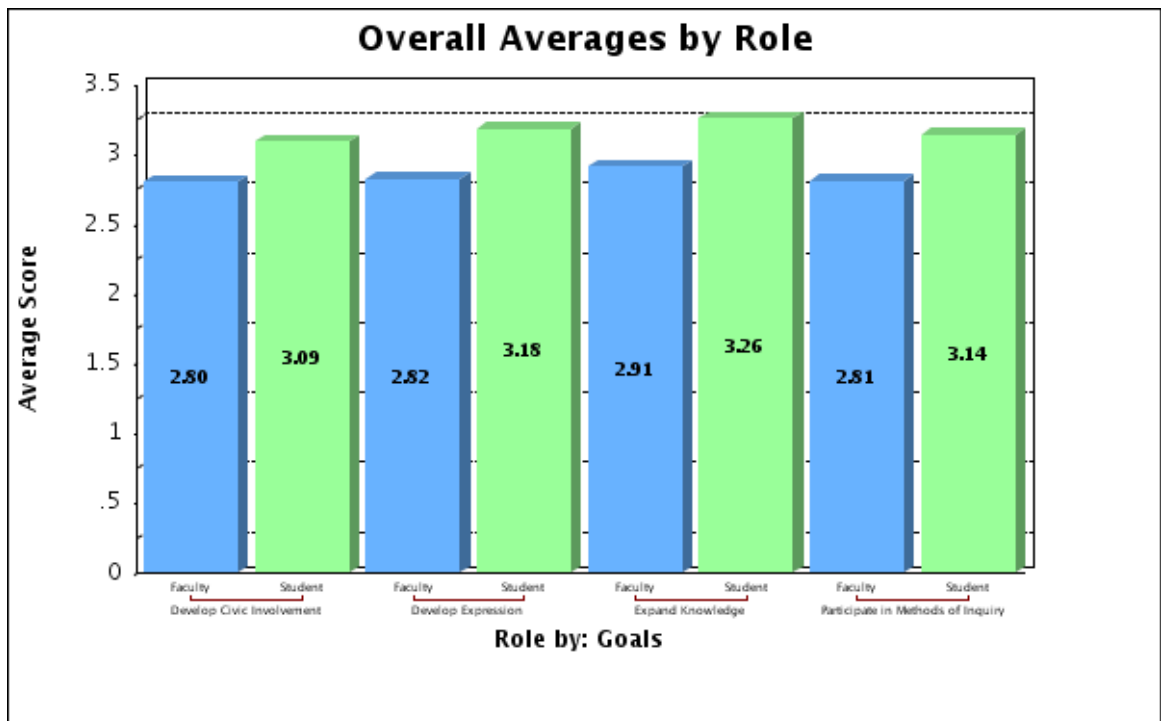
same course, but from different topics and perspectives. A total of 53 EPS sections have been offered in the first three years of existence with approximately 1,100 students being assessed by their instructors.

One major success factor has been in the ability to retain all seven original Academy Team members throughout the entire four-year experience. The makeup of the team, using one dean, two directors, one department chair and three faculty members has been beneficial. The team has traveled together for four years to Lisle, IL, for training and to Chicago for the HLC Annual Meeting. The team has bonded and learned to work together as a unified unit. It will be difficult for the original team to dissolve, yet team members need time to pursue other obligations and academic responsibilities. The original team members will continue to be advocates for a strong assessment program.

According to the Career Services Graduate Survey from students receiving a bachelor's degree from December 2007 through August 2008, 97% of WSC students are employed or enrolled in graduate school or continuing education. The survey had an 81% response rate.

According to 2009 NSSE data, 90% of first-year students report a favorable image of this institution; 84% of seniors would choose WSC again if they could start their college career over.

General Education EPS course assessment results after three years of data collection indicate that 100% of WSC students perform above the acceptable level. The following chart shows the overall averages of faculty assessment of students (blue) and student's self-assessment (green) as reported through the EPS course assessment process.



Assessment data has been reported on the Wayne State College, Office of Assessment, Web site. The team published a pamphlet "General Education Program Booklet (2008-2009)" detailing the revised General Education Program and assessment process. The booklet was distributed to all incoming freshmen the fall of 2008. The team was also instrumental in the creation of an entire General Education Program Web site with a page devoted to EPS courses and descriptions and another page on assessment.

Next Steps

The team is currently finalizing plans to host the fifth annual all-campus assessment faculty retreat on September 23, 2011. An opening session precedes departmental assessment collaboration meetings. During the opening, assessment "success stories" will be shared that highlight service-learning, curriculum mapping, and the Critical Thinking EPS course. The Chemistry Department's use of the electronic database system will also be showcased.

The spring half-day assessment retreats, the EPS faculty mentoring meetings prior to each semester, and the "Faculty Conversations" seminars will all be continued activities.

As the Academy Team completes its fourth year of Academy affiliation, the team will prepare for the November 2011 Results Forum and construct a sustainability plan.

Another step will be to remain active and visible. The Academy Team will continue to function locally with new members and some continuity from the current team. Plans are to continue all current and future Academy team efforts locally. There has been discussion about possibly rejoining the Academy with an entirely new team in the future to train and mentor new team members and develop a new project.

Additional non-academic departments are creating assessment plans with Career Services developing a plan to begin the fall of 2011, along with other new assessment initiatives in student services, counseling, residence life, business services, and freshman retention.

A proposal has been accepted to present the current project(s) at the AAC&U General Education Conference in February 2012 that will continue assessment leadership and involvement on the national level. Attendance and active participation at the HLC Annual Meeting will be continued and encouraged for team members.

VALUE Rubrics from the AAC&U will continue to be incorporated and adapted for further assessment initiatives.

All assessment endeavors thus implemented will be continued and expanded. NSSE, CAAP and local EPS course assessment results will be analyzed during the fall of 2011 to identify what has been learned and actions will be determined by the General Education Program Committee members. The institution is targeting ways to improve the writing skills of its students. With three years of data collection, the next step will be to further implement the Plan-Do-Check-Act model to Act and carry out change for continuous improvement based on the measurable evidence collected. This process will be continually monitored, assessed and revised to improve student learning.

Plans for sustainability

The current process for assessing the four General Education Program goals will be continued with the current Academy Team leader (the Director of Assessment) to remain coordinating all activities. The data from the established assessments will continue to be analyzed and used to make evidence-based decisions for improvements in student learning. The successful fall and spring all-campus assessment retreats will be continued to encourage collaboration and allow time for departments to work on assessment and curriculum mapping activities.

The two-hour "Faculty Conversations" seminars will continue to be hosted by the Academy team. The WSC Network and Technology Services (NATS) department will continue to support and enhance the development and activation of the e-Database electronic reporting system to collect and report assessment data. Graphs and reports will be generated and updated using WebFOCUS© software. Results and possible changes to be made to the General Education Program will be addressed in the fall of 2011 by the General Education Committee. A review of individual General Education course objectives and assessment is planned.

The Office of Assessment, the Academy for Assessment Team, the General Education Program Committee, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the campus Assessment Oversight Committee will continue collaborating with the General Education faculty to encourage continuous improvement of student learning.

Building a culture of assessment continues to take time and the continued commitment of the entire College. The systematic method of assessment that has been implemented will document assessment results and provide evidence that the results are used for continuous improvement of programs and services to cultivate a quality culture of assessment at Wayne State College.