

Success Stories 2010-2011 Academic Year

How is the WSC Outcomes Assessment Process Improving Student Learning?

The following exemplars were identified from the 2010-2011 assessment reports and represent a small sampling of the many uses of assessment processes being used for improvement of student learning.

Applied Human and Sport Physiology--So far I am proud to say that 100% of AHSP graduates have taken the time to complete the assessment comprehensive exam. This is not required; it is not tied to a grade, nor is it given during already scheduled class time. These students graciously take time out of their busy schedules to provide us information to help make the program better for future students. This isn't so much of what we as faculty are doing, but it surely shows what kind of students we have in our program.

Art and Design--The Department of Art and Design curriculum map shows the benchmarks we've developed in our assessment process over the past seven years using both direct and indirect measures.

Business Administration--The main success of our department at this point is that we realized we needed to return to administering the ETS exam. The Comprehensive Business Exam we had used instead of ETS was not providing our department with the type of information needed to make improvements in our program. The most important information we seek and did not receive was a comparison to other schools based on percentile ranks.

Chemistry--Individualized student/faculty interactions, which are a staple of our program, will be continued and encouraged. We are going to be taking the next step in this study to get input from employers of our students and the former students themselves to see if they have any input to the strengths of our graduates and programs and any differences they may see and we can develop improvements from their comments if they have any information.

Michael Jacobsen, a 2007 graduate of Wayne State College, has been selected to attend the annual Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings from June 26 - July 1 in Lindau, Germany. About 20 Nobel Laureates in physiology or medicine and 550 "Best Talent" young researchers from around the world will meet at Lindau to exchange ideas, discuss projects and build international networks. Young researchers are nominated by a global network of academic partners and then evaluated by a review panel. Michael Jacobsen completed three majors at Wayne State: chemistry, biology, and computer science.

He served on the student senate during his senior year at WSC (2006-07) and as the Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees representative in the same year. Jacobsen of Laurel, Neb., was one of only 323 students nationally and one of three Nebraska students to receive a Barry Goldwater Scholarship in 2006. A Neihardt Scholar and Honors Program student while at Wayne State, Jacobsen is now attending graduate school at the University of Utah conducting research on drug delivery systems.

The Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings provide a globally recognized forum for the transfer of knowledge between generations of scientists. They inspire and motivate Nobel Laureates and international best talents. Lectures by the Nobel Laureates reflect current scientific topics and present relevant fields of research of the future. In panel discussions, seminars and during the various events of the social program, young researchers nominated by a worldwide network of Academic Partners interact with Nobel Laureates.

Computer Science--Computer science students (7/7) scored at or above 70% on the labs resulting in 100% of computer science students meeting the desired outcome. This shows the effectiveness of laboratory planning and delivery.

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At our Spring 2011 assessment retreat faculty reviewed the results discussed at our Fall 2010 assessment retreat. While CTIS faculty were generally satisfied with the information provided by the exit focus groups and exit questionnaire and the information those assessment activities provided for making informed decisions about change, it was decided during the Fall 2010 assessment retreat that an additional indirect measure, an alumni survey, would provide supplemental information to fill in the gaps and answer questions that current information did not completely address. CTIS faculty discussed the advantages and disadvantages of paper-based and electronic forms of administering the alumni survey. It was decided that the target audience would be more accepting of an electronic form of survey and that response rates for such an instrument were likely to be higher than a paper-based instrument. Considerable discussion was held regarding the types of information we would like to receive from an alumni survey and the uses to which such information would be put. In addition CTIS faculty spent a considerable amount of time identifying the key categories of items to be placed on the alumni survey and the nature of specific questions to appear on that instrument. Discussion was held regarding the appropriate time frame for alumni beyond CTIS academic programs to be targeted for instrument administration. It was decided that an intermediate time frame of approximately five years would be the optimal duration beyond graduation to permit alumni the appropriate perspective to comment knowledgeably in retrospect regarding CTIS academic programs.

Computer Technology and Information Systems—Our CIS students (20/20) scored at or above 70% on the labs resulting in 100% of computer science students meeting the desired outcome. This shows the effectiveness of laboratory planning and delivery. The newly designed instrument will allow for reporting of total score plus reporting of computing area subscores to yield additional information beyond what total scores alone would yield.

The alumni survey will be designed in such a way that it also gives respondents an opportunity to indicate if they are willing to network with current CTIS students and/or to serve as speakers/presenters in CTIS courses. The alumni survey will be conducted in electronic form to enhance response rates and efficiency of data collection for analysis. It will also result in considerable cost savings versus the cost of a paper-based alumni survey administration.

Counseling--We created an advisory committee for the undergraduate and graduate programs. The committee is composed of counseling professionals who are familiar with the WSC program. The committee met for the first time in the fall of 2010.

Drafting--The video tutorials for the class were updated. Students use them on a regular basis to review a topic that was presented or on that they missed. Students will state their problem then ask if there is a video that covers the topic. They like to review the process several times vs. the instructor demonstrating the technique only once or twice.

English writing and literature--Last Fall, the faculty agreed to require the committee of faculty evaluators to produce a brief MLA style sheet for use in the following year. This Spring, faculty agreed that the faculty evaluators use the MLA style quicksheet found at http://academic.wsc.edu/conn_library/research/citation/, which students can also access.

The faculty also agreed last Fall to ask faculty evaluators to provide brief explanations of scores of 2, 1, and U to aid in the evaluation of assessment data.

Another recommendation made last Fall was that “Seminar papers used for assessment must be public and available both online and on paper.” Given the difficulty of posting the papers online, the faculty agreed this Spring to alter this recommendation from “both online and on paper” to “either online or on paper.” It was agreed that the ENG 480 instructor would be responsible for giving a copy to Dean O’Donnell, Ronnow would provide Conn Library with a copy, and Cupp would give a copy to Sue Sydow, Director of Assessment.

Last Fall the faculty decided to encourage English faculty to require at least one presentation in all of the English core courses. The faculty was also encouraged to use the public presentation criteria in the evaluation of student presentations in those courses. Regarding the exit survey, the faculty agreed last Fall to ask the person typing written comments to omit references to individual professors.

Exercise Science--This data reflects results since spring of 2009 since we just implemented this assessment instrument. Although the mean scores were high and we met our objective of a score of 3 or better, with only 25 respondents so far, it is difficult to determine whether action needs to be taken until we have more data. This data, however, tells us several things. One is loyalty to our program – overall, students seem to be pleased, and speak favorably to the efficacy of our curriculum and teaching. The other of course is that our program is effective.

Family and Consumer Sciences/Early Childhood--One of our success stories has been the addition of learning activities supporting student knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice which is a key early childhood philosophy. Data from graduate surveys had indicated that the students believed themselves to be less prepared in this area and therefore an extra unit was added to the FCS 120 course- Introduction to Early Childhood Education. Class members analyzed the philosophy text by section through group work, received an overview presentation by the professor, and then applied knowledge of the philosophy to case studies with children of various early childhood stages. Those students receiving the added reinforcement in their introductory class showed a better understanding of the philosophy when asked to apply developmentally appropriate practice in learning activities in subsequent courses in the area of early childhood.

One of our success stories has been the addition of a summer extension to the Early Childhood lab preschool course which allows additional college students to serve as teachers in the Kiddie College. Data from student evaluations indicated that students did not believe they received as much first-hand experience with the preschoolers as they needed when the class offerings had higher student numbers. The department took steps to add the additional summer course offering which allowed all of the course offerings throughout the year to have levels that allowed for more first-hand experience for the students and subsequent student evaluations have been positive in this area.

Life Sciences--Our exemplary assessment practice is our assessment exam. The exam was designed to assess student understanding and knowledge within the five core areas of our program: Biology Concepts, Zoology, Botany, Molecular Genetics, and Evolution. Our graduating seniors are performing significantly better on the exam than are the incoming freshman indicating that they have learned and retained the core materials that we deem necessary for them to continue on in a career in Life Sciences.

Requiring students to give an oral presentation on their internship or research project has been very successful for our department and for our assessment of student’s deeper and broader grasp of the subject matter. Students view the presentations as a capstone experience and are proud of their achievements once

they have completed the presentations. We additionally have many students who present at regional and national meetings.

Mass Communications--Four courses in the program area have had classroom requirements significantly revised as a result of student data collected via the WSC assessment process.

Political Science--Our newly developed research seminar provided the forum for our students to engage in an original research project using standard political science methodology and with close faculty supervision.

We are going to continue to build our political science club, with an emphasis on informing our students about career opportunities. We are going to develop a more systematic approach to marketing our program. Finally, we will expand our political science day next year to bring in more speakers.

Psychology--A required zero-credit-hour Psy 490 Assessment Seminar for graduating psychology majors has been approved to facilitate the collection of psychology assessment data (administration of the Program Evaluation and Comprehensive Psychology Exam). Completion of this course will be required of majors who are under the 2009-10 catalog.

School of Education's Renewal Accomplishments--Faculty in the School began a comprehensive tripartite undergraduate renewal initiative, studying current standards and professional literature in collaboration with faculty across campus, P-12 practitioners and ESU personnel to identify key elements of a premiere undergraduate teacher education program and create a renewed professional sequence/common core. Early next fall the unit will make final "tweaks" to ensure alignment with newly developed state teacher standards and prepare a rather massive Academic Policies proposal as detailed syllabi are developed and curriculum mapping completed. The unit will work with stakeholders across campus on scheduling and complete faculty assignments -- all faculty will teach in the renewed core, content and methods courses, and supervise candidate field experiences. The unit has also begun work on updating the "Gateway" system. With a productive year of careful planning, we will be ready to fully implement all aspects of our renewed program in the fall of 2012.

The Teacher Preparation Assessment Committee (TPAC) has worked diligently throughout the spring semester to produce the first significant revision of the unit's conceptual framework since the early 1990's, though maintaining the unit's core values. The document presents a clear and concise vision of what unit faculty member believe and includes goals and fairly specific outcomes to guide development of the assessment system and instruments/rubrics. The committee also proposed a plan for using triangulated data at key decision points. In addition, the unit is working with NATS to enhance the EDatabase system -- making it both more powerful in terms of "drilling down" and more user friendly. We will move forward next fall with developing key assessments and locking them in for the foreseeable future. This will provide stable longitudinal data for analysis and to guide continuous improvement efforts.

Sociology--The student portfolios allow Sociology faculty to track and review improvements in student's language skills, writing skills, uses and applications of data, uses and constructions of social theories, developments in critical thinking skills, etc. from their Freshman to Sophomore years, Sophomore to Junior, and Junior to Senior.

It is clear that the majority of Sociology majors are gaining strong theory/research knowledge and skills, writing/critical thinking skills, and understandings of issues related to socio-cultural diversity. WSC Sociology majors have a long history of presenting their research at Sociological symposiums in Nebraska and the Midwestern United States; often winning awards.

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Spanish--The improvement shown on the Wisconsin Placement Test represents a success for the department, as we have experimented with different texts and emphases and seem to have found the right approach to intermediate Spanish. Likewise, we are pleased with advanced students' demonstration of good linguistic skills (e.g. control of language and vocabulary) in formal presentations, as shown in the SPA 317 course. While we acknowledge students' need to improve their analytical skills, we are addressing that in the next academic year with such course offerings as SPA 316, Introduction to Hispanic Literature, and SPA 340, Literature and Culture of 19th Century Spain.

Speech Communications

Service Learning: Service learning projects were completed in Organizational Communication, Small Group communication and public relations courses. Students studied such topics as emotional labor and burnout in the workplace. They worked on group projects that benefited nonprofits in the area. They developed public relations projects for the department.

Research Activities: We have 10 students presenting in two panels at Central States Communication Conference April 7-10. One of panels was chosen "Top Panel" for the conference. In addition, 9 students will be presenting 5 papers at the Second Annual Nebraska Undergraduate Communication Research Conference April 16 at Hastings College.

Leadership Roles: We have one of our students serving as National Lambda Pi Eta President, another serving as President of the WSC Student Body, another serving as WSC Lambda Pi Eta President.

Internships: We had 8 speech communication students complete internships this past year.

Travel Abroad: We have three speech communication students in Greece this semester. Last semester we had two speech communication students in Taiwan.

Overall, we know our students are demonstrating their application of communication studies superbly. There should be many items of interest in future portfolios.

The data base "Communication and Mass Media Complete" must be retained in the library allocations for our student research projects. This data base is being used successfully by faculty and students. It has full support from Library administration to be continued.

The speech communication faculty have worked extremely hard last term to facilitate student research papers in their courses. This effort generated quite a few exceptional papers. Now, the faculty are working diligently at getting ten students ready to present their papers at Central States Communication Conference April 7-10 (it should be noted that one of our student panels has been awarded TOP PANEL HONORS for the conference) and seven students are ready to present papers at the Nebraska Undergraduate Conference April 16th (it should be noted that one of these student papers will be highlighted in the SPOTLIGHT PANEL for the conference). This is definitely a record, our personal best!