

Report on Pilot Intersession Assessment Institute

College of Arts and Sciences

University of Scranton

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I. Overview

As we approached the end of the fall, 2013 semester, almost all of the academic programs in the College of Arts and Sciences had developed program-level student learning outcomes and assessment plans, primarily in the context of Academic Program Review, which began in its current form during the 2007-08 academic year. At the same time, some of the College's smaller interdisciplinary programs were in the process of developing assessment plans as part of their Impact Reports, which they would complete during the spring, 2014 semester. In addition, the University's faculty had recently voted to make the inclusion of student-learning outcomes on syllabi responsibility for all faculty.

At this point in the development of assessment in the College of Arts and Sciences, the January, 2014 intersession provided a unique opportunity for the Dean's office to work with faculty in the College to develop and assess student-learning outcomes, and to use this assessment to improve their courses. In addition, by bringing together faculty from across the

College, we could implement an organized and sustainable process to support assessment at the program level and the College level.

Each January intersession, the College offers a limited number of courses in a four-week format. Most of these courses fulfill either basic program requirements or general education requirements. Many of these courses are then repeated in multiple sections during the spring and fall semesters. Therefore, the effective assessment of student learning during the intersession can allow faculty to “close the loop” with changes during the subsequent spring and/or fall semester. Moreover, effective assessment practices and improvements in these courses can ultimately have an impact on large numbers of students and contribute significantly to building a culture of assessment in the College.

On December 11, 2013, Dean Brian Conniff sent an e-mail to the full-time faculty teaching on-campus courses during the January 2014 intersession, inviting them to participate in a pilot assessment project. More specifically, he suggested that the workshop could help them to develop or revise student learning outcomes for their intersession courses, to implement assessment methods and collect assessment results, to utilize this assessment data to improve their courses, and to draw from this intersession experience to further develop assessment plans—at the program and college levels—during the spring semester and beyond. Participation in the pilot program was voluntary.

The Pilot Intersession Assessment Institute had five main elements, all of which were designed to address immediate faculty needs and concerns, to provide “real time” support as needed, and to maintain the flexibility to work with faculty from different disciplines and with varying levels of assessment experience:

1. **Initial meeting.** On December 19, from 11:30 to 1:00, participating faculty met with Dean Conniff and Assistant Dean Rebecca Haggerty to address any questions about the Assessment Institute—regarding student learning outcomes, data collection and analysis, etc.—and for a more general discussion of assessment.
2. **Workshop on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods.** On January 3 (the Friday before intersession classes began), Dr. Mary Goldschmidt, Faculty Development Specialist, conducted a workshop with participating faculty to finalize the student learning outcomes for their intersession courses and to select the assessment method(s) they thought would be most useful. Also at this workshop, Rebecca Haggerty answered questions related to assessment and Middle States accreditation. Dr. Goldschmidt offered this workshop again on January 23, making it available to all faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences.
3. **Workshop on Analyzing Assessment Data and Improving Courses.** On January 31 (the day after the final intersession classes), Rebecca Haggerty held a workshop for participating faculty on analyzing assessment results and on “closing the loop”: i.e., using assessment results to improve student learning.
4. **Ongoing support.** Throughout the intersession, Rebecca Haggerty and Mary Goldschmidt worked with faculty individually, as needed, to finalize their student

learning outcomes, to select assessment measures, to consider ways to “close the loop,” and to address any questions regarding assessment in their courses.

5. **Summary Reports.** By February 14, each faculty member submitted a “Summary Report” including their student learning outcomes, links to program and/or department and/or general education outcomes, their assessment measures, their reflections on assessment results, any improvements they made to the course as a result of assessment data, and any resources they might need to help them continue to develop the assessment of student learning in their courses.

## II. Participants

Twenty-five faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences participated. These faculty members represented a diverse group of ten departments: Biology, Chemistry, Communication, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics/Electrical Engineering, Political Science, Psychology, and World Languages and Cultures. During the intersession, these faculty members taught 18 courses, with a total of 31 sections, and 460 students.

Nineteen of the faculty participants submitted the Summary Report. The six who did not submit the report all taught Communication 100. Their reports on the assessment of their intersession courses will be included in a larger collective report on the assessment of this course through the 2013-14 academic year.

## III. Sample Findings

The participants developed a variety of useful assessment measures, produced many thoughtful reflections, and in several cases used their assessment results to make changes in their courses specifically designed to improve student learning related to their stated learning outcomes. Examples of these assessment methods and course improvements include the following:

1. The use of a national standardized exam (American Chemical Society) showed a wide range of student ability and background. The instructor decided to include more in-class problem solving exercises, designed to provide additional opportunities for individualized class instruction, and to include exam questions covering a wider range of difficulty.
2. The use of a pre-test and a post-test (Art and Art History) showed that students initially had little knowledge of basic techniques and styles. The instructor planned to incorporate additional explanation and additional use of basic terms in the next offering of these courses.
3. Quizzes directly linked to student learning outcomes (Philosophy) demonstrated that taking these quizzes increases students' attention to detail and students' ability to articulate key concepts. The instructor designed the quizzes specifically to address student learning outcomes.

4. Rubrics to assess learning outcomes related to natural science outcomes and writing outcomes (Natural Science) showed weaknesses in student learning related to quantitative reasoning. The instructor added new assignments specifically designed to address this weakness.

Considering the variety of courses, assessment measures, and course improvements, the Summary Reports will provide a useful resource for faculty who are new to assessment and considering the various approaches available to them, and for faculty with more assessment experience who are looking for new approaches.

#### IV. Recommendations

Based on the “Summary Reports” submitted by the faculty who participated in the Pilot Intersession Assessment Workshop, and on our own appraisal of assessment in the College of Arts and Sciences, we make the following recommendations:

1. Repeat the Intersession Assessment Institute, each year, as a permanent feature of assessment in the College of Arts and Sciences.
2. Make this report, along with all “Summary Reports” from the faculty members participating in the Pilot Intersession Assessment Institute, available to all faculty through the CAS Assessment Angel Site and any sites subsequently developed for assessment purposes. All faculty participants in

this year's Pilot Institute have given their permission to make this information available.

3. Distribute this report for review and comment to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Conference, the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Assessment Committee, the Provost/Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and any University-Wide Assessment body established in the future.
4. Distribute a similar report to the same audiences (number 3 above) for review and comment, each year, based on that year's Intersession Assessment Institute.
5. Conduct workshops open to all faculty, during the Spring, 2014 semester, similar to those offered during the Intersession Pilot Assessment Workshop: e.g., developing student learning outcomes, selecting assessment methods, and using assessment results to improve course ("closing the loop").
6. Invite faculty from each year's Intersession Assessment Institute to participate as mentors in the following year's Institute, as one way of building a community of faculty with a high level of skill and experience in assessment and developing a culture of assessment in the College of Arts and Sciences.

F.Name	L.Name	Department	Report	Course	# of students
Mike	Allison	Political Science	x	PS 340: September 11, 2001 and Beyond	6
James	Buchanan	Psychology	x	PSYC 221: Childhood	12
John	Deak	Chemistry	x	Chem 112: General & Analytical Chemistry	17
David	Dzurec	History	x	HIST 110 (Online): US History to 1877	16
David	Dzurec	History	x	HIST 111 (Online): US History 1877 to Present	18
Tara	Fay	Biology	x	BIO 110 (Online): Structure & Function	36
Michael	Fennie	Chemistry	x	CHEM 232: Organic Chemistry	17
Howard	Fisher	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	11
Daniel	Haggerty	Philosophy	x	PHIL 215: Logic	17
Jakub	Jasinski	Math	x	MATH 103: Pre-Calculus	7
Richard	Klonoski	Philosophy	x	PHIL 120: Introduction to Philosophy	6
Richard	Klonoski	Philosophy	x	PHIL 313: Philosophy & Friendship	24
Sufyan	Mohammed	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	10
Sufyan	Mohammed	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	11
Rebecca	Mikesell	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	12
Rebecca	Mikesell	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	11
Bruce	Lanning	History	x	ART 114: Three Dimensional Design	11
Darlene	Miller-Lanning	History	x	ARTH 112: History of World Art II	23
Patrick	Orr	Psychology	x	PSYC 210: Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences	28
Masood	Otarod	Math	x	MATH 114: Calculus 1	14
Kim	Pavlick	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	10
Matthew	Reavy	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	12
Matthew	Reavy	Communication		COMM 100: Public Speaking	13
William	Rowe	Philosophy	x	PHIL 210: Ethics	23
William	Rowe	Philosophy	x	PHIL 120: Introduction to Philosophy	23
Yamile	Silva	Foreign Languages	x	SPAN 295: Contemporary Mexican Culture/Language	4
Robert	Spalletta	Physics/EE	x	NSCI 105: Science in the Cinema	18
Maria	Squire	Biology	x	BIO 111: Structure & Function	4
Nicholas	Truncale	Physics	x	PHYS 115: It's Only Rocket Science	11
Patrick	Tully	Philosophy	x	PHIL 212: Medical Ethics	18
Robert	Waldeck	Biology	x	BIO 141L: General Biology 1	17
<b>Participated:</b>	<b>25 Faculty</b>	<b>10 Departments</b>		<b>18 Courses / 31 Classes</b>	<b>460 Students</b>