ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

SUMMARY REPORT

Use this form to provide a summary report on campus-based assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education

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845-257-3287

Name of Institution: SUNY at New Paltz Academic Year: Spring 2015

{Specify name of branch campus, if relevant}

A. Assessment Process

This spring our campus assessed a portion of our GE curriculum. To initiate the process, Jennifer Waldo, GE Board Chair, and I emailed information to faculty about the process and our expectations for their participation. The GE Board and I supported faculty to complete this assessment exercise by hosting and GE Assessment Forum in fall 2014 where faculty were provided training and resources. After the forum, the GE Board reviewed and gave feedback to faculty on the GE course assessment plans. Prior to (in fall 2014) and again in early spring, I sent email reminders to faculty concerning requirements for completing the GE assessments, and about the availability of resources to complete them.

In spring the faculty taught and assessed their courses and, as the process requires, submitted their GE course assessment information in my.newpaltz.edu at the end of the semester. In the database, faculty reported what they learned from teaching and assessing their GE courses, discussed planned modifications to their courses and to their teaching, and gave suggestions for improving the overall GE assessment process. Following faculty submission of the assessment results, Lucy Walker, the Assistant VP for Institutional Research aggregated the information into (a) overall campus reports, (b) school reports, and (c) departmental reports by content and competency areas (see Attachment for overall GE Assessment Summary report). I disseminated the reports to the Interim Provost, GE Board Chair, Presiding Officer of the Faculty, Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, and to Faculty. The cover memos accompanying the reports encouraged the scheduling of meetings to discuss the GE assessment results, taking concrete action on the
results, and reporting requirements (i.e., submission of departmental summary reports describing changes and results of changes based on the GE course assessment results).

B. Summary of the Spring 2015 GE Assessments

We assessed 20% (actually, 25%, 5% oversampling to account for attrition) of our GE courses in United States Studies, Other World Civilizations, and Basic Communication – Oral. We also assessed courses in these categories that have the Critical Thinking competency. Finally, we assessed courses that have competencies in Ethical Reflection, Effective Expression – Oral, and Information Management.

Content Areas

Overall Campus Ratings for Basic Communication – Oral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Communication - Oral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will develop proficiency in oral discourse.</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Comments

Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

- Students would be given more oral presentation practice throughout the course of the semester to build their confidence.

Please describe what you learned from your assessment.

- Some students were not able to develop their own arguments.
- Some students were able to critique and apply scholarly research and articulate their own arguments.

Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process

- The College should offer workshops on visual aids for speeches.
- One faculty asked to be notified about the assessment prior to the beginning of the semester. (We notified faculty about these assessments in the fall, well before the spring GE assessments are conducted. We therefore need to investigate why this and perhaps other faculty did not receive the information and address it).
Overall Campus Ratings for Critical Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will develop well-reasoned arguments.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own and others' work</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Comments

Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

- Students will be given more time for practice and assessments will be administered toward the end of the semester rather than at the mid-point.
- Students will be given more opportunities to develop their own arguments.

Please describe what you learned from your assessment.

- Some students felt much more comfortable after they became familiar with the grading rubric and had an opportunity to practice using it themselves.
- Throughout the assessment, faculty were able to observe areas where students needed the most work with regard to oral presentations.

Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process

- The entire process was clearly explained.
- A baseline for comparison is needed to ascertain if students’ scores on an exam are indicative of their skills, abilities, and performance in a course more generally.

Overall Campus Ratings for Effective Expression - Oral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Expression - Oral</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will analyze premises, synthesize arguments and evaluate the validity of the presentation.</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students will critique oral presentations. | 97 | 93 | 96% | 57 | 61% | 35 | 38% | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0%

Students will demonstrate proficiency in oral discourse. | 97 | 93 | 96% | 51 | 55% | 40 | 43% | 2 | 2% | 0 | 0%

Selected Comments

**Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?**

- Provide opportunities for students to conduct oral presentations earlier in the course.

**Please describe what you learned from your assessment.**

- Students who chose topics that were relatable to their experiences seemed more interested in the topic and were more confident in their oral presentations than the students who made no personal connection to the topic.

**Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process**

- Make a more concerted effort to include adjuncts in the assessment process.
- Check in with faculty at the mid-point of the semester to see how things are going.

**Overall Campus Ratings for Ethical Reflection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Reflection</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will identify, discuss and evaluate justifications of principles of right and wrong or conceptions of good and bad.</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will identify, discuss and evaluate matters of moral consequence (what is right or wrong, what is good or bad, what is valuable or without value).</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students will identify, discuss and evaluate principles or ideas that inform moral decision making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>92%</th>
<th>115</th>
<th>32%</th>
<th>147</th>
<th>41%</th>
<th>76</th>
<th>21%</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Selected Comments**

**Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?**

- Make stronger connections between abstract situations, such as Greek/Roman mythology, and contemporary social situations.
- Devote more time to helping students develop good writing skills and organize more discussions to encourage students to express their views on moral and ethical aspects of the material presented.
- Provide clearer guidelines for assignment as some students strayed from the important questions.
- Spend more time analyzing arguments and evaluating the justifications behind arguments about morality, so that students can see the difference between simply stating a personal opinion and proposing an argument.

**Please describe what you learned from your assessment.**

- Changes were made to the instructions for the assignment after the last round of assessment, and these changes seem to have enhanced students’ ability to meet Objective 3--by getting them to focus on evaluating the justifications of moral principles.
- When my colleague and I met to evaluate the students’ papers for the purposes of establishing inter-rater reliability, we were pleased overall with the students’ responses to our assignment and were in substantial agreement about with our ratings.
- Students were able to talk about moral matters broadly and to identify the principles that philosophers use to discuss them, but struggled to evaluate the justifications behind these ideas and to draw their own conclusions.

**Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process**

- When assessment was first introduced more than ten years ago, we were told by experts in the field that course-based assessment made no sense. I don't understand why we are still using this method.
- Extending the deadline for GE assessment well past the deadline for final grades is a welcome change.
- While the process has been streamlined, it is still very confusing for first-timers. A 'guide to assessment' would be most helpful.
- The reporting system is a lot friendlier.
Information Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Management</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will locate, evaluate,</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>103</td>
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<tr>
<td>and synthesize information from</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a variety of sources.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will perform the basic</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations of personal computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>use.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will understand and use</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic research techniques.</td>
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</table>

Selected Comments

Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

- I might form groups, I have not used that option so far; perhaps putting students who are struggling with excelling students.
- I would think about designing more exercises that would help students become more successful using and synthesizing research materials.
- I found that the writing center did not help enough, sometimes not at all. This is something that needs to be addressed.
- I would place more emphasis and practice on how to more successfully integrate the sources students found into their own text.

Please describe what you learned from your assessment.

- I was surprised at the lack of knowledge in the computer science area. Also that some students lack basic research skills.
- I learned that many of my students had great difficulty with synthesis of sources.

Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process

- The process seems good, especially when the academic programs develop assignments to be used for assessment.
• I shouldn’t have to enter the results myself at the end. I don’t grade my students and then have them punch those grades into the system. It’s inefficient.
• Avoid selecting brand new/first-semester Teaching Assistants who often have no teaching experience for these assessments.
• The assessment process, in and of itself, is very straightforward. However, there should be more than one training-session for Teaching Assistants-specifically.

Other World Civilizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other World Civilizations</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Exceeding</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate knowledge of either a broad outline of world history or</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate knowledge of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

• I might reduce the reading load and focus more intensely on close reading exercises.

Please describe what you learned from your assessment.

• This round of assessments corresponds fairly closely with the students' letter grades. The students who failed to meet the standards correspond to those with poor attendance.
• Reflecting on the results, I have come to understand that the questions adequately assessed the overall student learning.
• Students who are not meeting standards need to be counseled out of the course early.

Faculty's suggestions for improving the assessment process

• It's a waste of time -- the insights gained from it are insights gained already, without the process.
United States Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
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<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Not Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States Studies</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society.</td>
<td>229 218</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>105 48%</td>
<td>68 31%</td>
<td>27 12%</td>
<td>18 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.</td>
<td>229 218</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>86 39%</td>
<td>85 39%</td>
<td>29 13%</td>
<td>18 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.</td>
<td>229 218</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>31 14%</td>
<td>104 48%</td>
<td>37 17%</td>
<td>46 21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Based upon these assessment data, what changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

- I may need to make some changes in assessment strategy. It might be a good idea to assess these objectives separately rather than in one assignment.

Please describe what you learned from your assessment.
Students respond well to questions which don't have clear answers and which are controversial in the group discussion activity. I think makes them think more about the questions.

Some students struggle with complex writing assignments. There is not enough time in the semester to teach writing well, in addition to content.

The process is working.

**Faculty’s suggestions for improving the assessment process**

- The forms on-line are needlessly complex. Since Board of Trustees standards are what are used, there is no need to list two sets of forms for New Paltz and the Board of Trustees.
- Provide information regarding expectations of those assessing in the department and lists of those who have completed the assignments in the past. Samples and outlines for completing the assessment should be detailed at the very beginning of the course.
- It has much improved, and I appreciate the fact that the deadline for assessment is now later than for the final grades.

**C. Progress in addressing issues arising from the spring 2014 GE Assessments**

- Regarding the GE sample, we avoided selecting faculty to report assessment for more than one course.
- The Associate Provost’s Office sponsored webcasts on assessment, and funded faculty and staff attendance at assessment focused/assessment-related conferences.
- The Associate Provost’s office paid part-time faculty a stipend for participating in norming (rubric calibration) sessions and for attending the Fall GE Forum.
- Although the GE Board members provided support to faculty who were participating in the GE assessments for the first time, more support was needed.
- Following several requests from faculty, I extended the deadline to submit GE assessment results.
- Although we did not address faculty requests to assess Critical Thinking differently, we hope to do so once the new GE curriculum is approved. We expect to modify our campus GE assessment plan at that time and to send it to SUNY for review and approval.

**D. Actions taken by Faculty to address their spring 2014 GE Assessment Findings**

The GE areas assessed in spring 2014 were Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Western Civilizations, and courses in these content areas that were approved with the Critical Thinking competency.

Some of the actions taken by faculty to address the spring 2014 course assessments results: include the following:

- Faculty reported that they modified their courses based on the GE course assessment results (e.g., Educational Studies).
- Faculty reported that they engaged in useful conversations with colleagues about teaching and learning (e.g., Psychology).
- Faculty reported that they worked toward achieving consistency across course sections (e.g., Languages, Literatures, and Cultures).

- Calibrated assessment tool to ensure validity and reliability of instrument used (e.g., Engineering).