Assessment Project Results: Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)
2014-2015 Academic Year

Overview of Accomplishments

• Designed and implemented a comprehensive faculty survey that helped us learn about instructors’ practices, values, needs, and concerns related to assigning writing in their classes

• Designed and implemented an institutional assessment of student writing that scored 500 artifacts from 50 assignments, representing 28 departments; surveyed all scorers about the process

• Analyzed data from the survey and assessment, and prepared actions items

• Analyzed the assessment process and prepared recommendations for ongoing institutional assessments

• Strengthened the Writing Across the Curriculum program at CLC

Writing Project Deliverables

Goal #1:
Study the demands of writing at CLC by surveying faculty (about the ways they use writing in their classes, what they value, what their stakeholders value, the challenges they face, the challenges their students face, etc.) and by collecting representative sample writing assignments

Deliverables:

• A faculty development plan (general and/or discipline-specific) to address faculty challenges and encourage more effective use of writing in all courses

• A current measurement of the type, quantity, and frequency of writing assignments used at CLC

• A comparison of the type, quantity, and frequency of writing assignments to previous measurements

• A plan for ongoing measurements of type, quantity, and frequency of writing assignments

• A comparison of actual use of writing in particular courses to the Written Communication General Education Learning Outcome and required assessments listed on each Course Reference File

• An archive of sample writing assignments for internal use in faculty development and future studies
Goal #2:
Study how well our students are meeting the demands of writing at CLC (and beyond) by collecting and assessing representative samples of student writing

Deliverables:
- A comprehensive writing rubric to be used for the assessment project, made available to faculty who want to modify it for their courses, and publicized in support of the Written Communication General Education Learning Outcome
- A baseline measurement of student writing, to be compared to future measurements
- A plan for regular campus-wide student writing assessments and targeted assessments (of students in classes whose faculty have been assisted by Writing Across the Curriculum initiatives, for example)
- A plan for faculty development that addresses student challenges, as shown through assessment data
- An archive of anonymous student writing samples for internal use in faculty development and future studies
- A list of questions for student focus groups (to be run in AY15-16) to better understand student attitudes and perceptions about writing

Writing Assessment Results:

Overall, students achieved assessment scores on the writing rubric that place them at a “competent” (score of 9-12 out of 15) level of proficiency in each writing category (see table below). Students performed the best on language and conventions, and struggled the most with research and sources in their writing. These results provide a baseline measurement for how well students are meeting the demands of writing at CLC. Further detailed analyses have informed action items moving forward (referenced below) to improve students’ writing skills. Assessment of students’ writing will become integrated into the college’s regular assessment of student learning processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Category</th>
<th>Average Score (out of 15)</th>
<th>Average Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas &amp; Support</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Sources</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Conventions</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average unavailable because not all sub-components were applicable for each writing artifact.
Goal #3:
Enhance faculty development to meet faculty and student challenges and, ultimately, to enhance student learning, writing ability, and success at CLC and beyond.

Deliverables:
- A plan for faculty development resources, workshops, courses, webinars, and/or retreats
- A plan for comparing the Spring 2015 baseline assessment of student writing to future assessments at regular installments

Primary Action Items Moving Forward
1. Communicate survey and assessment results to the campus community via three orientation week sessions, Connections, Chronicle, TLETC blog, workshops with Writing Center tutors and academic coaches, website, and more
2. Plan new faculty development for AY15-16
   a. Designing assignments: provide opportunities for faculty to read others’ assignments and receive peer feedback; develop assignment templates to share in short video and workshops; work with individual departments and faculty …based on the experiences and observations of the Assessment Project readers
   b. Error: help faculty identify possible mismatch between (1) the message that is sent through their assignments, teaching, and grading and (2) their expectations for polished student writing …based on survey responses showing that faculty place a high value on correctness but may be sending mixed messages to students, and based on assessment data showing error to be less problematic than other categories
   c. Research and Sources: work with the Reference Librarians and Writing Center to develop tools (videos, short writing assignments, activities, rubrics) for faculty to use in their classes …based on assessment data (qualitative and quantitative) showing that students struggle to incorporate and document sources proficiently, and survey data showing that 40% of instructors think R&S is difficult or very difficult for students, and that instructors feel less confident about grading and, by extension, teaching these skills even though 60% of respondents assign “reports or essays, with citation of source materials”
   d. Develop more online WAC faculty development offerings …based on survey results showing a higher interest in online offerings than in-person
   e. Develop more support for teachers assigning and grading “short-answer questions on tests or quizzes” …based on survey results showing 68% of respondents assign this type of writing
   f. Target faculty development to upper-level courses to continue students’ writing improvement …based on assessment results that showed an increase in writing ability between 0 and 1-15 credits, but no significant growth between 1-15, 15-30, and 30+
g. Use the rubric that was designed for the assessment as a starting place for conversations with departments, especially those undergoing ADR; design a drag-and-drop template that would allow for easy manipulation

...based on the new Writing CLO

3. Provide recommendations to the Assessment of Student Learning Committee for future institutional assessments of student writing

...based on the responses of assessment readers to the debrief survey and the work of two WAC AQIP subcommittees

Two primary options:

a. Same format: Collect a narrower range of artifact types from multiple assignments and departments; obtain more information from instructor about assignment (e.g. sources required); assess using a modified rubric (e.g. cut “accuracy”)

b. Common prompt: Assign all students the same in-class writing prompt; assess multiple CLOs simultaneously

4. Plan student focus groups, in-class surveys, or other alternatives for Spring 2016

...based on the WAC AQIP Team’s desire to hear answers to our questions directly from the students

5. Fold the WAC AQIP Team into a WAC Advisory Group, led by the WAC Coordinator, that will continue analyzing data, finding meaningful themes, carrying out action items, and developing new action items