

Progressive Measures

Mission Statement:

"The University Assessment Office is responsible for conducting a variety of assessment activities related to student learning outcomes using qualitative and quantitative research techniques, providing support services to other units engaged in such assessment, and sharing best practices for and results of assessment activities."

News from the Director

Inside this issue:

Introducing UAO Assistant Director, Matt Fuller	2
FOCUS	3
Alumni Survey	5
Assessment in Teaching Workplace Writing	7
PEP	11
StudentVoice	12
Course Grading Is Not An Assessment Tool: But Your Grade Book Provides Data for Embedded Assessment	13

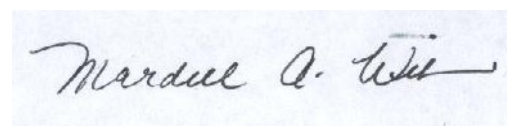
It certainly has been an exciting time for the University Assessment Office. The past few months have been filled with new faces, new projects, new ideas, and exciting outcomes. Within this issue of *Progressive Measures* you will learn about many of the exciting initiatives the UAO has been involved in developing. I believe that one of the most rewarding projects that I have had the opportunity to work with has been the FOCUS Initiative. The Faculty Opportunities for Creating Civic and Community Understanding among Students [FOCSU] coordinating team includes: Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan, Dr. Amelia Noel-Elkins, Ms. Danielle Lindsey, our Graduate Assistant - Nadia Wendlandt, and myself. This summer we had the opportunity to award three FOCUS Fellowships to highly qualified faculty who worked to develop the first three web-based instructional modules. On January 10, 2007 the FOCUS Modules will be debuted as the introduction to the Keynote address which will be given by Dr. George Mehaffy - founder of the American Democracy Project. This is going to be a great day for faculty at Illinois State!

In addition to the FOCUS Initiative, the UAO has been hard at work improving the Alumni Survey process. With the help of an enticing incentive, two roundtrip tickets on AirTran Airways courtesy of the

Central IL Regional Airport, our response rate was much improved over previous years. We also went to a web-only administration which appears to be very appealing to our recent graduates. Our office is working diligently to work with Alumni Relations, Colleges, and Departments/Schools to continue to improve the Alumni Survey.

The UAO is taking a fresh new approach to the utilization of the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE] by paring the NSSE information with other NSSE family surveys including the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement [FSSE] and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement [BCSSE]. Faculty were surveyed during the Spring 2006 semester and incoming first-year students were surveyed this past summer during Preview. In Spring 2007, our first-year and senior students will be asked to participate again in NSSE. The various perspective regarding student engagement provide a much more intriguing picture. More information will be provided about the results from these surveys at the 2007 Teaching and Learning Symposium. You won't want to miss it.

Until next time!



Meet the Assistant Director— Matt Fuller

Dear Colleagues-

The warm welcomes and thoughts have been greatly appreciated and have made the family's adjustment to the ISU and Bloomington/Normal communities smooth and enjoyable. The first three months of my job in UAO have been packed with introductions and meetings which have really shown me how special and unique ISU is. I'm looking forward to meeting even more colleagues and community leaders, so please let me know how I can help you in your assessment or other efforts.

These early meetings have also allowed me to develop a few "frequently asked questions," that I get when meeting colleagues in different departments. So, here are just a few "quick facts" about me that seem to keep coming up in conversation:

- My wife and I met in graduate school at Texas A&M University where we pursued Masters Degrees in Educational Administration. Kerri is a native of Lexington, IL. I grew up in a rural southern Texas town, not unlike many of the small towns I've seen around Illinois in the past few months.
- I have held a few positions in Residence Life/Housing, Faculty Development, Faculty Governance, and Assessment at Texas A&M University and the University of Alaska-Southeast in Juneau, AK.
- My personal research and educational interests are ever-evolving. However, presently, I am highly interested in changes in contemporary trends in student engagement and/or learning, student development outcomes in areas related to diversity, and historical and philosophical foundations of higher education. I'm also a fan of history and love reading about military and cultural history.
- Like many faculty and practitioners today, I was tricked into doing assessment. I had a chance to assist institutions in building general education assessment programs. Unexpectedly, I learned how intriguing and useful assessment studies can be. At this early point in my career, I learned that assessment should be a locally-delivered, scholarly effort which balances faculty-leadership and administrative support. Assessment shouldn't be a process for a process's sake and should not be overly burdensome to the faculty or staff involved. I would like to think I stay true to this belief system and reconsider it as the situations or needs dictate.

- I really enjoy a lot of outdoor hobbies: Fishing, camping, hiking, hunting, kayaking, photography, and playing the piano. But, the hobbies that provide me with the most satisfaction are woodworking, gardening and cooking. I also love to share tips, recipes, and photos—but never fishing spots.

More importantly, early meetings that I have had around campus have reaffirmed for me that the faculty, staff, and students at ISU are genuinely committed to the various forms of education occurring on our campus. Throughout the remainder of this newsletter, and in any interactions or collaborations with the UAO, it is my hope that you will sense this synergy and innovation in ISU's assessment practices. If I can ever be of any assistance, I hope you will call upon me to help.

All the best,




FOCUS Initiatives Develops Online Modules for Faculty

Nadia Wendlandt, G.A. FOCUS Initiative

In January of this year, the FOCUS Initiative was established in order to provide Illinois State University faculty with opportunities for civic and community engagement. The first semester was very successful as the FOCUS coordinating team introduced the Initiative to the campus with a well-attended breakfast for department chairs and school directors and two productive faculty luncheons. The FOCUS team is composed of Dr. Mardell Wilson-Director of the University Assessment Office, Dr. Patrick O'Sullivan-Director of the Center for Teaching and Technology and Ms. Danielle Lindsay-Special Projects Coordinator of the Provost Office, and Dr. Amelia Noel-Elkins, Director of University College also provided support during the first semester of the project. The summer goal for FOCUS was the development of online modules for faculty addressing the incorporation of civic and community engagement in the curriculum.

In May, three applicants were chosen from an outstanding pool to be the first FOCUS Fellows. They were selected to serve as content experts for the modules. The 2006 FOCUS Fellows were: Ms. Jodi Hallsten—School of Communication, Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus—Educational Administration and Foundation, and Dr. Gary Bachman—Agriculture.



Mrs. Jodi Hallsten, School of Communication
B.A. University of Minnesota
M.A. University of North Dakota
Research interest: Gender Communication



Dr. Gary Bachman, Department of Agriculture
B.S. and M.S. Clemson University
PhD. Ohio State University

Research interest: Evaluation of vermin compost as a tool for reducing the agricultural waste stream and producing a value-added product.



Dr. Phyllis McCluskey-Titus, Department of Educational Administration and Foundation
B.A. and M.A. Western Illinois University
Ed. D. Florida State University

Research interests: college student learning and development, the practice of student affairs, innovative pedagogy in graduate programs preparing student affairs administrators.

FOCUS

FACULTY OPPORTUNITIES FOR
CREATING CIVIC & COMMUNITY
UNDERSTANDING AMONG STUDENTS

FOCUS Fellows: Up Close

After an exciting summer, the FOCUS fellows reflected shared their experience.

The first three FOCUS modules will be introduced at the ISU Teaching and Learning Symposium on January 10, 2007. What is the purpose of the modules and what should faculty anticipate about their introduction?

Jodi: *The modules are instructional in nature. Our goal with them was to give faculty some basic tools to help them create and incorporate civic and/or community engagement into their curricula. Specifically, they inform faculty what civic and community engagement are, why civic and community engagement are so awesome, and then how to go about creating and directing civic and/or community engagement projects within their classes. There are some great resources available, too, for those who are interested in them.*

The modules are designed for anyone who instructs. I think that the faculty who choose to go through the modules will be pleasantly surprised. They're not dense or difficult – they're easy, interactive, and allow for active reflection as they assist the instructor in creating some kind of civic or community engagement activity that is relevant to a specific course she or he teaches. Then they even provide ideas for action – actually incorporating that activity into a syllabus. Overall, the modules are designed with faculty needs in mind.

What motivated you to apply for the opportunity to be a FOCUS fellow?

Phyllis: *I believe that student learning is at the heart of all that happens on a college campus (inside and outside of class), and saw this as an opportunity to help integrate community and civic engagement concepts into the collegiate experience for students. I also am passionate about innovative teaching and learning methods, and saw this as an opportunity to learn more in this area as well as make a contribution to other faculty who struggle with ideas for creative pedagogical strategies.*

Gary: *I have been interested in and have been using civic and community engagement in my horticulture courses to some degree. I thought the opportunity to work on the modules would help me increase the effectiveness of my course civic and community engagement experiences*

What did you enjoy the most about the fellowship?

Phyllis: *The opportunity to dig into new research literature was most enjoyable. I also appreciated the chance to brainstorm about “what was possible” in developing new modules for faculty and utilizing technology in creative and innovative ways.*

Jodi: *By far the greatest part of this fantastic experience was collaborating with amazing colleagues with whom I otherwise never would have worked. We made such a fantastic team – a superteam!*

Gary: *Learning from my fellow Fellows.*

As individuals take on new opportunities, unexpected outcomes may occur. What “outcomes” did you benefit from that were unexpected?

Jodi: *I think that the non-module-related outcomes from our collaborative efforts really surprised me. I learned that Phyllis and I think alike, and actually have many of the same professional interests. Subsequently, we've already begun working on a collaborative project related to civic and community engagement that will ideally lead to either a publication or presentation. What a great opportunity this became!*

As faculty members you often work independently, how was the team experience?

Jodi: *Outstanding – I can't say enough about the power of collaboration. Like I said, we made a great team, and each of us had knowledge and talent that contributed greatly to the project overall. Also, our personalities meshed perfectly – we had great group synergy and that, in itself, was really rewarding.*

Phyllis: *I am a team person, so this project appealed to me especially because of the opportunity to work with others. I was apprehensive about who the “others” might be, but the committee made excellent choices of people who were collaborative workers, but brought different strengths to the project.*

How did this experience impact your teaching?

Jodi: *I can't NOT engage students in class now – after having completed the modules it would be hypocritical of me not to! J*

Phyllis: *Jodi and I teamed up to engage students in Sharefest, the community-wide service week-end. Her first year LinC class and my first year master's class worked cooperatively on two different landscaping projects...two group homes affiliated with the MARC Center and also Sarah Raymond School.*

Gary: *I have initiated a Civic & Community Engagement Exercise across the entire Horticulture Sequence. The students from six different courses are coming together and providing service to the new Horticulture Center (university community engagement). There have been some rough edges that are being smoothed as we go along. The Horticulture CCE can be viewed at*

<http://www.cast.ilstu.edu/bachman/Hort%20CCE.htm>

Annual Alumni Survey Results

Matt Fuller, UAO Assistant Director

The Annual Alumni Survey at ISU is one of the major sources of student feedback, supporting academic departments' discussions on curricular and pedagogical quality and improvement. In recent years, however, the response rates for the Annual Alumni Survey have prevented ISU faculty and staff from making sound decisions based off of this information. While response rates for the 2006 Alumni Survey (Classes of 2004 and 2000) still do not reflect a statistically significant sample, the UAO is proud to provide the following information about this year's increased response rates and measures the UAO is taking to continue to increase the response rates for this important annual source of student feedback.

Overall, responses from the 2006 administration of the Alumni Survey were obtained from 19.1% of the available graduate and undergraduate recipients. For undergraduates graduating in 2004 and 2000, response rates of 18.7 and 14.2, respectively. Graduate-degreed alumni from 2004 and 2000 posted 28.7% and 25% response rates, respectively. Overall, undergraduates accounted for 17.8% of the respondents while graduates provided 21.7% of the responses. All graduates from 2000 provided 17.8% of the responses in the pool while the graduates from 2004 lent 20.2% of the total responses.

Compared to the response rates from the 2005 Alumni Survey (Classes of 2003 and 1999), response rates greatly improved. Figure 1.1 *2006 and 2005 Alumni Survey Response Rate Comparison* below compares the response rates

for the 2006 and 2005 Alumni Survey responses.

The table below displays a 2006 and 2005 Alumni Survey Response Rate Comparison

What caused this increase in response rate? Between the 2005 and 2006, a more directed and purposeful approach to the Alumni Survey was made by the UAO. For the first time the Alumni Survey was administered completely online, making ISU one of only a few public institutions in Illinois to administer a "web only" Alumni Survey. However, ISU's increase in response rate as well as the reduced difficulty in administration have been the subjects of many conversations with assessment programs across Illinois. Moreover, the addition of an incentive for survey respondents (2 free roundtrip air rickets on AirTran Airways) may have also contributed to increased response rates. Lastly, additional advertising and notification efforts taken by the UAO could also be a factor in increased response rates. The web-only methodology, incentive, and advertising efforts will all be employed by the UAO to continue to (hopefully) increase Alumni Survey response rates.

What else is UAO doing to continue to increase response rates for future Alumni Surveys? In addition to implementing the web-only methodology and incentives, the UAO has focused its efforts in its preparations for the 2007 Alumni Survey in the area of advertising. UAO staff developed an advertising

2006 Population by Degree and/or Year	2006 (%)	2005 Population by Degree and/or Year	2005 (%)	Difference from 2005 to 2006 (%)
2004 Undergraduate-degreed	18.9	2003 Undergraduate-degreed	11.4	+7.5
2000 Undergraduate-degreed	16.6	1999 Undergraduate-degreed	9.5	+10.1
2004 Graduate-degreed	28.2	2003 Graduate-degreed	21.0	+7.2
2000 Graduate-degreed	25.0	1999 Graduate-degreed	16.0	+9
All 2004 graduates	20.2	All 2003 graduates	12.8	+7.4
All 2000 graduates	17.8	All 1999 graduates	10.4	+7.4
All Undergraduates	20.2	All Undergraduates	10.5	+9.7
All Graduates	26.4	All Graduates	18.8	+7.6
Overall	19.1	Overall	11.6	+8.1

they wish to encourage Alumni to be on the look out for the survey. The ISU Alumni Association and the Alumni Magazine have also been utilized as resources for advertising to alumni. Lastly, the UAO will be attending Grad Finale with the hopes of introducing the new alumni to the appearance of invitation letters and the survey itself.

As you can see the UAO staff are really putting a lot of effort into increasing response rates to the alumni survey. UAO Staff are always looking for innovative ways to market the survey to alumni. Receiving a fully representative set of responses is still a few years out in the Alumni Survey's future. But, this year's response rate increase is a significant step in the right direction.

Want to Help Increase the Response Rate of the Alumni Survey? Advertise as a part of your upcoming College, Department/School newsletter or on your webpage!

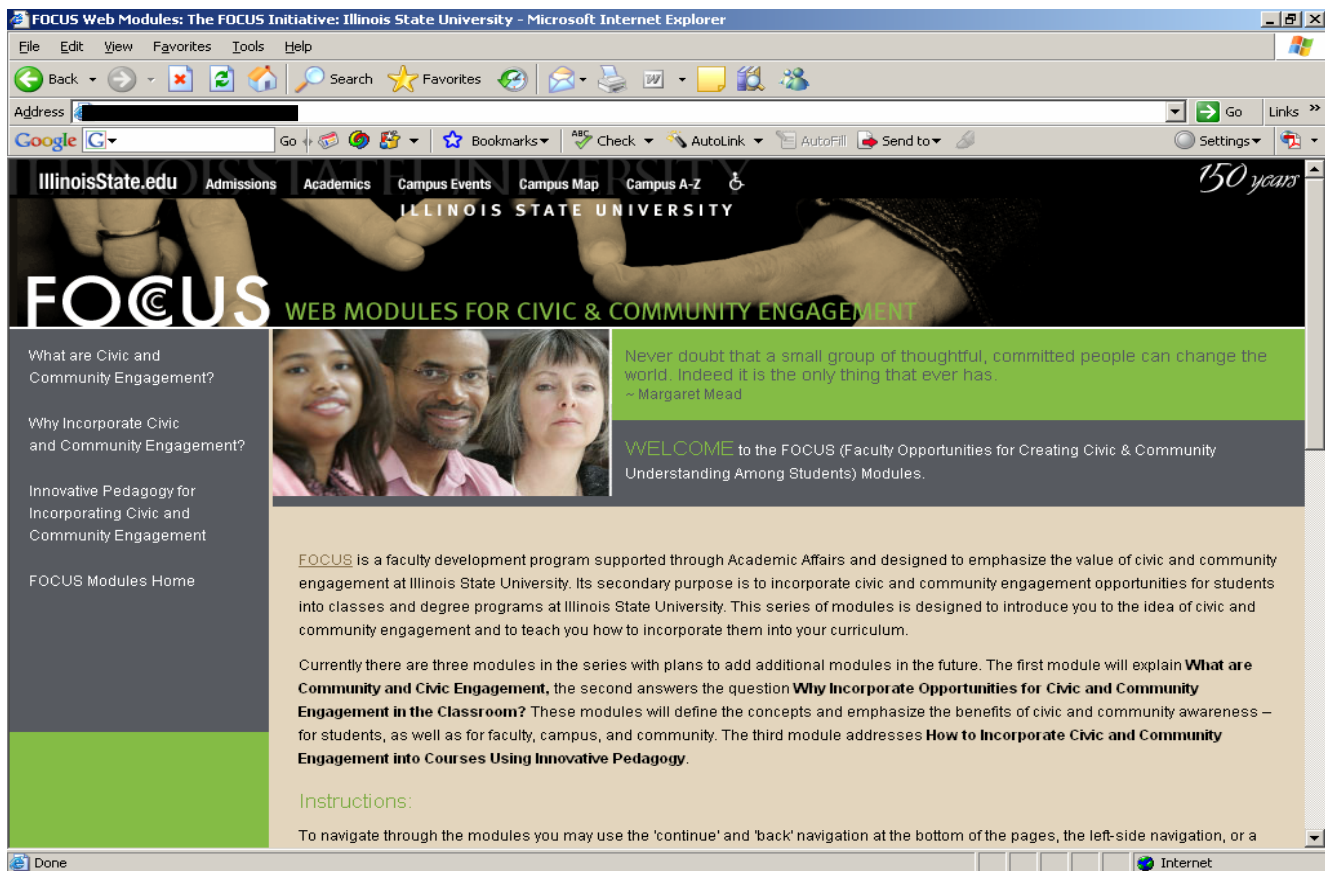
To learn how, Contact Mr. Matt Fuller at 309.438.7021 or mbfulle@ilstu.edu



DEBUTS... JANUARY 10, 2007

FOCUS Modules

Look for this new and exciting way to learn more about incorporating civic & community engagement into the curriculum



Using Authentic Assessment in Teaching Workplace Writing

Han Yu - Ph.D. Candidate / Graduate Teaching Assistant, English Department

Teaching Workplace Writing Through Contextualized Instruction

In the 1980s, North America educators, and particularly English educators, began recognizing the importance of teaching writing beyond the university context. Studies of non-academic writing developed and continue to grow. With these studies, educators come to recognize the difference between traditional classroom writing and non-academic workplace writing. Beaufort, for instance, concludes that in the workplace, texts often “result from a collaborative process among a group of writers and editors, and almost always the text reflects the institution’s point of view rather than the individual’s... there is a greater complexity associated with issues of audience and purpose in workplace writing than in the writing for most undergraduate classes, where writing tasks are usually directed to a single audience—the teacher—and for a single purpose, displaying knowledge” (180).

To address these differences and offer more effective workplace writing instruction, teachers try to design writing assignments that simulate “real-world” practices and engage non-academic, social, or workplace contexts and audiences. These assignments are variously referred to as context-rich, simulated, realistic, and authentic assignments. Freedman, Adam, and Smart, for instance, describe a financial analysis case study assignment that requires students to, literally and symbolically, wear suits to the classroom, which prepared students to adopt stances valued in the financial analysis workplace community (213). Blakesless proposes we use client projects as a transitional stage where students may interact with workplace representatives, experience meaningful exposure to workplace practices, and link their writing in the educational context to those used in the professional context.

What Have We Missed

Teaching *ENG 249 Technical and Professional Writing* at Illinois State, I was able to put the literature to use. As the majority of students taking this course are seniors or graduating seniors, I assigned them contextualized writing tasks to prepare them for the workplace. Although students found this orientation helpful and engaging, many of them were not satisfied with the assessment part of the class design. Besides the common complaints students have with the “subjectivity” of writing assessment, my students struggled for more reasons:

Coming from computer science or other technical programs, students were not used to formative writing process or assessment. Putting considerable efforts into a development draft as if preparing for a one-time test, they were easily discouraged with the formative grade.

Most students did not have prior training in technical writing and some of their earlier attempts were not satisfactory. These attempts, however, were formally graded based on set criteria, lowering their final course grades.

Writing about disciplinary or professional subjects, students were interested in and at times passionate about their work, which made it harder for them to accept assessment lower than their expectations.

As the instructor, I was not familiar with some of the subject matters students wrote about, which didn’t help when students doubted the fairness of the assessment.

Students’ struggle and suspicion convinced me the assessment methods of the class needed improvement. I may have implemented authentic tasks, but did I assess them in a way that is similarly realistic and contextualized? For example, is it true that each and every assignment is formally reviewed in the workplace? Or does workplace assessment involve only one primary reviewer as classroom assessment does—the teacher? As I am myself a practicing technical communicator in industry, it didn’t take me long to conclude on the difference between the assessment I enforce in the classroom and those I experience in the workplace—it is surprising how I have managed to overlook these differences all along:

- First, workplaces usually use style guides to document stylistic conventions and criteria of writing. All members of a work unit reference the guide and suggest changes or updates, whereas in a classroom, assessment criteria are often developed by the teacher or a group of teachers, and presented in a finalized form to the students.
- Second, workplace writing assessment typically involves more than one active party: the editor, the writer, the subject matter expert, the supervisor, the legal department, and sometimes even the middle and upper management, whereas in the classroom,

the primary reviewer and assessor is the instructor. Even when students are involved in peer reviews, they often do not participate in final evaluation.

- Third, workplace assessment tends to be longitudinal. Supervisors look at employee performance over a period of time rather than focusing on any particular assignments. Routine and low stakes tasks are also assessed less rigidly than special and high stakes writing tasks. But in a classroom, there usually is not a clear line between how low stakes and high stakes tasks are assessed—all works are to be immediately and formally assessed as they are completed.

How to Bridge These Differences: Authentic Assessment

To bridge these differences and more effectively teach workplace writing, I propose teachers use the concept of authentic assessment to integrate the best workplace and classroom assessment practices.

So what is authentic assessment and how might technical writing teachers use it as a framework to learn from workplaces? *Authentic assessment* is one particular form of *alternative assessment* (Some scholars also use the two concepts interchangeably): it “emphasizes the real-life context of alternative assessment tasks...requires the students to perform tasks with real-life applications or which represent authentic tasks of a discipline” (National Center for Research 2). In addition, Svinicki describes the following features that Wiggins concludes characteristic of authentic assessment:

It is contextually realistic and reflects the way information or skills are used in the real world

It involves complex problems that can be solved in more than one way and, thus, require learners to use judgment and innovation

It requires students to be engaged in active performance

It requires students to demonstrate a wide range of skills

It involves diagnostic feedback for learner improvement

As such, *authentic assessment* is a qualitatively defined concept; there is no master list of assessment methods that are deemed authentic and the rest unauthentic. Instead, many of our current classroom assessment practices, for instance, the use of peer reviews and portfolio assessment, can be re-focused to emphasize their authenticity. Using authentic

assessment also does not mean that we should duplicate workplace practices. Classrooms and workplace have different social functions and purposes, one is to facilitate learning and the other to realize economic production, so some of their practices will necessarily differ. The goal of using authentic assessment is then to design, with pedagogical purposes, assessment that aligns with workplace practices and “synchronizes” with contextualized assignments to reach our intended learning outcomes: teach students to write in the world of work.

Toward this goal, I propose the following authentic assessment methods. These methods, I believe, can not only be used in technical and professional writing classes such as the ENG 249 I teach, but also other classes that utilize writing as a means for students to learn disciplinary knowledge and prepare for professional careers beyond the university.

Student-Centered Assessment

Students work with professionals in their fields and fellow classmates to develop assessment criteria for writing projects. The instructor functions as a coordinator to ensure that the criteria are rigorous enough and understood by all. Actively involved in developing assessment tools, students will “see the quality standards as partly of their own devising,” and thus be “more ready to seek help in meeting them” (White 107). This method also reflects practices in professional workplaces where team members jointly develop and update style guides as writing criteria.

Collaborative Assessment

Professionals from students’ disciplinary areas and student peer groups can be involved as active parties in assessment. These parties, more informed than the writing instructor is on the subject matter of writing, can give feedbacks to intermediate drafts and help students revise, as well as give assessments to final drafts and help instructors make evaluation decisions. This method resembles the collaborative assessment used in professional workplaces.

Performance Reviews

As Bergland writes, most workplace organizations use some form of performance reviews to longitudinally evaluate employees (usually annually or semi-annually). Similar reviews can be used in a classroom. Throughout the semester when students turn in low stakes assignments, such as a small exercise, teachers

can review them and give feedback but do not assign formal grades. Instead, students are asked to re-submit all low stakes assignments completed to date at times of performance reviews (I recommend using two reviews, once at the mid-term and once during the final). Teachers can then assess students' progress over time and give more holistic assessments.

There are certainly other authentic assessment methods that can be developed and used for more effective workplace writing instruction. I hope the above can be a start and invite educators to conduct more researches and experiments.

References

- Beaufort, Anne. "Transferring Writing Knowledge to the Workplace, Are We on Track?" Expanding Literacies: English Teaching and the New Workplace. Ed. Garay and Bernhardt. NY: State University of New York Press, 1998. 179-200.
- Bergland, Bob. "Incorporating Performance Reviews into the Business Writing Classroom." Business Communication Quarterly 60.4 (1997): 52-62.
- Blakeslee, Ann. "Bridging the Workplace and the Academy: Teaching Professional Genres through Classroom-Workplace Collaborations." Technical Communication Quarterly 10.2 (2001): 169-92.
- Freedman, Aviva, Christine Adam, and Graham Smart. "Wearing Suits to Class: Simulating Genres and Simulations as Genre." Written Communication 11.2 (1994): 193-226.
- National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing. Alternative Assessments in Practice Database: User's Manual. UCLA Graduate School of Education. Retrieved: July 22, 2005. <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/CRESST/Sample/AAIP.PDF>.
- Svinicki, Marilla D. "Authentic Assessment: Testing in Reality." New Directions for Teaching and Learning 100 (winter 2004): 23-29.
- White, Edward M. Developing Successful College Writing Programs. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Han Yu is a Writing Instructor in the Department of English. She can be reached at hyu@ilstu.edu



NSSE/FSSE Comparison: Students and Faculty Offer Perspectives on ISU Experiences

Matt Fuller, UAO Assistant Director

For many years, ISU students have been participants in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, typically pronounced “nessie”). NSSE is one national tool used to gather information on students’ perceptions about their academic and co-curricular experience at ISU. In 2007 (ISU’s next administration of the NSSE survey), over 1 million college-goers are expected to participate in the survey.

In Spring 2006 ISU faculty participated in the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) course-based survey. This survey asked faculty to consider one of the courses they taught in the Spring of 2006 and respond to a survey which seeks to identify the extent to which *faculty* feel *students* are engaging in meaningful academic and co-curricular experiences. The UAO staff received the results from the FSSE 2006 administration last month and have been busy interpreting the data and making plans for dissemination and use of the data.

Besides establishing a baseline of data for faculty perspectives on student experiences at ISU, the FSSE results are compared to NSSE results in order to identify areas of difference between ISU faculty and students in terms of perceptions about students academic experiences. The FSSE was developed to mirror the

Quick Points

Ninety percent of lower division faculty and 93% of upper division faculty indicated that they structured their courses *very much* or *quite a bit* so that students develop their ability to think critically.

NSSE. Thus, the FSSE-NSSE comparison is one method to typify the perceptions and analyze collegiate expectations between two of the most important populations in academe: students and faculty. (For more information on NSSE and FSSE psychometrics, reliability, stability, validity, etc., see http://nsse.iub.edu/nsse_2002/faqspsych.cfm)

All full-time tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty (N=839) were surveyed. The average institutional response rate for institutions participating in the FSSE was 54% with the overall national response rate being

46%. Illinois State University achieved an institutional response rate of 51% (n=423). Assuming a 95% confidence interval, a response rate including 263 faculty was needed (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The number of faculty responses allows the UAO and ISU interpret this data as a fairly accurate global representation of ISU faculty perceptions about student engagement.; based upon full-time faculty. It should be noted that the sampling error for the FSSE was approximately 3.4% with a confidence interval of 95%

Quick Points

Eight one percent of freshmen and 86% of seniors indicated that their college experience contributed to their ability to think critically and analytically.

So where do ISU faculty perceive students to be highly engaged? Several areas of positive perception emerged from the faculty data. For instance, 87% of ISU’s faculty responded that it was *important* or *very important* for students to engage in some sort of “real world” application of disciplinary knowledge, such as a practicum, internship, field-experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment. Following this theme of application of knowledge, 90% of upper division faculty and 80% of lower division faculty revealed that they place *very much* or *quite a bit* of emphasis on student’s ability to “Apply theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations,” in their course structure. Students echo this sentiment. Seventy six percent of freshmen and eighty-one percent of seniors indicated that their classes *very much* or *quite a bit* emphasized the application of concepts in the real world (NSSE, 2005).

Likewise, 86% of lower division faculty and 89% of upper division faculty indicated that they spent *very much* or *quite a bit* of time preparing classes which would help students learn effectively on their own. Eight one percent of freshmen and 76% of seniors responding to the 2005 NSSE Survey indicated that their college experience contributed *very much* or *quite a bit* to their ability to learn under their own volition.

Another focus of the FSSE and NSSE surveys is to provide data on student and faculty perceptions about ISU’s support of five areas that NSSE calls Effective Educational Practices. While this area appeared to be a faculty-perceived area of overall strength for ISU, a few of the educational practices ISU

employs were especially emphasized by faculty. For instance, 76% of lower division and 77% of upper division faculty felt the institution emphasized *very much* or *quite a bit* providing students with the support they need to help them succeed academically. Relative to the overall student responses, students closely mirrored the faculty sentiments 68% of first year students and sixty-nine percent of seniors believed ISU *very much* or *quite a bit* emphasized its support of them in academic success.

The list of positive interpretations of the faculty and student comparative data is rather lengthy. However, some areas which warrant further discussion, based from the data, have emerged. UAO and Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT) staff are working together in planning major, semester-long programs which will focus an institutional conversation on the areas in which faculty and student perceptions about the ISU experience do not closely align, based upon the NSSE-FSSE Data of 2005&2006. A full presentation of the data from the FSSE 2006 and NSSE 2005 Comparison study is planned for the January 10th - Illinois State University Teaching and Learning Symposium.

The NSSE and FSSE comparisons is just one set of data in which the UAO identifies and uses to inform the

educational practices of ISU. This past summer all incoming students were given NSSE's newest "family" member; the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE; pronounced "Bessie"). This survey is again directly correlated to NSSE items and provides a baseline for input variables students bring with them as they begin their college experience at ISU. Data from this survey will be the foundation for a longitudinal study of ISU's impact on students from entry to graduation. Once BCSSE data is analyzed, and the next round of NSSE data is collected (Spring 2007), a comparative study will be done to help ISU articulate the impact it is having on students, particularly in their first college year. In addition, this same cohort of students will be asked to participate in NSSE 2010 to capture a longitudinal perspective. The approach UAO is forming should allow the ISU community the opportunity to view the "average ISU Redbird's" collegiate experience with clear and crisp empirical data within the next few academic semesters. Faculty support of this effort, particularly in the form of encouraging survey participation, has been a strong and vital aspect to the success of the UAO's program for surveying student engagement thus far.

References

Krejcie, R.V. & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational & Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607-610.

Political Engagement Project (PEP)

Suzanne Bell, PEP Initiative G.A.

ISU was selected as one of only eight other institutions to take part in the Political Engagement Project, an initiative of the American Democracy Project. The Political Engagement, or PEP, was created to encourage students to gain an interest in politics both inside and out of the classroom.

During the Fall 2006 semester, there are three groups of courses that have been identified for PEP affiliation. Freshmen enrolled in Communications 110 are focusing on how to be more effective political communicators while gaining an overall knowledge of different political processes. Freshmen students who are enrolled in First Year LinC are introduced to political engagement through various class assignments and guest speakers. They also learn to make the connection between their chosen majors and different civic engagement activities. A variety of courses in the Individuals and Civic Life, a middle core category, are also focusing on thoughtful ways to enhance political engagement in the curriculum.

Aside from the in class activities, members of the PEP Coordinating Team helped to organize ISU's Constitution Day in September and have also assisted with the ADP's Voter Initiative project. PEP is also working to establish curricular and co-curricular learning outcomes for second, third and fourth year students, as well as working with the Student Government Association to develop a plan that will help support PEP's goals through different student organizations.

The PEP Coordinating Team includes:

Coordinator – Associate Provost, Dr. Jan Shane, PEP Carnegie Fellows – Dr. Steven Hunt (Communications) and Dr. Robert Bradley (Politics and Government), Director of the University Assessment Office – Dr. Mardell Wilson, Special Projects Coordinator for the Provost's Office – Ms. Danielle Lindsey, Associate Director of University College – Dr. Carlye Kalianov, Coordinator for Library Instruction and Information Literacy – Mr. Chad Kahl, Daily Vidette Representative – Ms. Suzanne Bell, and Student Government Association Representative – Mr. David McCoy.

StudentVoice

Matt Fuller, Assistant Director

Faculty and staff at Illinois State University have access to a new tool to support their assessment efforts and projects. The University Assessment Office, the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and Academic Services have made available a new tool, StudentVoice, which has a well-known national reputation for supporting higher education assessment and surveying initiatives. As an ISU faculty or staff member, you have access to this web-based program to use in implementing your assessment ideas and collecting data.

StudentVoice is a Buffalo, New York-based company which grew out of higher education's needs for easy-to-implement assessment practices and real-time reports. As an ISU faculty or staff member, you can work with the UAO staff to determine if your project compliments the assessment efforts of Illinois State University and the services provided by StudentVoice.

There are several administration options available. You may decide to rconduct a web survey or perhaps use PDA's maintained by the UAO to incorporate a respondent friendly, time-specific survey. StudentVoice makes

implementing your assessment ideas easy and practical. You can decide the degree of involvement the StudentVoice team will take in your project. StudentVoice staff members will also be glad to send out invitation and reminder e-mails for your survey or you can do this crucial step on you own. Throughout the entire process of developing your tool, StudentVoice and UAO Staff will support you in crafting the best possible tool to meet your needs and the needs of your constituents.

However, implementation of surveys and assessment tools is not all that StudentVoice offers. The Student Voice website offers a wide array of analysis capabilities. These basic analysis tools are easily navigated on the StudentVoice webpage. However, if you'd like to conduct more advanced analysis of your data, you have the option of exporting the data into an MS Excel file which you can use to propagate nearly any data file of your choice.

If StudentVoice could help you, your department/school, or college facilitate an assessment project contact the UAO today!



University Teaching and Learning Symposium

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

DoubleTree Conference Center

Bloomington, IL

8:00a.m.- 4:15p.m.~ Reception to Follow

Course Grading Is Not An Assessment Tool:But Your Grade Book Provides Data for Embedded Assessment

Joseph Trefzger, Professor of Finance, Kenneth Newgren, Professor of Management, College of Business

When the word *assessment* arises in collegiate hallway discussions, a response sometimes heard is, "I already assess; my course grades show that students are learning." Good grades, however, do not always reflect students' achievement of the desired learning outcomes of a course or program. The proverbial "easy grader" with a grading scale that emphasizes class attendance, slick presentations, or group projects, often allows the blissfully unenlightened to hide and escape the GPA consequences of their scholarly shortcomings. Such cases provide obvious examples of why grading does not always assess students' grasp of the most important material in a course or a program of study. Yet even some who grade with care, and reward only academic rigor, may be lulled into thinking their grading effort provides an assessment of learning in key areas, when in fact it does not.

The scenario. Consider a hypothetical standard MBA Finance course, with 26 students enrolled. Each enrollee's semester letter grade is determined in large part (perhaps entirely) by the score earned on a comprehensive final. The test has five questions that are equally-weighted for grading purposes: 20 points each, 100 points total. The open-ended exam format allows for answers reflecting various levels of depth and breadth in understanding, on a range of topics covered over the preceding fifteen weeks. Topics broadly covered in the questions are financial ratio analysis, weighted average cost of capital (WACC), net present value (NPV), common stock markets and valuation, and bond markets and valuation. All five questions address important financial topics, but the professor was especially diligent in crafting the NPV and bond questions. Not only are the issues covered in these two questions deemed especially important for MBA students to understand, the professor reasons, but these questions further can be seen as reflecting deep financial understanding and reasoning ability, while the other questions on the exam have greater elements of memorization. In addition, NPV and bonds are given considerable class time in prerequisite foundation-level course work in the program, such that the professor believes students should leave the MBA course with a thorough understanding of these topics.

The professor grades carefully, and in fact is so miserly with points in places that it seems appropriate to curve the final grades on a scale of 87 = A, 75 = B, 62 = C, 50 = D, and below 50 = F. Grade book results appear as follows in Table 1:

TABLE 1

Student	20-Point	20-	20-	20-	20-	Total	Grade
	Ratios	Point	Point	Point	Point		
	Problem	Problem	Problem	Problem	Problem	100	
Attaway	15	18	19	14	20	86	B
Bakir	17	12	16	17	13	75	B
Craig	19	20	20	18	20	97	A
Dumler	20	20	20	20	19	99	A
Edwards	10	14	16	15	17	72	C
Flanigan	15	18	18	12	11	74	C
Graf	16	14	19	20	12	81	B
Hemmasi	19	15	12	18	17	81	B
Ivey	16	17	13	18	12	76	B
Joaquin	17	19	18	20	13	87	A
Kang	19	17	15	19	18	88	A
Long-fellow	14	17	16	17	13	77	B
Miles	16	19	18	14	16	83	B
Norton	19	20	18	20	20	97	A
Ostrosky	12	15	16	18	16	77	B
Palmer	6	10	16	9	12	53	D
Quane	20	18	17	18	18	91	A
Ringer	9	15	18	12	10	64	C
Showers	15	15	14	13	18	75	B
Taylor	17	19	16	19	17	88	A
Urice	20	15	16	15	13	79	B
Varner	15	14	11	13	13	66	C
Walstrom	18	16	17	19	13	83	B
Xiang	19	17	13	20	19	88	A
Yoder	17	15	16	16	13	77	B
Zintam-bila	20	19	18	19	12	88	A

Letter grade totals are nine *As*, twelve *Bs*, four *Cs*, one *D*, and no *Fs*, for a class grade point average of 3.115 on a four-point scale. The professor is encouraged that the vast majority, approximately 81% (21 out of 26), of students have shown *A* or *B* level performance, and concludes that learning has been substantiated. After all, demonstrated knowledge was the only basis for the awarding of examination points.

Yet how much understanding did the class overall have on the important NPV and bond topics? The professor believes that, based on the nature and difficulty of the questions, an acceptable level of comprehension should correspond to the awarding of at least 70% of the possible points, or 14 out of 20, for a student's answer to the attendant question. A further belief this individual holds is that at least 80% of the students in a successful program should demonstrate this level of knowledge. The grade book shows that more than 80% of the students earned good grades. But in fact, as shown below, a favorable grade in the class may not indicate sufficient understanding of the most important material.

The assessment. We can see this contradiction by using the grade book as a tool for *course-embedded assessment*. As opposed to such *add-on* assessment tools as standardized exams, which require assessment through activities unrelated to the course itself, embedded assessment tools make use of information generated through the ordinary administration of the course. How can this professor's grade book, which has failed to assess the attainment of key learning goals in the grading process, nonetheless be used effectively as a tool for assessing learning? An adage that has been adopted by assessment specialists in connection with embedded assessment is "add across the grade book to grade, add down to assess." Consider an examination of the grade book's columns (topics), rather than its rows (students), focusing on the NPV and bond problems that relate to the key learning goals. Each score that meets or exceeds the 14-points-out-of-20 standard is denoted with an underline. When we add (actually, tally) down, tracking the underlined scores, we find the following results (Table 2).

It turns out that the class overall has, indeed, shown an impressive grasp of the net present value topic. Twenty-two of the enrolled students, constituting almost 85% of the class, have shown acceptable understanding on the NPV question. Yet understanding in this key area does not directly correspond to the assigned course grades. For example, the class overall showed strength in NPV, and student

Edwards, with an unremarkable *C* grade in the course, actually demonstrated strong knowledge on both the NPV and bond topics. Yet *A* student Xiang did not show mastery of the NPV concept, unlike even most of those who did not earn *A* grades, while student Ivey managed a *B* in the class even though measured knowledge in both key areas falls below the 70% standard that the instructor has judged to be appropriate.

Of more concern is the bond question, on which only thirteen students, or half of the class, has met the 70% standard that this professor considers an indicator of minimally acceptable knowledge. Our colleague must face the difficult realization that while the vast majority of the students have earned *A* or *B* grades, only half of those enrolled are able to show, according to the professor's own chosen metric, knowledge in one of the most critical areas. A class full of Edwards-type students would actually give a professor doing embedded assessment cause for celebration, in that even those who did not master enough ancillary details to earn high grades would have demonstrated acceptable knowledge in the most important areas. A class full of Ivey and Xiang-type students would lead our assessing colleague to reach for the ice bag or ibuprofen, based on the embedded assessment activity's resulting evidence that students could show superior grade performance while lacking understanding of key areas of knowledge. The grading system might seem to suggest that the class has achieved desired learning goals, but embedded assessment – a superbly inexpensive tool that provides a record of performance over time and is based on the professor's own chosen performance measures – would offer strong evidence that it has not.

Closing the loop. The lack of demonstrated understanding should not automatically lead one to conclude a lack of quality in the professor's teaching, creation of assignments, or selection of learning materials. Assessment is, at its best, a means of gauging effectiveness of a program, not of a course or instructor. In this case we have evidence that the *program* is not delivering what it purports to be doing. Students' failure to show sufficient understanding in key knowledge areas at an important juncture in the program may reflect poor preparation in foundation course work, or in other course work over the student's academic career, that was expected to provide a solid basis for learning and thinking. The total curriculum of the program and its requirements need to be examined. The assessment exercise's identification of a weakness is only the first step toward isolating the cause of the weakness and

TABLE 2

<u>Student</u>	<u>20-Point Ratios Problem</u>	<u>20-Point WACC Problem</u>	<u>20-Point NPV Problem</u>	<u>20-Point Stock Problem</u>	<u>20-Point Bond Problem</u>	<u>Total Out of 100</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>NPV Mastery</u>	<u>Bond Mastery</u>
Attaway	15	18	<u>19</u>	14	<u>20</u>	86	B	Yes	Yes
Bakir	17	12	<u>16</u>	17	13	75	B	Yes	
Craig	19	20	<u>20</u>	18	<u>20</u>	97	A	Yes	Yes
Dumler	20	20	<u>20</u>	20	<u>19</u>	99	A	Yes	Yes
Edwards	10	14	<u>16</u>	15	<u>17</u>	72	C	Yes	Yes
Flanigan	15	18	<u>18</u>	12	11	74	C	Yes	
Graf	16	14	<u>19</u>	20	12	81	B	Yes	
Hemmasi	19	15	12	18	<u>17</u>	81	B		Yes
Ivey	16	17	13	18	12	76	B		
Joaquin	17	19	<u>18</u>	20	13	87	A	Yes	
Kang	19	17	<u>15</u>	19	<u>18</u>	88	A	Yes	Yes
Longfellow	14	17	<u>16</u>	17	13	77	B	Yes	
Miles	16	19	<u>18</u>	14	<u>16</u>	83	B	Yes	Yes
Norton	19	20	<u>18</u>	20	<u>20</u>	97	A	Yes	Yes
Ostrosky	12	15	<u>16</u>	18	<u>16</u>	77	B	Yes	Yes
Palmer	6	10	<u>16</u>	9	12	53	D	Yes	
Quane	20	18	<u>17</u>	18	<u>18</u>	91	A	Yes	Yes
Ringer	9	15	<u>18</u>	12	10	64	C	Yes	
Showers	15	15	<u>14</u>	13	<u>18</u>	75	B	Yes	Yes
Taylor	17	19	<u>16</u>	19	<u>17</u>	88	A	Yes	Yes
Urice	20	15	<u>16</u>	15	13	79	B	Yes	
Varner	15	14	11	13	13	66	C		
Walstrom	18	16	<u>17</u>	19	13	83	B	Yes	
Xiang	19	17	13	20	<u>19</u>	88	A		Yes
Yoder	17	15	<u>16</u>	16	13	77	B	Yes	
Zintambila	20	19	<u>18</u>	19	12	88	A	Yes	
Meet/exceed expectation:	Number	22			13				
	Percentage	84.62%			50.00%				

step toward isolating the cause of the weakness and developing a plan for improvement, be it within the program or through the strengthening of prerequisite requirements.

References

Ewell, Peter, "The Learning Curve," *BizEd*, July/August 2003, 28 – 33.



University Assessment Office

Instructional Technology Development
Center (ITDC) Room 122
Campus Box 2500
301 S. Main St.
Normal, IL 61790-2500

Phone: (309) 438-2135
Fax: (309) 438-8788
Email: UAO@ilstu.edu



UAO Staff

Back Row (L to R): Shanell Jones (Marketing & Promotions Graduate Assistant), Nadia Wendlandt (FOCUS Initiatives Graduate Assistant), Dr. Mardell Wilson (Director), Radhika Gopi (Technical Graduate Assistant) Front Row: Matt Fuller (Assistant Director) and Chris Jackson (Staff Clerk)

Visit us on the Web:

<http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu>



Assessment Related Conferences/ Workshops

13th National Conference on Students in Transition

Call for Papers - Deadline August 28, 2006

November 3-5, 2006
St. Louis, MO

AACU 93rd Annual Meeting

The Real Test: Liberal Education & Democracy's Big Questions

Pre-Meeting Symposium: January 17, 2006
January 17-20, 2007
New Orleans, LA

General Education and Assessment Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Thinking Conference

March 1-3, 2007
Miami, FL

7th Annual Assessment Conference Building Assessment Capacity: Foundation to Fruition

February 22-23, 2007
College Station, TX

The Higher Learning Commission Leading for the Common Good

Call for Proposals: Due by October 16, 2006

April 20-24, 2007
Chicago, IL