

ASSESSMENT UPDATE

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Important Dates

- Departmental Reports due to CASA by **July 1, 2002**. See www.eiu.edu/~assess for the forms.
- **June 20-23, 2002** AAHE Assessment Forum in Boston.

EWP Reminder

Many students in writing-centered or writing-intensive courses should be submitting documents to the EWP. Please announce this to your classes. Documents should be submitted to 3001 Ninth St. Hall, M-F 8:00 a.m.-noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. Questions? Call 581-8384 or check www.eiu.edu/~assess for form and submission details.

ASSESSMENT FORUM—A BIG SUCCESS

In February CASL sponsored an Assessment Forum: “Tools, Techniques, and Tips for Academic Assessment at the Department Level,” presented by Dr. Cheryl Davis Bullock, Head of the Division of Measurement and Evaluation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Chris Migotsky, Associate Head of Measurement and Evaluation, UIUC.

Forum evaluations indicated that the workshop was a success as 96% of the participants believed the presented information would be useful in improving academic assessment in their departments.

The presenters took turns leading participants through topics such as

formulating and evaluating objectives, choosing instruments, developing and using surveys, designing and conducting focus groups, and creating and using departmental portfolios.

Group activities were interspersed throughout the workshop to allow participants to discuss and apply the techniques

presented.

Bullock suggested that objectives should include cognitive goals, subject matter objectives, skill objectives, and affective objectives. She encouraged the audience to “know what you want to measure and then find the measurements” while warning her listeners to be

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Forum participants share ideas in small group activity.

NEW CRITICAL THINKING EXAM APPROVED

Eastern’s senior seminar faculty have been administering the *Tasks in Critical Thinking Exam* since Summer 2001 in all three-hour senior seminars. Senior

seminars, in fact, were expanded to three credit hours in order to accommodate such assessment activities.

Recently, the Educational Testing

Service alerted Eastern to its intent to discontinue this exam. In response to this news, CASL decided to begin administration of the *Watson-Glaser Critical*

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FORUM, A BIG SUCCESS CONT.

careful to ascertain that standardized instruments are measuring what you want to assess.

Bullock and Migotsky offered examples of using multiple methods to assess departmental goals, and gave tips on designing survey questions and formulating focus groups. Migotsky stressed the importance of choosing a small group in a social setting for an effective focus group.

Following the workshop, deans,

chairs, and assessment coordinators were invited to a lunch talk on using assessment results.

Bullock noted that assessment activities should be a collaboration among all campus constituencies and reiterated that assessment is a cyclical activity played out through discussing assessment, planning for use of data, establishing a feedback loop, and supporting assessment committees and task forces.

Participants of the forum were asked to indicate their interest in a one-on-one discussion with Bullock, who returned on March 28-29 to meet with representatives of several departments concerning departmental assessment plans.

The power point slides for the February workshop are available at www.eiu.edu/~assess.

CRITICAL THINKING EXAM CONT.

Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA). The Provost supported this change, and CAA approved this exam on March 21, 2002.

The Watson-Glaser is composed of scenarios that pose both neutral and controversial content allowing the appraisal to test critical thinking with objective and subjective content. At 30 minutes, the exam takes less time to administer, thus allowing extra time for course instruction/discussion.

Another benefit to the Watson-Glaser is that it can be scored at Eastern through the Office of Academic Assessment and Testing. Students' scores will be sent to their senior seminar faculty for dissemination in

class approximately one week after the answer sheets are returned to Ninth Street Hall.

The appraisal is composed of 16 scenarios with 40 questions; students complete a scantron form answering questions related to the scenarios. These 40 items are organized by five subtests:

Inference (discriminating among degrees of truth or falsity of inferences drawn from data)

Recognition of Assumptions (recognizing unstated assumptions or presuppositions in given statements or assertions)

Deduction (determining whether certain conclusions

follow from information in given statements or premises)

Interpretation (weighing evidence and deciding whether generalizations or conclusions are warranted)

Evaluation of Arguments (distinguishing between arguments that are strong and relevant and those that are weak or irrelevant to a particular issue)

With the approval of the Watson-Glaser, Eastern's assessment of students' critical thinking skills will continue uninterrupted. This exam will provide vital information concerning student achievement of this General Education Goal.

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Along with four colleagues, **Janet R. Cosbey**, associate professor of Sociology/Anthropology, has recently published an article titled "Improving the Assessment of Student Learning: Advancing a Research Agenda in Sociology" in *Teaching Sociology* (Jan. 2002). The authors discuss the "evolution of assessment" in sociology and pose questions for further research to "enhance understanding of the context, content, process, and effects of assessment."

Olivet I. W. Jagusah, assistant professor, Secondary Education and Foundations, will be delivering a presentation, "Formative Assessment across Course Content: From Teaching to Learning," at the CAPS conference in May.

If you have an assessment activity/publication to announce, please email Karla Sanders at cskjs@eiu.edu.