



ASSESSMENT UPDATE

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Assessment website:
www.eiu.edu/~assess

Important Dates

- Departmental Reports due to CASA by **July 1, 2003**. See www.eiu.edu/~assess for the forms and <http://www.eiu.edu/~acaffair/MAP/> for previous years' reports and responses
- **April 13-16, 2003** North Central Association annual meeting in Chicago.
- **April 4, 2003** IBHE-sponsored meeting on Critical Thinking and General Education in Chicago.

A REPORT ON THE CRITICAL THINKING ASSESSMENT FORUM

The January Assessment Forum, "Fostering and Assessing Students' Cognitive Skills," was deemed a success by participants. Ninety percent of attendees said the information presented would be useful in improving their teaching while 63% said the information would be useful in improving academic assessment in their department.

As a follow-up to the January Assessment Forum, Dr. Ruth Green, our invited workshop leader, provided CASL with a report on her observations concerning the state of assessment activities at Eastern.

Dr. Green stated that Eastern has a clear definition and statement of skills (outcomes) for cognitive development. She also offered that the Plan for Assessing General Education is well-developed and conceptualized. She observed that many workshop participants were aware of the critical thinking

definition and were familiar with the assessment plan.

She noted pockets of activity (University Foundations and the Philosophy Department) in which individual courses/curricula can contribute to student development of cognitive skills.

In her work with Eastern, Dr. Green also witnessed strong support from the administration for strengthening the development of student skills and the assessment effort. She noted that the Center for Academic Support and Achievement and the Office of Academic Assessment and Testing have staff who are knowledgeable about assessment and have initiated activities to increase knowledge and activity in this area.

While Dr. Green's report on the assessment of critical thinking skills at Eastern was largely positive, she also

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CASL AT WORK

In our first newsletter of Fall 2002, CASL shared its goals for this academic year. Since we are nearing the end of the spring semester, we thought our readers would be interested to learn of our progress. A formal annual report will be available on-line early in the fall semester.

At the October 24, 2002 CAA meeting the speaking assessment proposal was passed unanimously. Since that time a Speaking Across the Curriculum Subcommittee of CASL has been working on the issues presented in that proposal.

Subcommittee members are Andrew Methven, Janet Cosbey, Karla Sanders, Mary Hogg, Sherry Holladay, and Gail Mason. Presently, the subcommittee is gathering information concerning speaking activities in the senior seminars via a survey sent to senior seminar faculty. The subcommittee is also discussing how to gather speaking assessment data in Speech 1310G using primary trait analysis.

Another priority for this academic year has been the continued development of a

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A REPORT CONT.

offered several suggestions for the University to consider as we continue in this endeavor.

Dr. Green advised that we broaden and deepen the conversation around Eastern's goals for student development of cognitive skills. This could be accomplished through sharing the definition with students in class, including definitions and expectations in University publications (catalog, syllabi), and adopting and sharing a model for critical thinking across courses.

Eastern could also encourage program/department-level activities to

increase the intentionality and impact of critical thinking. Dr. Green suggested Eastern work systematically through first-year and senior seminar professors to explicitly emphasize cognitive goals. This could be accomplished through providing students with an explicit definition of cognitive skills, creating assignments to promote the development of skills, adopting a model for cognitive skills to be shared across sections, developing rubrics and common terminology to use across assignments and/or courses.

Action on some of these ideas began in February when the Provost invited members of CASL to join a panel at the Senior Seminar faculty meeting where critical thinking and its assessment was a topic of conversation. We hope to continue this dialogue in coming semesters.

Eastern faculty will also be attending the IBHE-sponsored General Education Assessment workshops in March and April. Both workshops are devoted to the topic of critical thinking.

IN THE WORKS CONT.

survey to assess the responsible global citizenship goal. A subcommittee of CASL consisting of Noelle Greathouse, Karla Sanders, Janet Cosbey, and Mary Hogg refined the freshman survey originally drafted by Ron Wohlstein. This survey will be given to incoming freshmen in June 2003 at orientation. An accompanying senior seminar survey has been developed as well. CASL hopes to

begin gathering senior seminar data in AY04.

We continue to collect documents from students through the Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP). The number of writing intensive courses and seats has risen since the program's inception. In Fall 2001 there were 6,992 seats offered in WI courses, and in Spring 2003 there are 9,278 seats (these numbers

exclude Eng 1001G and 1002G). This increase is important for assuring that students can take WI courses to meet the EWP requirement.

Beginning with Spring 2003, the data on students' majors will be gathered with the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. Results by major will be routinely sent to departments for their use.

ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Drs. **Mary Hogg** and **Christine Helsel**, Speech Communication, recently presented a paper entitled "Communication in Action: Speaking Labs Germinate New Ground for Assessment" at the National Communication Association National Convention in New Orleans, LA. Drs. Hogg and Helsel collected information that will serve CASL well as we further examine the speaking effectively goal of General Education.

Information about our EIU assessment plan including

where we stand in our assessment efforts in writing, speaking, critical thinking and global citizenship was also presented. After the panel, people were standing in line to congratulate EIU for being so far along in assessment efforts. "It was very rewarding to know that EIU is farther ahead than many college campuses," Hogg said. "It is certainly very timely to be researching and writing in the area of assessment as scholarship!!"

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