



# ASSESSMENT UPDATE

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## CASL Members & Areas of Representation

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<http://www.eiu.edu/~assess>

## ASSESSMENT AIDED BY TECHNOLOGY

Increasingly departments are turning to technology as a way to simplify assessment tasks, such as data collection and reporting. Several departments have worked with the Center for Academic Technology Support in order to create systems that meet the special needs of their programs. We have highlighted the work of two of those departments.

Communication Disorders and Sciences (CDS) employs an on-line database to rate students in each course in relation to the departmental learning objectives. Faculty enter information at the end of each term as they figure grades. This formative assessment is used to determine how the department is meeting its goals.

Dr. Gail Richard, Chair of CDS, explained that Danny Harvey in CATS worked with faculty in her department to create "a system congruent with our accreditation standards."

Dr. Richard notes that faculty in her department appreciate the system because it allows them "to access data to guide decisions rather than relying on opinions or impressions that can't always be substantiated."

Family and Consumer Sciences' Dietetics concentration also employs technology to aid with assessment tasks. Students in this concentration use Open Mind software to create their Dietetic Intern Portfolio, which is organized around the program's learning objectives. This portfolio

## ASSESSMENT DATA AVAILABLE ON-LINE

The Center for Academic Support and Achievement maintains a web site ([www.eiu.edu/~assess](http://www.eiu.edu/~assess)) dealing with all matters related to assessment.

Annually, each program—major and minor, graduate and undergraduate—submits reports to CASA on their assessment plans. In addition to these plans, the Director also prepares reports on the graduate and undergraduate plans to track the progress of the assessment efforts on our campus. All of these plans as well as the Director's responses to such

plans and the reports are available on the assessment web site.

Data and reports related to the undergraduate learning goals are also available on-line. At the EWP portion of the web site, instructions for faculty and students concerning the new submission procedures are available. Also, this site offers the full and executive reports of the readings conducted over the last three years as well as annual data on the number of WI and WC courses as well as the formative data collected on individual

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also allows students to complete a self-assessment on their progress through the program.

According to Dr. Karla Kennedy-Hagen, Assistant Chair of FCS, "there is a value-added effect for my assessment program. Portfolios arrive on a CD or thumb drive. Thus, we

eliminate manipulation of a 3-inch, 3-ring binder, save multiple trees each year, save students time and money to create the hard copy portfolios, yet [the portfolios] provide me with the assessment data that is needed for program review."

In addition to their portfolios, this

department also uses the internet to collect survey data from alums and employers. "Both are accessible online, providing 24/7 access."

Additional information on departments employing technology for assessment purposes will be given in the next CATS newsletter.

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submissions. Quantitative as well as qualitative data are given for the portfolio readings. Over the last three years, 26-28% of portfolios were deemed strong by readers whereas 53-58% were judged to be adequate while 17-21% of completed portfolios were considered weak. Students' use of mechanics were deemed the strongest skill while style was the most problematic.

Similar data are available on the speaking portion of the site for the freshman and senior speeches. Reports comparing several years worth of holistic scores at each level are offered. In 2005 28% of freshmen in CMN 1310G were rated as highly competent speakers by their faculty; in 2008 52% of seniors were assessed as being highly competent speakers by senior seminar faculty. Forty-one percent of freshmen were competent while 50% of seniors were at this level, and only 4% of seniors were deemed to be minimally competent while 18% of freshmen were at this level. These numbers indicate that our students' speaking skills are growing over the course of their time at Eastern.

This site also gives students and faculty examples of speeches that epitomize the ratings on the rubric., so students and faculty can view students giving parts of speeches at particular levels to help them understand the

rubric and to anchor the faculty evaluators.

The global citizenship goal is currently assessed through an internally developed survey that is administered to freshmen at orientation and to seniors as part of the senior seminar courses. A report comparing the 2004 freshmen with the 2008 seniors can be found online in addition to freshman to freshman and senior to senior comparisons. Twenty-three percent of freshmen in 2004 strongly agreed that they felt confident in their abilities while 75% of seniors strongly agreed for a 52% increase.

Critical thinking is the last undergraduate goal, and this goal is assessed through the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, which is a norm-referenced instrument. Data have been collected from this instrument since Summer 2002, and the composite scores for each semester are available in the critical thinking data section of the web site. This instrument is administered in senior seminar courses. The highest possible score is 40, and Eastern's average composite ranges from 24.78 (SU06) to 27.09 (SU03).

Along with the data collected on students' attainment of the undergraduate learning goals, the web site offers several years' worth of

reports on the alumni survey. The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) requires each public university to survey its alumni one year, 5 years, and 9 years from graduation in a 3-year cycle. Data for the 2008 (5 years out) survey are still being analyzed, but reports are available from 2002-2007.

These reports cover the qualitative data gathered from former students answering the following two questions: What had the most positive impact on your time at Eastern, and what had the most negative impact on your time at Eastern?

Overwhelmingly, from year to year, former students indicate that their relationships with their faculty had the most positive impact on their time at Eastern, "The high level of interaction with my instructors had a very positive impact on me. In almost every class, the instructor knew students individually and gave one-on-one help. Instructors were also accessible outside the classroom, and most seemed to care about teaching rather than just their research interests" (2006 graduate).

Additional comments and data on the categories into which the comments fell can be found on the assessment web site.