



ASSESSMENT UPDATE

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CASL Members & Areas of Representation

John Best, Provost's Appointee,
Critical Thinking

Michael Cornebise, Chair, College
of Sciences

Mary Herrington-Perry,
Academic Affairs

Melissa Jones,
College of Education &
Professional Studies

Richard Jones, Provost's Appointee,
Speaking

Danelle Larson, College of Arts &
Humanities

Simon Lee, Lumpkin College of
Business & Applied Sciences

Debra Reid, Provost's Appointee,
Global Citizenship

Karla Sanders, Center for
Academic Support &
Assessment

Tim Taylor, Writing Across the
Curriculum Committee

Rebecca Throneburg, Council on
Academic Affairs

Richard Wilkinson, Provost's
Appointee

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

2012-13 EWP READINGS REPORT AVAILABLE

In March 2013, EWP readers completed the 8th reading of the Electronic Writing Portfolios. Seventeen readers from all four academic colleges read 233 completed portfolios that encompassed 697 papers.

Readers completed review sheets for each portfolio and then participated in one of three focus groups to discuss what was observed from this sample of student work across the curriculum.

Overall, readers stated that traditional papers with a beginning, supporting analysis, and conclusions were in the minority in favor of more reflections and summaries of books, articles, and movies.

Development remained the most problematic area of the writing skills, and this trait is most closely aligned with

critical thinking on the readers' review sheets. Only 21% of portfolios were deemed strong in this area (ideas consistently developed in depth and supported with rich and relevant details) with 47% adequate, 30% weak, and 2% poor. These scores indicate that a third of our completed portfolios had either some or very little development of ideas or use of supporting evidence.

Readers noted a connection between lack of development and paper length. "Development is going to suffer if there isn't any length. I know some people disagreed with that, but I think if you don't have a sufficiently long paper, you aren't going to develop those ideas. . . There's no criticism, no support, defense

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NCA SELF-STUDY UNDERWAY

In February 2005, the NCA site team visited Eastern for its 10-year regional re-accreditation process, and in October 2014, a team will be back for our next 10-year accreditation. In order to prepare for this visit, a self-study will be prepared that speaks to the criteria outlined by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

In his letter of appointment to the self-study team, President Perry outlined the importance of accreditation. "Accreditation insures that Eastern has access to resources essential to conducting the business of an institution of higher

education. As important, the self-study process offers a critical opportunity to engage the campus in a systematic self-examination of our education activities."

The self-study team will be co-chaired by Dean Robert Augustine and Dr. Jeffrey Stowell with Dr. Mary Herrington-Perry making up the third member of the executive committee.

Robert Augustine underscored the opportunity afforded by the self-study process, "Historically, Eastern has used its 10-year re-accreditation cycle to self-

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AWARDS CONT.

or evaluation,” said one reader in the focus groups.

Style was the other trait that showed problems with only 15% of portfolios rated as strong, 60% adequate, 24% weak, and 1% poor. One reader asked, “I wonder if they are exposed to styles of writing through courses. We need to emphasize that you can frame your style in different ways: scientific style, informational. Do we teach a variety of different styles?”

In past years, students’ ability to sustain a sense of focus or purpose was one of the stronger elements of writing. This year while that element remained strong the percentage of portfolios that were strong in this area dropped to 24% from a high of 32% the previous year. Readers observed that many papers began *in media res* and never let the audience in on what was trying to be accomplished.

The percentage of portfolios rated as strong for organizational skills dropped from 25% to 22% with 62% of the portfolios in the adequate category for this

trait. “There was no cohesion between different points. To get into that transition, you have to summarize, define, and demonstrate, but there would be no lead-in to the next point,” commented an EWP reader.

Audience awareness dropped to 21% in the strong category from a high of 25% the previous year; 30% were deemed weak, an increase of 5% from the previous year. Readers noted that few papers indicated any audience beyond the professor who had made the assignment.

The percentage of portfolios rated as strong for mechanics went to 28% from 25% the previous year, and only 17% were deemed weak/poor.

Readers are asked if portfolios have at least one submission that shows their ability to use sources. This year 90% of portfolios included at least one paper citing sources, and 35% of these were rated as strong in their use of sources with only 13% deemed weak. Students have the tendency to allow quotes to

speak for their points without placing them in context or providing an introduction. “They don’t necessarily set it up, and they almost never explain the quote. They let the quote do their work as writers.”

Readers also discussed ways to improve writing across the curriculum. “I think [in the sciences] we have been content driven, and now we have to have some of the grade being about the expression and writing context as well.” Several readers concurred and one added, “I’d focus on the fundamentals of framing your writing: a clear introduction, clear transitions, supporting sources for your opinions. Only a few portfolios evidenced finesse.”

Readers felt the faculty needed help in crafting writing assignments, “The assignments may not have a clear sense of purpose or audience, which would make it unlikely that the students’ work would.”

The full readers’ report is available on the assessment website under the Electronic Writing Portfolio section.

ASSESSMENT INSTITUTE CONT.

evaluate its mission, vision, and values and develop a clear and focused plan for preserving and strengthening core values while addressing areas that are identified as important to enhancing the institutional mission. We hope to engage the entire campus and community in the self-study process and create a well-focused outline of strengths and enhancements.”

President Perry and the Provost Lord have appointed a team of faculty, administrators, and students to write the self-study report.

The site team will evaluate Eastern based on a set of five criteria. The **first criterion is mission**, and this team will be co-chaired by Dr. Terri Frederick from the English Department and Dr. Jennifer Sipes from the Vice President for Student Affairs office.

The **second criterion is integrity** (ethical and responsible conduct); this team will be lead by Dr. Marshall Lassack of the

Mathematics and Computer Science Department and Ms. Linda Holloway representing the Vice President for Business Affairs.

Criterion three and criterion four both involve **teaching and learning**. Criterion three covers quality, resources, and support of the teaching and learning process; this team will be lead by Dr. Michael Mulvaney from Recreation Administration and Dr. Bonnie Irwin, Dean of Arts and Humanities. Criterion four focuses on the evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning; Dr. Rebecca Throneburg from Communication Disorders and Sciences along with Dr. Karla Sanders of the Center for Academic Support and Assessment will co-chair this team.

The **final criterion** involves **resources, planning, and institutional effectiveness**; this team will have Dr. Michael Dobbs from the School of

Business and Mr. Michael Mauer, representing the Vice President for Business Affairs.

Jeffrey Stowell, co-chair, noted, “The self-study team is composed of energetic individuals selected from a broad range of campus constituents. The campus community can expect them to work hard with faculty and staff members to gather accurate information about the strengths and weaknesses of EIU. We look forward to having a dynamic self-study team that will lead us through the re-accreditation process.”

Over the summer the committee will be working on a survey to gather data on all aspects of the campus. Faculty, staff, and students will be invited to respond to the survey at the beginning of FA13.

To read more about the criteria, please visit <http://www.ncahlc.org/> and click on the link to the new criteria.