

## Overview of 2015 Assessment Results

### CLA+ Results

- CLA+ results are based on sample of 94 freshmen and 94 seniors. (This sampling contains no transfer students, is consistent with levels for validity of approximately 100, and is a common sampling level at other universities.) The CLA+ results are similar to previous administration of CLA.
- CLA+ results indicate there was less "value-added" change from freshmen to seniors at EIU compared to other universities, even with factoring in ACT scores and beginning skill levels.
- EIU students' ability to **critique an argument** and **critical reading skills** began at 30-50 points below national averages. The amount of gain at EIU was **similar to the national average gain** (so we are making progress/students are learning in these areas); however because we began with large skill deficits, EIU senior scores in these areas were similar to the national average for freshmen.
- There was a smaller proportion of freshmen at EIU (8-10% fewer) who demonstrated a basic proficiency level in **writing effectiveness or writing mechanics** compared to national freshman averages. **Gains were made at a similar rate** compared to national averages and senior levels are 8-10% less than national averages. The percentage of EIU seniors with proficient writing scores were approximately 10% above national freshman averages and 10% below national senior averages.
- EIU freshmen began with fewer students who had basic proficiency in **developing an argument**, however the **gap widened** between EIU and national averages from freshman (7% fewer) to senior year (17% fewer).
- **EIU freshman scores were very similar to the national average** scores (within 6 points) for **quantitative and scientific reasoning**. The mean gain nationally was 47 points from freshman to senior year **while EIU's gain was less than a quarter** of that amount at only 9 points.

### Other Results

- Review of papers from the EWP that more than 40% were weak or poor in the ability to develop ideas and arguments. The majority of assignments in portfolios seemed to ask students to summarize or write about their feelings. Too few required students to use varied sources to build an argument or solve a problem. Sources most often appeared in a "data dump" of decontextualized quotes and paraphrases that did not provide evidence of evaluation or effective use of evidence to develop an argument or prove a point. Mechanical problems in writing are often repeated across all three papers in portfolio.
- The Citizenship assessment was updated last year to incorporate measures that are used in other national studies and may allow for future comparison of EIU data to other universities (the Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale-Short Form and the Political and Social Involvement Scale from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education).
  - Overall, results indication EIU students' desires don't always match their actions. For example, the majority would like to engage with people from different cultures - but not as many actually do. Close to 70% believe volunteering in the community is important but 30% volunteered in something not required.

### CASL Plans

- CASL is in the planning stages for a university-wide assessment for a direct measure of the ethical reasoning component of the citizenship goal and a measure of critical reading. Plans are also being developed for how to assess quantitative reasoning for the university with a larger number of students.

### Assessment Results are Influencing Changes for the University Learning Goals

- The next page (p. 2) summarizes work on the Learning Goals project that is a direct result of initial CLA data at EIU and overall concern about improving student learning and assessment results at EIU
- Page 3 describes changes to the ENG 1001 & 1002 required writing sequence to develop critical thinking skills

## **Assessment Results are Influencing Changes for the University Learning Goals**

In November of 2011 (after the first set of CLA data was evaluated and other concerns related to patterns in assessment data discussed), CAA with CASL learning goal experts and faculty volunteers (28 members) conducted an 18-month study to review of integration, instructional practices, and effectiveness of EIU's 4 undergraduate university learning goals. Results of the study were discussed across campus in spring 2013, a summary report was submitted, and in April 2013 CAA approved a multi-year plan designed to improve student achievement in the undergraduate learning goals.

In Academic Year 2013-2014, a 35 member ad-hoc learning goal committee was formed. In January 2014, after discussion across campus, the university learning goals were updated to include a quantitative reasoning goal, to include critical reading in addition to writing, to include critical listening in addition to speaking, and revise components of the citizenship goal. The critical thinking goal was updated and aspects of critical thinking necessary for effective writing and speaking were more clearly delineated. Resources for campus were developed for each learning goal, workshops for each learning goal were conducted, and newsletters about each learning goal were distributed to all faculty.

In Academic Year 2014-2015, 25 faculty members attended a summer symposium at EIU and studied information and brainstormed methods to infuse EIU's undergraduate learning goals more effectively into general education. The ideas from this group and other AAC&U information were used as the starting point for the 28 member ad-hoc general education committee, which was convened in the fall. A model was developed over the course of the year for systematically infusing the learning goals into general education at EIU. This model was presented in a newsletter and a campus forum, and was discussed at committee meetings across campus. In April 2015, CAA passed a structure for a standing General Education and Essential Learning Committee. A draft of a General Education Handbook was developed with resources for segments of general education of how to infuse the learning goals in courses. Additionally, a number of departments adopted the new quantitative reasoning goal for their majors, with 5% in CAH, 20% in LCBAS, 12% in CEPS, and 18% in COS. The Lumpkin College of Business and Applied Studies held meetings to begin discussion of how to more systematically infuse all the updated university learning goals into the curriculum for LCBAS majors.

In Academic Year 2015-2016, a small group of 13 CAA members, general education course instructors, and learning goal leaders met in summer meetings. They developed sample course proposals that intentionally targeted the university learning goals and general education objectives in a manner consistent with the proposed model. However, with all the campus developments this year, the learning goal project has been slowed down as faculty and chairs focus on urgent matters. The Learning Goal Leaders (Rebecca Throneburg, Richard Jones, Tim Taylor, Fern Kory, Jeff Stowell, Wesley Allan, Linda Scholz) are continuing to meet and work on the project and the model for infusing the learning goals into general education will be discussed across campus again in the spring and possibly voted on. Tim Taylor and Richard Jones, as directors of the required foundational communication courses in writing (ENG 1001 & 1002) and speaking (CMN 1310), are revising these courses with more intentional focus on critical thinking (which is consistent with the proposed model for general education). A big thank-you and recognition goes to the English department Composition Committee, chaired by Dr. Tim Taylor in updating the current sequence of ENG 1001 Composition & Language and ENG 1002 Composition & Literature to focus on the much needed skills of writing with critical reading, critical thinking, information literacy, and argumentation. The new course titles are ENG 1001 Composition I: Critical Reading & Source-Based Writing and ENG 1002 Composition II: Argument & Critical Inquiry. These revisions are currently being approved by curriculum committees and are summarized on the next page.

Although the Learning Goal project has slowed down this year to allow focus on other pressing matters, the new CLA+ and other current assessment results continue to highlight the need to continue with the multi-year plan to more systematically infuse the university learning goals in general education and courses within the majors.

## Revision of Foundational Writing Courses

An extensive review of papers submitted to the Electronic Writing Portfolio, multiple university assessment data points, and the need for greater focus on intentional development of critical thinking skills in foundational general education courses were factors driving the revision of the required first year writing course sequence. This revision was developed by the English department Composition Committee, chaired by Dr. Tim Taylor. The revised courses were approved by the English department early Fall 2015 and are moving through the curriculum approval system.

The emphasis of these revised courses on sustained, explicit instruction about critical thinking, information literacy, and argumentation is reflected in the course titles:

- ENG 1001G/1091G = Composition I: Critical Reading & Source-Based Writing
  - Was “Composition & Language”
- ENG 1002G/1092G = Composition II: Argument & Critical Inquiry
  - Was “Composition & Literature”

Both courses promote and reinforce the importance of rhetorical flexibility to prepare students to transfer their writing processes, rhetorical knowledge, and genre awareness to writing situations in other classes, their professions, and other aspects of their lives. To facilitate this transfer, practice in metacognition will be embedded within the courses: students will be encouraged to think about and reflect on their rhetorical moves and how they can use them in other writing situations.

### **ENG 1001G/1091G: Critical Reading & Source-Based Writing**

Because too many students enter our classes with reading skills that warrant further development, ENG 1001G/1091G focuses on the careful, critical reading demanded by the academy.

ENG 1001G/1091G will also reinforce the undergraduate learning goal of speaking and listening.

### **ENG 1002G/1092G: Argument & Critical Inquiry**

The course now focuses squarely on argumentation in the academy and beyond. Students will engage with sustained explicit instruction about argumentation, critical thinking, and information literacy. The emphasis on academic and civic argumentation aligns with critical thinking goals such as “creating and presenting defensible expressions, arguments, hypotheses, and proposals”; “asking essential questions and engaging diverse perspectives”; and “anticipating, reflecting upon, and evaluating the implications of assumptions, arguments, hypotheses, and conclusions.”

The revised course also reinforces the undergraduate learning goal of quantitative reasoning. Students will consider the persuasive and ethical use of statistics; engage in critical evaluation of quantitative data; read, interpret, and construct graphical elements that use data; and compose at least one argument using data.