

Day 6: Did you know why the processes to assess student learning are valuable and lead to improvements to academic programs and courses?

[HLC Criteria 4.B.2/4.B.3] Assessment of learning outcomes for curricular and co-curricular programs and use of outcome information to improve student learning.

The obvious importance of assessment lies in how outcome data inform and improve student learning. While CMU continues to identify and implement valid measures of student learning, early data collection has led to improvements made by some academic programs. The following examples of [course changes](#) illustrate some of the improvements based upon student assessment data.

- In the area of Communication, grading writing as well as content, focusing on the use of credible sources and focused instruction on writing are all changes made by three programs (Accounting, Business and Nursing) to increase proficiency.
- Critical thinking was addressed in Chemistry by requiring students to develop their own experiments instead of given experiments, while History and Kinesiology majors are expected to formulate their own research and risk questions.
- Criminal Justice majors were found to consistently score a lower average on the courts unit of CRMJ 370 leading to faculty making adjustments to teaching methods and clarification of concepts prior to the corresponding exam.
- Classroom management strategies were addressed more fully with Music Education students to better prepare them for student teaching assignments.
- Research design coursework in Political Science and Psychology was revised. The Senior Seminar for Political Science students now focuses on in-class applied research skill development in a workshop format, while Psychology statistical literacy is being introduced earlier in the curriculum so that program graduates demonstrate stronger skills to potential employers.
- The [success](#) of streamlined approaches to remediation has not only been a psychological boost in terms of students' attitudes toward enrolling in developmental education coursework, but also results in both a time and financial savings for successful students.
- o Mathematics faculty piloted a one-credit, three-week "review" course for Intermediate Algebra as a "prequel" to College Algebra in Fall 2014 (MATH 101). Students who successfully completed the review course moved into a Late Start section of College Algebra in the same semester; those who were not successful continued in the developmental-level course. Results of this pilot were that 74% of those who went on to College Algebra were successful. Beginning in AY 2016-17, review courses for Precalculus, Calculus I and Calculus II were added to improve student learning in these courses.
- o Similar to the Mathematics project, faculty members from the English Program and Developmental English created a one-credit Writing Studio as an alternative to Basic Writing that provides "just in time" support. In the initial lab session, students write a diagnostic essay to determine particular areas of their writing in need of improvement and schedule meetings with a lab instructor to work on specific assignments for English Composition.
- o Several sections of Developmental English sections concurrently remediate reading and writing skills while students are enrolled in English Composition (ENGL 111). Co-enrollment in the

Writing Studio (ENGC 092) has not only accelerated students' progress toward completion but has also enhanced those students' success rates to a remarkable degree. For AY 2013-14 through AY 2015-16, the average student pass rate for ENGL 111, when taken concurrently with ENGC 092, was 72%.

- Faculty members in a number of majors have made changes to capstone courses to strengthen student learning:
 - o Geosciences increased the number of required oral presentations;
 - o History created a new course (HIST 202);
 - o Social Work expanded writing weekly reflections;
 - o Theatre Arts now requires creation of professional documents;
 - o Political Science added a peer-review process to replicate industry norms;
 - o Computer Science added scientific projects;
 - o Mechanical Engineering Technology includes participation in industry projects; and
 - o Nursing (at the doctoral level) added additional clinical hours to assist in successful completion of a national certification.

An [external assessment by internship employers](#) occurs for the institutional Communication and Critical Thinking SLOs. When reviewing the ratings, based on a ten-point scale with 10 being the best score, 93% of CMU students scored an 8 or higher in the area of communication by employers. In Critical Thinking, 85% of employers felt students rated at an 8 or above. With internships ranging from the Grand Junction Police Department, to the Museum of Western Colorado, to regional school districts, to a local brewing company, these percentages demonstrate that outside evaluators are assessing student attainment of these two SLOs at the excellent level.

To learn more, log into MAVzone and click on the document link found in the CMU Assurance Argument for HLC channel (top left on the Home tab) for the full text of CMU's Assurance Argument. Links to supporting evidence are identified by underlined words but are not available through the PDF version.

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