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“Assessment should involve the systematic and thorough collection of direct and indirect evidence of student learning, at multiple points in time and in various situations, using a variety of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods that are embedded in courses, programs, and overall institutional processes.”

—Middle States Commission on Higher Education

SPRING 2012    VOLUME III, ISSUE I

TASKSTREAM IMPLEMENTATION

Last year a team of faculty and staff reviewed several assessment management software solutions to help facilitate the coordination of assessment activities and artifacts throughout the College. Based on this team’s recommendation, earlier this year the College acquired TaskStream’s Accountability Management System (AMS). For the past two months, Assessment Coordinator Raymond Galinski has been working with the implementation team to prepare the system for a roll-out to the college community.

AMS will allow both academic and administrative programs to work collaboratively to develop/revise goals and objectives, curriculum maps and assessment plans. It will also provide programs with the ability to share documents and to link program-level goals to college-wide planning documents such as the College’s new Strategic Plan, and to specialized accreditation standards.

Training sessions will be held in the coming weeks for staff and additional sessions will be scheduled in the fall for faculty.

SNAP SURVEYS

Do you currently use Survey Monkey, Zoomerang or another tool for your survey research? Do you plan to gather student feedback for an assessment project, or for a specialized accreditation visit? If you do, the College has a new campus-wide survey tool to fill your needs.

SNAP Surveys is a robust survey software solution, containing many advanced features not available in many of the more recognizable tools. SNAP allows for numerous question types, sophisticated question routing, customized styles including fonts and colors, automated email alerts, as well as many other features. SNAP is hosted locally on a Lehman College server and is available to all faculty and staff.

To have SNAP Surveys installed on your PC (not Apple compatible), please contact the Lehman College Helpdesk at help.desk@lehman.cuny.edu. You will also need access to the SNAP server in order to upload and launch your survey. Please contact Raymond Galinski at raymond.galinski@lehman.cuny.edu, for a username and password. A SNAP user’s guide is available on the Office of Assessment and Planning’s web site.

FACULTY GUIDELINES ON ASSESSMENT

The Assessment Council recently issued Faculty Guidelines for Assessment. Created at the suggestion of faculty and the administration, the guidelines articulate the roles of full-time and adjunct faculty as well as the roles of departments and the administration in the assessment process. Access the guidelines on the Office of Assessment and Planning’s website – www.lehman.cuny.edu/research/assessment/.
MY EXPERIENCE WITH AN EMBEDDED TUTOR
by Robin Kunstler

The course I teach every fall, REC 387 Research and Evaluation of Recreation Services, poses continuing challenges to me; and I have, year after year, worked on a number of strategies to facilitate students’ learning and completion of a research proposal. In fall 2011 I had the opportunity to have an “embedded tutor” placed in this writing intensive course required for all majors in Recreation Education and Therapeutic Recreation. Responding to the ISSP’s call for faculty to apply for an embedded writing tutor, I was fortunate to work with Dominick Gregory, a recent Lehman graduate and experienced tutor. Sarah Blazer, ISSP Writing and Literacy Coordinator, assisted me with developing the plan for Dominick to attend every class session, offering in-class assistance to students, as well as providing information, through numerous announcements, of the services available to students at the tutoring center. He also assisted me with planning and executing in-class writing activities, including individual and small group work focused on developing and writing their research proposals. It was hoped that the additional assistance for the professor and students would increase the amount of attention each student could receive in writing their proposals and result in greater student success. For purposes of assessment, final course grades would be compared to the previous year. In addition, I was interviewed, Dominick’s weekly tutor notes were reviewed, and the students filled out a survey response form at the last class session.

Results of the assessment showed the following: Course grades were slightly higher from 2010, but more significant is that in 2010 four students received Incompletes and one a WU; however, in 2011, all the students successfully passed the course. The tutor’s assistance was essential to this achievement because we were able to provide in-class assistance to a greater number of students. He also contributed valuable suggestions for teaching strategies and learning activities that were successfully used in the classroom. Although only two of the 29 students in the class went to the tutoring center for assistance on their proposals, 19 of 27 noted on the response forms that they might utilize it in the future now that they knew about it. All respondents said they would like to have a tutor work with them in their other classes. The convenience of the tutor’s presence in the classroom, as well as their increasing degree of comfort with him as he attended every session and was a visible and active presence, may have contributed to this. Students were asked which areas of writing Dominick helped them with most; they indicated: generating ideas (17), revising (14), editing (12), planning (11) and research (9). While I personally appreciated the input, feedback and support I got from Dominick, many student comments also highlighted the value they put on having another voice besides the professor’s to help them with their work.

Overall working with Dominick was not only a worthwhile experience for the students, but for me as well. I benefited tremendously from having a second pair of eyes take a look at my teaching and illuminate areas I could improve, as well as a great source of support and a truly enjoyable working relationship.
Lehman’s current General Education curriculum is designed around a set of core fluencies, which are common to all the Gen Ed coursework, and which each course is expected to develop to varying degrees. Fluencies, also called Basic Skills, Competencies, are skills or abilities to think, communicate, analyze, interpret, and so on.

During the 2011-12 academic year, we performed an assessment to gauge how well students were acquiring these fluencies in LEH 300 and 301 courses. Two fluencies and two specific objectives for each fluency were selected. The first, Communication and Language, encompasses written and oral communication, using English and other languages and also visual-graphic, aural non-verbal languages. The specific objectives selected were: 1) to demonstrate skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing, and 2) to use graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency and is virtually error-free. The second fluency selected, Critical and Analytical, includes using multiple disciplinary tools to compare and contrast, to make connections and to explain relationships. The two objectives examined were: 1) to provide conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) that are logical and reflect the student’s informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order, and 2) to independently create wholes out of multiple parts (synthesize) or draw conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.

Because LEH 300 and 301 courses serve both as “capstone” general education courses and as introductions to upper division work, we focused on these courses for data collection. It is important to note that this was not an assessment of student learning in our LEH courses; rather students’ prior educational experiences should have had a greater effect on their progress toward achieving these objectives than a one semester LEH course.

At the start of the fall semester, half of all LEH courses were contacted to participate in this assessment. Each instructor was asked to send us a class assignment that reflected one of the objectives and the work of eight randomly selected students on that assignment. In total, 23 assignments and 190 pieces of student work were received. In January, 15 faculty volunteers met and reviewed the assignments and the students’ works. Because the objectives we selected matched objectives developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), our reviewers were able to score the student work using established AAC&U rubrics.

To assess the quality of the assignments, reviewers responded to the following prompt: “For each assignment, please indicate your feeling as to how well the assignment addressed the specific learning objective.” Reviewers used a scale ranging from 4 = Excellent, to 1 = Poor. Over all four objectives examined, the average rating was 2.7 (between “okay” and “good,” closer to “good”). Thirty-five percent of the assignments were rated as “excellent,” only 18% were rated as “poor,” and thirty percent were rated as “okay.” These results indicated that, in general, the assignments addressed the objectives. However, there is room for improvement. Our goal should be to reduce the number of assignments rated as “poor” and “okay.” We are currently working with the Assessment Council to plan a fall faculty workshop on writing assignments to address learning objectives.

To assess student learning, reviewers used AAC&U rubrics on a scale in which 4 = highest level of achievement and 1 = lowest level. Over all four objectives, the average rating was 2.3 (middle of the range). Seven percent attained the highest rating (4) and 20% received the

Visit the assessment web site at:
www.lehman.cuny.edu/research/assessment
STUDY OF ALUMNI

In recent years there has been a lot of national discussion about the current state of higher education, and more specifically, how well colleges and universities are preparing students for future employment and for graduate school. At Lehman, many faculty have expressed a similar desire to learn more about what their former students have been doing since earning the baccalaureate degrees.

In response to this interest, the Office of Assessment and Planning, using data from the National Student Clearinghouse, investigated how many students attend graduate school within one and two years of graduation. The results were quite surprising. Eighteen and twenty-seven percent of 2008/09 of 2009/10 graduates respectively, attended or were attending graduate school within one and two years of graduation. To put this into perspective, according to the US Census Bureau, just ten percent of the adult population has earned a graduate or professional degree nationwide. Of course most of these former students have yet to earn their degrees in such short order, but the fact that a high proportion of former graduates continued their education beyond the baccalaureate level is very encouraging.

This year, the Office of Assessment and Planning is undertaking an even more comprehensive examination of graduates to determine how they are doing five years after graduating from Lehman. A survey is currently underway asking former students about their employment history, and reflecting back, how their experience as Lehman undergraduates has impacted them. These responses will be merged with graduate school data from the Clearinghouse to give us a broad understanding of the career and academic pursuits of alumni several years removed from their undergraduate studies. We will keep you posted on the progress of this project. Expect to see the first results from this survey in the fall.

MIDDLE STATES

As past readers of Assessment Central know, in spring 2011 the College submitted its Monitoring Report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In June 2011, this report was accepted; however, the Commission has asked the College to submit a follow-up Progress Report by April 1, 2013, documenting evidence that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning.

You may ask, ‘what exactly does this mean for me and for my department?’ The answer is not complex; essentially Middle States wants us to continue on the path that has been laid for the past several years. They want reassurances from the College that the plans that have been created and the data that departments have collected are being put to good use. In other words, they want us to demonstrate that we are closing the loop by using evidence to make improvements to programs, services, teaching and learning.

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT, CONT.

continued from 3

lowest rating (1). Thus, 73% of the students’ work fell between those extremes. These results indicate that student performance is about where it should be. To expect that many or most students at this mid-point of their college careers would attain the highest level is unrealistic; however, our goal should be to see that more of them attain the higher intermediate level (3). Clearly, the objective: “to independently create wholes out of multiple parts (synthesize) or draw conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective” was the most difficult for students to attain.

One important outcome of these assessments is that we have now developed a workable process that can be used in a variety of courses and that is: authentic, in that it relies on assignments that faculty are already using in their courses, that causes no interference with instruction in the course or with course material as determined by the instructor, and that requires minimal additional time and effort from instructors.