

College of Charleston

Institutional Effectiveness Report Summary

2005-2006

Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning, and Assessment
and the
Office of Institutional Research

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July 31, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

Introduction.	1
Academic Assessment Reports	1
<i>Full Reports</i>	
Art History	1
Communication	1
Computer Science	2
English	3
French	4
Philosophy	4
Political Science	5
General Education	6

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that assessment is inextricably linked to planning, the College currently joins these processes administratively through the Office of Assessment & Planning. This office, officially created in 2001, was moved from Academic Affairs to the Division of Strategic Planning and Administration in Summer 2003. The success of planning and assessment efforts will always depend, however, upon a campus-wide effort (including faculty, staff, students, and administrators) that supports and sustains a vital planning process that informs the assessment cycle. This report details specific aspects of that process.

Academic Assessment Reports for CofC for 2005-2006

The following summaries were compiled from academic departments in the Assessment Reporting Phase in 2005-2006. They have been condensed from the Institutional Effectiveness Report which may be found at: <http://www.cofc.edu/~oap>. Also, please note that the College of Charleston has made the decision to continue with the CHE format for graduate program evaluation to ensure that all programs are thoroughly reviewed on an established schedule and that they have the opportunity to incorporate elements from that cycle such as outside program review. We will begin to report on these assessments in the 2006-2007 Institutional Effectiveness Report.

Art History

The Department of Art History assessed on two learning outcomes for students in their program: 1) whether the 100-level introductory art history courses provide the general background and foundation to prepare students for upper-level art history course and 2) whether the Research and Methods in Art History course (ARTH 299) provides adequate introduction for art history majors. In addition, their plan was modified in 2003-2004, to allow the collection of data regarding the ability of their students to organize and effectively deliver an oral presentation as a part of the capstone seminar in art history (ARTH 415). The department initially developed an exit interview for majors given immediately prior to graduation, but this instrument was found to be inadequate on its own to assessment needs; therefore, an entrance interview, completed upon declaration of major, was instituted. The department also began making presentations for the capstone course open to all department faculty, who evaluated the presentations. Data from the entrance and exit surveys indicated that ARTH 299 very much improved the skills in visual analysis (76%). Data on the 100-level courses was inconclusive. The institution of a faculty "review" of the oral presentations in ARTH 415 did not, in the end, measure the effectiveness of the presentations due to an evaluation form that did not aid in this data collection. In addition, the overall focus on the oral presentation caused students to lessen their focus on developing sophisticated skills in research and in written communication, another of the learning outcomes for ARTH 415. The courses, for the meantime, will remain the same; with the return to an in-class oral presentation for the capstone course. The department is using this assessment cycle to inform the next in order to develop clearer and more measurable goals that will provide better data for assessment of student learning outcomes both in the introductory-level courses open to all College of Charleston students as well as the upper-level courses intended for art history majors.

Communication

The current departmental assessment gives evidence of the effectiveness of the department in offering a "model" communication program/major. Specifically, the objective of the department's

assessment was to determine if they were offering the majors the education they desired/needed. A variety of assessment techniques were employed to assess the objectives: online student surveys, online alumni surveys, student focus groups and faculty surveys. Additionally, the department sought to offer team teaching opportunities both within and outside the department. The results of the student surveys indicated that, among other results, approximately 90% of alumni survey report being satisfied with the major, and 86% say they would choose the major again if given the opportunity. Alumni were especially satisfied with the quality of teaching rating it a 4.1 on a 5.0 scale. Current students reported slightly greater satisfaction with the department's teaching (4.4), but satisfaction with advising for both groups was lower (3.5 for alumni and 4.1 for current students). The survey of faculty reflects a concern about training in writing that was also reflected in student scores that indicated that they are somewhat less confident in their ability to write and to work through library-based research than in other skills acquired through the major. Faculty at least somewhat agree that students in the major are prepared for both careers and graduate school and they clearly see room for improvement in both areas. More than half the faculty agree with the statement that majors have a hard time finding work, and nearly all faculty would like to see more students completing internships. As a result of this assessment cycle, the department has five recommended actions: 1) consider new approaches to writing pedagogy across the curriculum; 2) consider increasing research instruction in communication courses; 3) consider changes in advising in the department (which may be impacted by the addition of a Faculty Internship Director beginning fall 2006); 4) consider the diversity of non-classroom, extra and co-curricular opportunities; and 5) consider whether to increase the number of team-taught courses within the department.

C o m p u t e r S c i e n c e

The assessment report from the Department of Computer Science summarizes assessment data that resulted from a major revision of the department's goals and objectives undertaken in 2003-2004. The report was strongly influenced by the criteria for computer science programs put forth by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET. Several faculty members have been program evaluators or team chairs with ABET-CAC which familiarized them with evaluating computer science curricula, assessing program delivery, and with analyzing areas of additional support.

The Department of Computer Science established an ambitious set of six goals with 48 objectives under these goals. They sought to assess the undergraduate degree programs, the graduate program, support for the liberal arts and non-majors, faculty, resources, and the assessment process itself. Clearly the department was unable to handle 48 objectives within the current structure of our assessment cycle, but rather than restrict themselves from the outset, they decided, however, to see what could be accomplished across all of these objectives anyway. This was important to the department in its preparation for the ABET-CAC reaccreditation visit for Fall 2006 as well as for the institutionally mandated review of the graduate program (using the CHE format) conducted in Spring 2006.

The Department of Computer Science assessed each of the six goals and drew conclusions for each goal as well. For example, Goal One, Subgoal 1.1, objective 1. is "to give each student a strong foundation in core topics from the computer science body of knowledge focusing especially on the areas of programming fundamentals, algorithms, data structures, software design, concepts of programming languages, computer organization and architecture, and operating systems. The student will be required to engage in activities with cognitive competence between levels 3 (Application) through 6 (Evaluation) of Bloom's taxonomy. In addition the software artifacts that students produce will demonstrate increasing structural complexity as the student progresses from the introductory courses through the advance courses."

In order to create this core course structure, at a departmental retreat in December 2004, the following courses were deemed to be core courses across all programs: CSCI 220-222; CSCI 221; CSCI 230; CSCI 250, CSCI 320, CSCI 340, MAATH 207, MATH 307. During the spring 2005 semester the department developed initial course outlines for all the CSCI courses from this list. Most importantly, a significant portion of the course objectives in these courses incorporate levels from Bloom's Taxonomy to more precisely indicate the level of comprehension or mastery expected of each student. Each time a course is taught, course packets are compiled for all the CSCI courses. These packets contain all course handouts and a complete set of assignments and tests together with samples of student work reflecting excellent, average, and poor student performance. Preliminary assessments by all departmental faculty of the courses took place at the Spring 2005 departmental retreat. Hereafter, they will take place at the end of each semester in which the course is taught. The department analyzed the course packets for the computer science courses listed above taught during the 2005-2006 academic year. Each packet was then reviewed by at least one faculty member using a course review sheet as a guide. Based on these review sheets and instructor self-assessments, the department listed the areas of competency from Goal 1.1.1.1 and demonstrated within the core CSCI courses where each element is covered in a significant (S) or moderate (M) amount. One example of this is that "programming fundamentals" is covered in CSCI 220 (S), CSCI 222 (S), CSCI 221 (S), and CSCI 340 (M). The department concluded that the curricula for each degree program seem to be meeting the objective as it relates to coverage of the content areas, but there were not enough course objectives yet that attempted to use Bloom's taxonomy to determine how well the students are achieving across the cognitive levels. Undoubtedly part of this is due to the fact that the department as a whole is not yet completely comfortable working with Bloom's Taxonomy. Recommendations to the department for this area of assessment were: 1) to maintain and evaluate course packets annually; and 2) to work to incorporate Bloom's Taxonomy into the course objectives for more of the courses.

English

The main concerns of the Department of English during their assessment cycle centered on trying to increase the number of students declaring English as a major, to increase the number of non-majors taking English courses (i.e., to satisfy the Humanities requirement as a part of the student's general education coursework), and to determine if there needed to be a wider set of course offerings at the 200 level in order to more fully engage students beyond the required English 101/102 sequence. The department carried out a series of assessments to aid in this effort, including a survey of departmental faculty to determine interest in teaching new 200-level courses, two surveys of student in English 102 to ascertain the level of interest in current and possible future 200-level course offerings, a survey of faculty advisors to determine how English courses to satisfy the Humanities requirement are perceived by these advisors, a survey of students in English 101 to determine differences in attitudes toward 200-level classes between these students and those leaving English 102, a comparison of 200-level enrollments in English with those offered by History and Philosophy (two departments with significant 200-level courses that count toward the Humanities requirement), as well as longitudinal data provided by the Office of Institutional Research. These measures were to be used to answer questions regarding faculty interest in teaching currently listed and new courses at the 200 level, student interest in taking these courses, the ability of the department to attract non-majors as compared to other departments, and advisor perception regarding advising students to take upper-level English courses to satisfy the Humanities requirement of the general education component at the College of Charleston.

The data demonstrated the department is not adequately meeting student interest at the 200 level and that the department needs to adjust course offerings in order to attract more potential majors through the departmental offerings beyond English 101/102 (a list of potential offerings

was generated through the student surveys in the English 101 and 102 classes). To this end, the English Department Assessment Committee made the following recommendations to the department: 1) that more 200-level course be offered on different topics than currently offered at this level; and 2) that some 100-level courses be added to the curriculum (this would more closely parallel the Philosophy Department's offerings). Based upon the results of this assessment, the Committee also recommended that these changes as well as more in-depth analysis of information such as advisor attitudes become the focus of the next assessment cycle in order to determine the efficiency of changes instituted as a result of this current assessment cycle.

F r e n c h

The Department of French and Francophone Studies is struggling to establish a new assessment paradigm based on a conception that assessment is and should be an on-going process. A new form of assessment embedded in the course taught by the department should be not only attractive to the department but also understandable and relevant. The department is striving to have each course, especially the 100- and 200-level courses, embed an assessment mechanism within the courses which would determine a student's ability to move from one level to another. This portion of their assessment would focus directly on the relative mastery of skills needed to perform satisfactorily at the next level. For basic and intermediate courses (100- and 200 level courses), the instrument would be course-specific; at the upper level, assessment would be both course and instructor specific. In upper-level courses, there is a new emphasis in the discipline on interdisciplinary through which the courses emphasize content, but more than that, the capacity of the student to relate that content to other disciplines, or at the least, to see the interconnectivity between and among disciplines. In a previous assessment cycle, the department researched the qualifications that the department provided to its graduates desiring to enter graduate school. The flaws in data collection as well as the challenges it provided (attempting to contact past students to determine who might have gone to graduate school at any point beyond graduation) handicapped this assessment effort and the department decided to focus its assessment goals in a different manner.

The department is now refocusing on improving the quality of curriculum and instruction and is attempting to develop other tools (possibly based on Deryl R. Learning's *Academic Leadership*) that will reveal (or fairly accurately measure) how the department and its offerings are effectively helping students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, etc., that should distinguish them as a graduate of CofC's program. In short, they are now targeting the educational outcomes (or behaviors) of their graduate. To this end, the department intends to institute: a capstone experience, an entrance and an exit exam, an employer survey, a portfolio review, a survey of graduates, and exit interviews. The next assessment cycle will seek to establish this new assessment paradigm by determining the efficiency efficacy of these changes on student learning outcomes.

P h i l o s o p h y

The 2003-2006 assessment cycle for the Department of Philosophy addressed student learning outcomes in five areas: 1) critical thinking and formal logic; 2) critical and analytical reasoning, reading and writing; 3) research techniques in Philosophy; 4) understanding of the ethos and requirements of the major and setting high self-expectations; and 5) engagement in academic life of the College. The assessment procedures included a comparison of data on critical thinking from course evaluations; and analysis of standardized pre- and post-tests in critical thinking, an analysis of standardized evaluation of student writing; an analysis of student research portfolios; and an analysis of student entrance and exit interviews.

The evidence gathered through implementation of these procedures during the assessment cycle suggests that the department is successfully meeting the five objectives addressed. Specifically, student ratings indicate that Philosophy courses stimulate critical thinking more frequently than do other courses at the College. Review of student writing and research shows that many students are producing high quality independent work in Philosophy, reflecting acquisition of important philosophical skills and research techniques. Entrance and exit interviews (written and oral) with Philosophy majors provide good information about student expectations and experience in the major, and demonstrate a high level of student satisfaction with the program. Implementation of the assessment procedures during this cycle suggests changes in the Philosophy program to enhance its effectiveness, as well as changes in the assessment plan and procedures themselves.

These changes resulted in a number of recommendations to the department: 1) Discuss in the department ways in which appropriate research activities can be included in courses for majors, and implement these ideas; 2) revise the current assessment plan for implementation in the next cycle by revising assessment criterion and procedure I.3.1, to incorporate all the ways in which students conduct research within the Philosophy program; 3) devise ways of better implementing valuable elements of the current plan by ensuring that students perform up to their full abilities on the critical thinking test, especially in Philosophy 450 and by considering the adoption of a different standardized test of critical thinking as the current test does not adequately reflect the material which is actually taught in Philosophy 115 (Critical Thinking).

Political Science

The Department of Political Science presented an ambitious multi-year assessment plan in 2003. Some, but certainly not all, of their plans have now come to fruition. The department reports that they were, in hindsight, quite compartmentalized in their thinking about the link between assessment, reflection, and action. In some cases, they did not fully anticipate how the proposed assessment strategies would be used to prompt reflection and action and so they worked out those connections as the process unfolded. During this process their ability to anticipate these connections has greatly improved and they have matured as a department in this regard. Since 2000, they have started each academic year with a department meeting dedicated to setting priorities for the year and reflecting on the ways in which they met or missed their action goals from the prior year. This has proven to be for them a very effective planning process that incorporates continuous assessment in the best sense. In order to identify and prioritize actions for the coming year, the department has found it necessary to utilize assessment data/information on an annual basis. Data is, therefore, utilized immediately to enact changes to practices, policies, and programs rather than necessarily forming a part of a three-year cycle common to the College of Charleston. This department organized its assessment efforts around ten goals for the major and used many different assessment methodologies to determine changes needed and to enact these changes. For example, assessment of Goal Two (comprehend the views of others and articulate and defend one's own position) and Goal Three (develop the skill of applying theories and concepts to new situations) cause the department to conduct a review of course assignments noted on political science course syllabi at the 100 and 200 levels in order to determine the percentage of courses in a given year that explicitly include assignments related to these two goals. The department found that, on average, students encountered this type of assignment three out of four semesters (75% of the time). Another way this goal was met and assessed was through examining examples of assignments designed to explicitly link the department's thematic programming for 2005-2006 to coursework. They included many examples of this programming. The assessment of Goal Four (acquire knowledge of political systems including their institutions processes, laws and constitutions; the relations between and among nations; major political philosophies, a (western and non-western) and the context of their origins; and the bases of human behavior in diverse political settings and roles) included a thorough review of the political science curriculum and fifteen new courses

were added and ten courses were deleted to reflect the current state of the political science and geography disciplines. Since 2002, the department has hired three geographers to complement the political science faculty. The department used many methods of assessment including transcript and course syllabi review and analysis, analysis of graduate exit surveys, faculty assessment of students' performance in the capstone course, among many others. As a result of their assessment, changes such as those listed above were instituted to identify and improve student learning outcomes in political science offerings.

General Education

During 1998-1999, the Faculty Committee on Institutional Effectiveness began reviewing general education assessment in conjunction with the institution-wide comprehensive review of general education. The committee began to develop a comprehensive plan for general education assessment with these new objectives in mind. Testing instruments in three different domain areas were collected. These included: subject content knowledge (English, math, science, social science), critical thinking, and student attitude toward their educational experience. During the 1999-2000 academic year, the Faculty Committee on Institutional scrutinized a number of existing tests, and selected the ETS Academic Profile, which provided a comprehensive assessment of general education (Reading, Math, Writing, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, Critical Thinking). With the collaboration of the Office of Institutional Research, the Office of Orientation, the Faculty Committee, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the Office of Assessment and Planning, the administration of the ETS Academic Profile assessment tool was conducted during the Fall 2000. The College of Charleston planned to readminister the test to the same 700 students at the end of their sophomore year. Unfortunately, ETS changed the test and would not allow the College to use the old version for a retest.

During this same time frame (1996-1999) a campus-wide examination of the General Education curriculum took place through which the College faculty identified college-level competencies that students should attain through General Education courses. For the present curriculum, the following list of goals for General Education courses was approved by the faculty Senate in April 1997. (This may be found in a longer document which is available online at <http://www.cofc.edu/~donatoh/GenEd/pcaug98.html>.)

Students, through the curricular and extra-curricular General Education experience, are expected to:

1. Acquire basic knowledge of the arts, humanities, mathematics, and the natural and social sciences, the languages which define and convey this knowledge, and the relationship among the branches of knowledge.
2. Acquire an interdisciplinary understanding of major contemporary ethical, political, economic, social and scientific issues and movements including their origins, implications and interrelationships.
3. Develop a knowledge of diverse cultures, natural and human-made environments, and their global interrelationships.
4. Develop effective reading, writing, and oral communication skills in English, and basic communication skills in a language other than English.
5. Develop skills in the methods and technologies of inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving,

scientific research, quantitative and historical analysis.

6. Employ the available resources to retrieve, use and evaluate information from a variety of sources.

7. Develop the ability to set and achieve personal goals.

8. Work and interact effectively with others.

9. Develop intellectual honesty and curiosity, a commitment to lifelong learning, a sense of personal responsibility, and informed, active, responsible citizenship in a climate of civility where dialogue about intellectual debates and controversies can occur.

To insure that students in General Education courses have attained these competencies, each department chair is responsible for assessing the content and academic rigor of the courses in his or her own department. The chair is responsible for determining that any General Education courses offered by the department are being taught according to commonly accepted standards and practices, and that these courses teach, and require students to demonstrate, the competencies that they are intended to address. The College requires annual faculty evaluations for which each faculty member must submit syllabi and other course material, including graded student work, demonstrating what is covered in each faculty member's course. The Faculty-Administration Manual (FAM) stipulates that the chair is responsible for "annually evaluating each member of the department's faculty" and for "supervising the department's program of instruction" (12). Each department chair's supervisory work is evaluated by the dean, who also reviews the annual evaluations of each faculty member. Deans are evaluated by the Provost (FAM 11).

The Faculty-Administration Manual is online:

<http://www.cofc.edu/academicaffairs/manuals/fac-manual.pdf>

Departments are also required to assess periodically the effectiveness of all their instruction, including general education courses. Reports of these assessments are provided to CHE annually for appropriate departments through this Institutional Effectiveness Report.

An Ad Hoc Committee on General Education, formed in 2005, is currently revisiting our curriculum, and during 2006-2007 academic year will develop an updated list of competencies that will be required by the revised curricula as well as indicating assessment measures to be used in evaluating the acquisition of these competencies by our students in their CofC career.