Good instructors are continuously making adjustments to their teaching in order to address issues that become apparent through observation of students and their performance throughout a semester. But formal assessment gives us the opportunity to reimagine whole aspects of our instructional programs in preparation for presenting them to a new batch of students. Instead of revising our syllabi based on what we think is or isn’t working for our students, we have assessment results that allow us to make evidence-based decisions. And that’s exciting.

When we taught and assessed our first group of students in spring 2014, one of the most surprising findings from our assessment data was that students struggled more with searching for information sources than with evaluating them for appropriateness for their information need - which is exactly the opposite of what we expected to find. Assessment for each subsequent semester shows the same disparity, although overall student performance has increased each semester. For example, students consistently scored lowest on the Internet Searching tutorial. In spring 2014, the average student score was 71.3%. In fall 2014, the average score had increased to 83.4% and by spring 2015, the average score was 88.2%, which reflects a 24% improvement over the previous year. In contrast, students’ scores on the Source Evaluation tutorial have also improved that steadily, but by just 4% over three semesters.

Comparing these assessment results led us to a few important observations. It is possible that the low student scores in the area of Internet searching supports a widely-discussed theory that students are overconfident in their information seeking skills (Gustavson, 2011;
Assessment Around Campus

Comings and goings
Annie Wofford, a master’s student in the higher education administration program, will work this summer and fall as an intern in the Office of Assessment. This internship will provide the opportunity for Annie to learn about assessment practices in academic programs, as well as in student affairs programs and high-impact student experiences.

Barbara Glesner-Fines has announced her decision to step down from the position of FaCET Faculty Fellow for Assessment. Barb has made substantial contributions to developing a culture of assessment at UMKC through her work including guiding the implementation of assessment in the School of Law, serving on the University Assessment Committee, and mentoring faculty across the university to enhance assessment efforts. I have enjoyed working with Barb and greatly appreciate the support and guidance she has provided to me as I transitioned into my role at UMKC. Barb has promised that she will remain involved in institutional assessment efforts after a spring semester of well-deserved regeneration – and I plan on holding her to that promise!

As Barb steps away, I am most pleased to announce that Caitlin Horsmon, Associate Professor in the Department of Communications Studies, will assume the role of FaCET Faculty Fellow for Assessment effective fall 2015. Caitlin has been a member of the University Assessment Committee for two years and serves as an assessment coordinator for her department. I look forward to working with her in this role as she collaborates with colleagues across the university to deepen engagement in assessment to support student success.

See Page 5 for information about UMKC’s new assessment fellow.

Other assessment news
Mark your calendars! The 2015 FaCET Fall Conference will be August 20 at the Kauffman Conference Center. In addition to presentations by Theatre Delta, there will be several sessions on supporting graduate and undergraduate writing, a session on making meaning out of assessment data, and a number of sessions on additional topics of enhancing teaching and learning. The complete schedule and link to register for the conference are at https://net3.umkc.edu/intapps/workshops/workshopDetail.aspx?id=131

Following pilot assessment of the General Education Core program over the last two years, efforts are underway to enhance strategies to provide meaningful, actionable information concerning student achievement of the general education outcomes. Rhiannon Dickerson and her team of Discourse instructors are working to improve assessment of the Discourse learning outcomes. The group has reviewed previous assessment approaches and preliminary data. At the start of the fall 2015 semester, they will work on refining the rubrics used to evaluate student work and participate in rubric calibration to improve validity and reliability of data collection. Lynda Plamann, General Education Director, Jerry Wyckoff, Chair of the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC), and members of the GECC have reviewed the processes and results of the initial rounds of data collection for Anchor and Focus courses. Realizing the need to make assessment of the General Education Core more efficient and effective than initial strategies, the group developed a revised assessment plan, which includes the creation of rubrics to assess the general education outcomes, the establishment of a three-year cycle of data collection, and streamlined reporting formats. Details concerning the revised General Education Core assessment will be provided in the coming weeks.

Upcoming deadlines
Assessment reports for Anchor and Focus courses taught in spring or summer 2015 are due by October 1, 2015. (Each course is required to submit one assessment report each year. If a report for a specific course was submitted for Fall 2014, additional reporting is not required for the academic year.) For additional information on the General Education course assessment or to receive a copy of the report form, please contact me.

Program assessment plans are due in Weave on October 15, 2015. The reporting requirements are the same as in previous years, including the brief narrative that describes the processes, positives, challenges, and supports received or needed for assessment activities.

Continued on Page 3
Do You Know NILOA?
Established in 2008, the mission of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) is to discover and disseminate ways that academic programs and institutions can productively use assessment data internally to inform and strengthen undergraduate education, and externally to communicate with policy makers, families, and other stakeholders.

NILOA assists institutions and others in discovering and adopting promising practices in the assessment of college student learning outcomes. The NILOA project is based at the University of Illinois and Indiana University. Stan Ikenberry and George Kuh serve as co-principal investigators, and Peter Ewell, Jillian Kinzie, and Pat Hutchings serve as Senior Scholars. The initiative is guided by a National Advisory Panel and supported by Lumina Foundation for Education, The Teagle Foundation, and the College of Education at the University of Illinois.

Resources available on NILOA’s website include: reports of NILOA’s major research projects, an archive of Occasional Papers commissioned by NILOA on current issues in assessment, examples of good assessment practices, lists of assessment journals, and links to featured web sites.

Recent Occasional Papers that might be of interest to UMKC assessment coordinators and committee members include:


Visit the NILOA web site to check out the wealth of resources available and to sign up to receive NILOA’s monthly newsletter.

Do you have a favorite assessment website? If so, let us know and we will feature it in an upcoming Assessable Roo newsletter. Closer to home, check out UMKC’s assessment website, which offers a variety assessment resources, as well as the video tutorials on UMKC’s annual assessment reporting process available at www.youtube.com/channel/UCptiBF00xy6pn2enFXGp-tQ.

Assessment Around Campus - Continued from Page 2

Be sure to include an action plan and provide updates on the status of implementation of status plans developed in previous cycles.

The annual report should also address the feedback you received from the University Assessment Committee in response to last year’s update.

Please let me know if you have questions concerning the annual report or would like assistance with entering the information into the Weave assessment management system.

~ Ruth Cain

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

If you have an assessment process that has worked well for you and your program/department in the past, the Assessable Roo is a good place to tell your story. Contact Dan Stroud at disrzf@umkc.edu to propose or offer a submission.
Information Literacy (Continued from Page 1)

Molteni, 2015). Additionally, the dramatic increase in scoring in this concept area can potentially be explained by our responsiveness to assessment results following each assessment cycle. We have adapted our instructional methods to focus more in areas where students show less understanding. We intentionally make efforts to meet students at the knowledge level that assessment has shown them to be when they enter our class, as opposed to beginning our instruction at the level where students would self-report their abilities. We view this as a successful example of implementing change based on assessment.

As we make curriculum adjustments to incorporate in the fall 2015 semester, we are looking for broader ways to apply our interpretations of the assessment data. High student scores on activities focused on source evaluation present an opportunity to revise our teaching methods. Since the majority of students are achieving at the proficient level of our rubric on this learning outcome, we can conclude that students would respond well to a more nuanced conversation about evaluating sources. We plan to change the way we talk to students about the credibility of sources, moving away from a checklist of criteria toward a critical evaluation process that has transferable applications. We have observed that students tend to categorize sources simply as credible or not credible, so we will respond to that tendency by discussing credibility as a contextual consideration, and perhaps as a scale as opposed to a duality. Students also tend to fixate on labels for source types -

What Is Research Essentials?

The UMKC Libraries provide information literacy instruction that is integrated into the Core curriculum in Discourse 200 and 300, using a curriculum created by UMKC librarians called Research Essentials. This information literacy program combines online learning activities and assessment tools with face-to-face instruction at the library. The program design uniquely positions us to gather rich assessment data since we can compare student progress on the Information and Technology Literacy learning outcome across sections and between the 200 and 300 levels. Most college instructors who assess student learning see new cohorts of students at the same course level over many semesters, while the integration of Research Essentials puts us in contact with many students on two levels every semester. For this reason, we use the same rubric in 200 and 300 and hope to see students move from one level of achievement to the next - in this case, to move from proficient to advanced.

Although our assessment is rooted in a common rubric, each level of instruction involves different content, learning activities, and assessments. When this curriculum was first implemented in the fall of 2013, we began with standardized quizzes as our only form of assessment. They were the most labor-intensive form of assessment to create so we did the extensive work necessary to put them in place as part of the foundation of our curriculum. Each subsequent semester we have integrated new, various assessment techniques to replace or supplement existing ones.

Examining student achievement across our 200 and 300 level curricula, as well as comparing performance on various activities in both levels – each content delivery tool, activity, or assessment is mapped to a sub-learning outcome – allows us to watch students moving through the categories of cognition made familiar to educators by Bloom’s taxonomy: students grasp the conceptual knowledge, practice their way through the procedural knowledge, and – it is our goal – leave with the metacognitive knowledge that will enable them to be successful as students, citizens, and employees (Krathwohl, 2002). In one specific example of this progression, Discourse 200 students learn about evaluating sources based on flexible sets of criteria, while Discourse 300 students are required to apply those concepts by selecting sources and justifying their selections.

To find out more about Research Essentials — either the online content as delivered through Blackboard, our flipped classroom curriculum, or both! — please contact Dani Wellemeyer or Jessica Williams.

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Information Literacy (Continued from Page 4)

academic, refereed, etc. We anticipate that adapting our pedagogy in this area will not only result in higher student achievement of the learning outcome but also that it will continue to encourage students to think more holistically about the role of information in their academic work. As we complete this phase of the assessment as cycle-implementing change—we are encouraged by the prospect of increased learning for a new cohort of students; we appreciate the challenge to improve our instruction in creative and evidence-based ways; and we couldn’t be more excited about what we will learn from assessment the next time around.

References

~ Jessica Williams & Danielle Wellemeyer

Introducing the New FaCET Faculty Fellow

It is always difficult during transition periods, but the addition of our latest FaCET Faculty Fellow to the UMKC Assessment community should be nearly seamless, as Caitlin Horsmon steps into the role. Caitlin recently commented, “I am so pleased to be serving as the FaCET Faculty Fellow for Assessment and begin the position with both enthusiasm and curiosity. Any of you who have had the pleasure of working with Barbara Glesner-Fines know that I have big shoes to fill, but I look forward to learning more about assessment strategies, hurdles and accomplishments across the University. I am eager to work with departments, programs and individual faculty on creating robust assessment plans and look forward to supporting the outstanding work of the UMKC Assessment team in advancing the goal of creating a tangible culture of learning at UMKC. Please be in touch if you’d like support at any level – looking forward to working with you.”

Caitlin is Associate Professor of Film & Media Arts and a member of the Graduate Faculty and Women’s and Gender Study Faculty at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She is an award-winning artist who makes films, videos and interactive works. Her works have been exhibited around the world in wildly diverse venues from micro cinemas to the Centre Pompidou. She has received numerous awards and grants including a Rocket Grant form the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Charlotte Street Foundation and Spencer Museum of Art. Horsmon’s experimental and non-fiction media work focuses on questions of visual history, pleasure, gender and absence and her research centers on non-commercial and expanded cinema with a focus on the social history of experimental forms. Caitlin was trained in Cinema and Comparative Literature and Media Production at the University of Iowa and graduated from Oberlin College. Caitlin is one of five artists who make up the curatorial collaboration and artist-run space Plug Projects. The Collectif Jeune Cine-ma in Paris distributes her work.

The 2014 –15 Assessment Reporting Cycle ends October 15, 2015!! For assistance in completing the information in Weave, contact Dan Stroud at disrzhf@umkc.edu.