

*The Sinclair Community College Newsletter
designed to heighten the understanding of the integrated relationship
between curriculum, general education, and assessment
Fall 2005*

Notes from the VPI Office

It's all about student learning. We sometimes forget in the busyness of our routines that the reason we come to work every day is to help students learn. Some of that learning is focused on specific skills tailored to technical programs or majors which translate into courses, certificates, and degrees. Some of that learning is more generalized and focused on helping students live richer lives which translates into general education competency areas. All of the learning is a result of our curriculum—the reason students come to Sinclair. There isn't anything more important than the curriculum we offer and the means we use to assess its success in the lives of individual students. It's all about student learning.

We have a collective responsibility at Sinclair which reminds us that curriculum, general education, and assessment are the means to help put student learning at the center of our work days. **Sue Merrell** and her team help build a large and dynamic curriculum which combines courses,

certificates, and degrees into successful learning experiences for our students. **Lori Zakel** and her team help create learning opportunities in six competency areas and define corresponding measurable outcomes. **Teresa Prosser** and her team help raise our awareness and encourage our use of assessment tools to ensure that students do indeed learn and can demonstrate that learning. These three leaders are joined by five outstanding faculty members who serve as **Learning Liaisons (Art Ross, Linda Pastore, Gloria Goldman, Ned Young, Lori Zakel, and Steve Wendel)** to provide a consistent understanding of assessment, general education, and documentation related to student learning. Together with all faculty and staff, these leaders help put student learning at the center of our work days.

It's important to remember why we come to work every day. It's important to remember that curriculum, general education, and assessment work together in an integrated relationship. It's important to remember that it's all about student learning.

Upcoming Deadlines for Curriculum

Did you know that the curriculum for the *Course Catalog* is pulled from the Curriculum Management Tool (CMT) database? Please take a look at this past year's catalog--courses and programs. If your department's courses and/or programs need to be revised, now is the time to submit curriculum changes. All revisions submitted during the month of January will be approved in time for printing in the 06-07 *Course Catalog*.

News from Assessment

The *Training, Resources and Glossary of Terms* section of the Sinclair Community College's Assessment of Student Learning website is now online. This valuable resource includes links to survey data from Institutional Planning and Research, including assessment data. The Learning Liaison section details the roles of these divisional leaders of assessment and provides contact information. The section entitled "Tools and Methods" includes links to articles and statements on assessment of student learning, 'mega' assessment sites with multiple links, multiple resources for and examples of Classroom Assessment, information regarding the development of student outcomes and performance criteria, portfolios as an assessment tool, and the development of rubrics. Additionally, there is an assessment glossary, a list of contact people at Sinclair related to assessment, curriculum and general education, links to assessment bibliographies, and information regarding conferences and institutes focusing on assessment. All of these useful resources can be accessed at the Assessment of Student Learning website (<http://www.sinclair.edu/about/assessment/index.cfm>) by clicking *Training, Resources and Glossary of Terms* on the menu bar.

Suggestions for additional resources for this section of the Assessment of Student

Learning website are welcome and may be submitted to Mary Connolly (mary.connolly@sinclair.edu).

News from Curriculum

As the new year rolls around, it triggers thoughts of tax day. The notion of April 15 conjures up images in each of our minds, doesn't it? Many of us begin to assemble and organize bits and pieces of information we stash away for the entire previous year, preparing to answer the questions posed by the federal, state, and local tax forms.

April 15, 2005 was more than tax day in the State of Ohio; it was the effective date of House Bill 95 (HB 95). HB 95 mandates a new level of transfer and articulation accountability for public colleges and universities. Compliance with HB 95 means that our students have access to key information about transfer across the state. To comply, institutions like Sinclair identified course equivalencies for frequently transferred courses, shared explicit program requirements, and allowed non-Sinclair students to run "what if" degree audits using classes earned elsewhere. To see how this works, check out <http://www.transfer.org>.

In response to the expectations from the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR), Sinclair now provides detailed master syllabi to the OBR for review. Once the OBR receives our master syllabi for designated transfer courses, professors from the public colleges and universities participate on Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG) review panels to ensure courses are actually equivalent to one another.

So how does this work? What standards do the reviewers consider when determining whether a course is universally transferable? Specialized committees, representing areas such as Business, English, Engineering and Science, or Math, determined the core standards for the courses. In most cases, the committees set the standards and received

final approvals by this past summer. These standards form the basis of a standardized syllabus for a course with an Ohio Articulation Number (OAN). The review panels assess the extent to which our master syllabi address the OAN outcomes.

Of interest to curriculum, the reviews focus predominately on learner outcomes. This reaffirms our interest in helping students' learning as mentioned in the VPI Office article. While the review panels have yet to deliver their first findings, we continue to review and revamp curriculum to ensure alignment for transfer and articulation. OBR just announced a new round of reviews to begin in the spring. These reviews will continue, two per year, with one in the fall and one in the spring--similar to the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) reviews.

With the Curriculum Management Tool, Sinclair's submissions to the state include detailed course outcomes that identify and integrate assessment tasks, performance criteria, and measurable General Education outcomes into the master syllabi. We have received commendation from the State of Ohio for the quality of our master syllabi. In particular, our syllabi have been used as models for other institutions.

News from General Education

General Education is often viewed by students as "those courses that I have to take before I can take the classes for my major." It's too bad that the definition, in a student's mind, doesn't encompass the inherent value of those courses. It's also too bad that the student often doesn't see the connections between "core" courses and "major" courses. To some extent, General Education does mean those core courses, but being generally educated neither starts nor ends with core courses.

According to Sinclair's regional accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central

Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), General Education consists of "understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit." NCA's statement on General Education also adds that these general education elements "allow people to live richer lives," and also are a "foundation for most careers and for the informed exercise of local, national, and international citizenship." The Commission expects institutions of higher learning to address these important ends. Finally, in helping to define general education, NCA states, "general education is intended to impart common knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and to develop in them the skills and attitudes that an organization's faculty believes every educated person should possess."

Through Sinclair's courses and programs of study, a student acquires breadth of knowledge and gains competence to achieve independent intellectual inquiry. Our courses must also stimulate understanding of personal, social, and civic values.

Sinclair has adopted the following General Education competency areas:

Computer Literacy: the ability to apply concepts and terminology in the basic operation of computers.

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving: the application of higher order analytical and creative cognitive processes.

Information Literacy: the ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information.

Oral Communication: the creation of common understanding through the use of verbal and nonverbal messages in a variety of contexts.

Values/Citizenship/Community: an awareness of personal obligations and responsibilities in one's community of influence.

Written Communication: the creation of understanding through composition and synthesis of the written word.

How does general education align to curriculum and assessment?

At Sinclair, we have identified Levels of General Education Core Competencies:

- **Basic skills:** introductory, foundational skills. Core Courses in Every Program
- **Skills transfer:** evidence of basic skills being transferred into specific majors
- **Skills synthesis and integration:** integrated application and synthesis of skills and knowledge in simulated workplace or transfer environments

Learning and application of general education competencies must occur throughout a student's entire program of study, and must be assessed periodically. Simply acquiring skills and knowledge without regularly using them creates entropy—those skills die off. I couldn't imagine allowing a surgeon to perform a procedure on me if she hasn't ever actually performed the procedure—in fact, I feel much more secure if I know that she has recently performed the procedure, has performed it regularly, and has always had a good result. Likewise, in our curriculum, general education knowledge needs to be reinforced, skills need to be regularly used, and both knowledge and skills need to be regularly evaluated, assessed, and improved.

Further, the competencies have been translated to measurable outcomes. These can be found on page 67 of the college's *2005-06 Course Catalog*. Rubrics have been developed to assist in the measurement (for both assessment and evaluation purposes) of these general education outcomes. These rubrics are available for adaptation and use by all faculty. You'll be able to read more about these in the next edition of this newsletter.

News From The Learning Liaisons

As discussed in the spring newsletter, the Learning Liaisons are faculty members, one from each of the academic divisions, who serve as assessment advocates. Their charge is threefold: to provide a consistent message and understanding of assessment across disciplines in a coordinated, proactive manner; to help provide consistent understanding, practice, dissemination, and collection of assessment and general education information across the divisions; and, in turn, to provide the necessary documentation of assessment and general education activity within the institution itself in a systematic, consistent, and meaningful way, reinforcing the operational aspects of the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle of continuous process improvement.

The Learning Liaisons also serve as members of the College's AQIP team on assessment in addition to serving as resources within the divisions in a number of ways. To date, they have conducted interviews with all chairs to determine the current state of assessment within the departments and programs; have helped chairs "feed" the Curriculum Management Tool to address course outcomes, assessment methods, performance criteria, and pertinent general education competency areas and measurable outcomes; and have developed information instruments to help clarify assessment and its benefit to students, faculty, and administration.

Sue Merrell (Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Continuous Improvement), Teresa Prosser (Chair of Assessment Committee), and Lori Zakel (Chair of General Education Committee) wish to thank **Jane Myong** for serving the past year as the Learning Liaison for Liberal Arts and Sciences and **Mary Connolly** who is now serving as the Communications Liaison rather than as the liaison for Extended Learning and Human Services. In their places are now **Art Ross** (please see below)

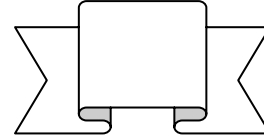
for Liberal Arts and Sciences and **Linda Pastore** (please see below) for Extended Learning and Human Services. Welcome, Art and Linda! They join the other Liaisons **Gloria Goldman, Allied Health; Ned Young, Business; Steve Wendel, Engineering; and Lori Zakel, Fine/Performing Arts.**

Linda Pastore: Extended Learning and Human Services. Linda Pastore is beginning her sixth year at Sinclair as an associate professor in the Experienced Based Education Department. This academic year she has a new position as the coordinator of College Without Walls. Linda also works with students who want to design their own degree through the Associate of Technical Studies and the Associate of Individualized Study degree programs. Linda serves on the Diversity Committee and the Curriculum Review Committee. She holds a Bachelor's of Science degree in Spanish education from Bloomsburg University and a Master's degree in Higher Education Counseling, from West Chester University. Linda's interest in assessment and curriculum comes from her graduate work and research. She recently received her doctorate in curriculum and administration from the department of Educational Leadership at Miami University.

Art Ross: Liberal: Arts and Sciences.

Art Ross is a professor of Physics and is completing his 16th year at Sinclair. For nine of those years, he has been the Chairperson of Physics. Recently, he participated in the piloting of the new Department Review process and continues to work with several college-wide initiatives. These initiatives include but are not limited to the Curriculum Management Tool Development Team and the definition of the Computer Literacy and Information Literacy outcomes. His interest in assessment comes from his desire to provide a quality educational experience for all students. He has a B.S. & M.S. in Physics from Bowling Green State University. He

began teaching in 1975 at Edison State College but left three years later. After 12 exciting years in Electronics Warfare, he returned to teaching at Sinclair.



2006 Spring Institute

There will be multiple sessions related to assessment, general education, and curriculum development at the 2006 Spring Institute. Full descriptions and details for these workshops will be found in the 2006 Spring Institute brochure.

Assessment 101 This workshop offers participants the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon their assessment understanding and practices using two tools developed by the Assessment Committee.

Assessment 102 Increasing understanding and practices related to assessment. This session builds upon Assessment 101 discussions and reflections.

Incorporating and Measuring General Education Outcomes in Any Class This workshop helps workshop participants learn how and when to use general education rubrics in their classes.

Collaborative Curriculum Connections: Working Together in CMT to Strengthen Student Learning This is a working session restricted to department chairpersons and their designees who are interested in incorporating assessment into their courses utilizing Sinclair's Curriculum Management Tool (CMT).

Additional Resources

Sinclair's websites

CMT: <http://cmt.sinclair.edu/security/login.cfm>

*click on guest login at bottom on page

AQIP: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/aqip/index.cfm>

Assessment: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/assessment/index.cfm>

General Education: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/gened/index.cfm>

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