



*The Sinclair Community College newsletter  
designed to heighten the understanding of the integrated relationship among  
curriculum, general education, and assessment  
Winter 2007*

## Note from the Provost

Sinclair has a long and proud history of providing a wide variety of learning options for students who want to learn. We pride ourselves on the number of students we welcome in rather than the number we screen out. More recently, we have become aware of the need to pay closer attention to the success of all those students who enroll in our many programs. We are not alone in this quest. There are many external demands at the state and national levels which call for more accountability in the results of our efforts once students are enrolled. The good work of many at Sinclair is focused directly on this charge to improve the success of our students and to document those efforts for others to see. The first and probably most important category in our **AQIP** systems portfolio is Helping Students Learn. The primary focus of **Achieving the Dream** is helping students succeed, especially those students historically underserved by our educational systems – minority and low income students.

**Building the Collective Responsibility for Student Learning** is a college-wide imperative which helps all of us focus on what is most important – student learning. In the following articles from Sue, Teresa, and Lori, you will read about the Ohio Board of Regents’ student success plans, our five year program outcomes plans, and encouraging results on computer and information literacy skills. Through their good work and that of faculty all across Instruction, we are making

excellent progress in our collective work to improve and expand student learning.



## Student Success in Ohio: OBOR Connecting the Dots

*By Sue Merrell, Director of Curriculum, Assessment and Continuous Improvement*

In last quarter’s newsletter, I wrote about the commitment versus compliance conundrum faced by institutions like Sinclair. “Effective assessment of student learning is a matter of commitment, not a matter of compliance.” (The Higher Learning Commission, NCA 2006)

Enter the Ohio Board of Regents (OBOR) and Student Success Plans. First off, OBOR’s Student Success Plan is not to be confused with Sinclair’s “SSP.” Simply defined, OBOR’s Student Success Plans reflect a “...clear, public statement of the measurable learning outcomes expected of students attending an institution, published on the institution’s own website.”

<http://regents.ohio.gov/accountability>

With ever-escalating interest in defining, measuring, and communicating learning outcomes in General Education and in the discipline, the OBOR Planning Committee on Higher Learning Accountability and Productivity offers a practical alternative that allows institutions to showcase their own results.

Here are a few of the expectations of the OBOR-recommended Student Success Plans. Sinclair is in great position to answer these questions in support of student success.

- Have we defined learning outcomes and assessments for student achievement of General Education outcomes? **YES!**
- Have we defined discipline-specific learning outcomes and assessments for student achievement in our programs? **YES!**
- Have we established standards for content, competencies, abilities and successful completion of our programs? **YES!**
- How do we engage faculty and the entire instructional community in continuous improvement of student outcomes and student achievements? **Ongoing Faculty Development**
- Can faculty, students, and others easily access information about institutional academic expectations and success? **YES!**

## Assessment

By Teresa Prosser, Chairperson of the Assessment Committee

For over two years now, all academic departments/programs have been progressing through a new review process, a process which requires every five years an in-depth review of program outcomes, general education outcomes, and student learning attainment among other aspects. These reviews and the subsequent set of recommendations for improvements are posted on the Provost website (<http://www.sinclair.edu/administrative/vpi/pdreview/index.cfm>).

Also posted on this website are the five-year program outcomes plans, as identified by the relevant chair and faculty, that constitute the systematic collection, analysis, and actions of each program outcome over the course of five years. The plans also identify the course(s) that are associated with the outcomes.

These plans help chairs and faculty focus on a select number of outcomes in a select number of courses and allow time for the analysis of the data pertaining to student attainment of the outcomes; they also allow time for changes to be implemented as a way of improving and enhancing student learning of the outcomes. (see below)

Program Outcomes	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
PO #1	Direct measure data are collected	Direct measure data are analyzed	Document improvements		
PO #2		Direct measure data are collected	Direct measure data are analyzed	Document improvements	
PO #3			Direct measure data are collected	Direct measure data are analyzed	Document improvements
PO #4				Direct measure data are collected	Direct measure data are analyzed
PO #5					Direct measure data are collected

These plans form an integral part of the department review process...and now form an integral part of the annual updates that occur during the four years between the more in-depth reviews. The annual updates identify the outcome(s) for which data are being collected from the identified courses and progressively prompts the collection, analysis, and actions taken for each outcome, thus creating a continuous cycle of improved student learning.

Already, chair and faculty responses have been positive. The plans provide a path for program outcomes assessment that is clear, direct, and manageable. The posting of these plans on the Provost website makes them accessible to all, both internal and external to the college, and provides a larger institutional view of student learning. It is collective responsibility and academic sharing at its best.



## General Education

*By Lori E. Zakel, Chairperson of the General Education Committee*

As promised in the Fall 2006 newsletter, college wide general education outcomes data have arrived. At the end of this newsletter, you will find the Research Analytics & Reporting (RA&Rs) executive summary of the Computer and Information Literacy Surveys that were conducted by a subcommittee headed by Ned Young and Linda Pastore. Surveys were disseminated to students at entry and exit points in spring, 2006. This successful initiative is the first of a five-year continuing cycle that asks for students' perceptions of their outcome achievements in General Education.

As you read the executive summary (and if you would like to see more detail, here is where you can find the full report: [http://www.sinclair.edu/departments/IPR/pub/survey\\_reports/Computer\\_Information\\_Literacy\\_Survey\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sinclair.edu/departments/IPR/pub/survey_reports/Computer_Information_Literacy_Survey_Report.pdf)), please take some time to decide what it means for your area. For example, the data suggest that our exiting students are more confident about their information and computer literacy abilities than are incoming students. Exiting students also reported that their education here had contributed to their skills in information literacy. Often, the areas where entering students rated themselves as least confident were also the items that showed the most difference between entering and exiting students.

However, there are also areas where improvements can be realized. Specifically, respondents tended to report lower confidence levels for the items about research strategies and information use than for the items that were more directly computer related. This suggests that perhaps it would be worthwhile to spend a bit more time in classes helping students improve their skills in those areas, specifically as they begin working on research papers for classroom assignments.

Another area where we could help improve our students' information and computer literacy skills is incorporating tables, graphs, headers, and footers into a document. Again, adding the requirement that a table or graph be included as one element of an assignment in a class or two might help students feel more comfortable with this outcome, at the completion of their education at Sinclair.

As you make changes in your curriculum based on the data in this and/or other studies, take some time to document them. I would love to be able to report some of those improvements in upcoming newsletters. Also, be sure those changes are discussed in your department's program review and its annual update. It's an easy way to show that the data are being used to improve student learning in General Education. And ensuring and improving student learning helps us all—it's great to be a part of that.

**COMPUTER AND INFORMATION LITERACY SURVEYS**  
**SPRING 2006**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report discusses the results of two surveys. One was administered to students in the Student Success Course (SSC), a course designed to help new students. The other was administered to students enrolled in capstone courses (CC) or courses generally taken as the student prepares to graduate. Students were asked to rate various tasks in terms of their ability to perform those tasks if asked to do so at that moment. The available responses were: “no experience”, “would likely need help”, “some confidence” and “could do easily”. CC respondents were also asked to rate how much their education at Sinclair had contributed to their skills using the following responses: “none”, “a little”, “some” or “a lot”.

**Demographics:**

- ❖ The percentage of males was much higher among the student success course respondents (51.1%) than among the capstone course respondents (37.9%).
- ❖ The percentage of minority students was much higher among the student success course respondents (27.7%) than among the capstone course respondents (11.2%).
- ❖ This could mean that males and minorities are starting here but are not getting to capstone courses (nearing graduation) at the same rate as females and white students.

**Overall**

- ❖ In general, in each of the areas studied, students felt confident about their skills even early in their enrollment here (based on responses of SSC students).
- ❖ In all cases, the CC students, who had, on average, been here longer, were more confident than the SSC students.
- ❖ Over 80% of CC students reported at least some confidence on each of the 45 tasks presented except for *scanning e-mail messages and attachments for viruses*.
- ❖ Respondents tended to report lower confidence levels for the items around research strategies and information use than for the items that were more directly computer related.
- ❖ CC students were more likely to report that their education here had contributed to their skills in tasks related to information literacy than more directly computer related skills.
- ❖ Often, items that SSC students rated themselves as least confident on were the items that showed the most difference between SSC ratings and CC ratings.
- ❖ In many cases items on which SSC students had little confidence were the ones that CC respondents were more likely to say their abilities had been helped by their Sinclair education.

**General Computer Use and Data Management Abilities**

- ❖ In the area of general computer use and data management, the biggest difference between SSC & CC students was in terms of *backing up data*. Only 50% of SSC students reported at least some confidence compared to 85% of CC students.

- ❖ 34% of CC students said their education at Sinclair had contributed some or a lot to their ability to back up data.

### Word Processing Abilities

- ❖ Of the word processing related tasks covered in the surveys, both sets of respondents were least confident in their abilities to incorporate tables, graphics, or headers and footers into a document.
- ❖ The difference in ratings between the two groups was also greatest on these items.
- ❖ Almost 40% of CC respondents' reported that their education here had contributed to their ability to incorporate items into a document some or a lot.

### E-mail Skills

- ❖ Tasks related to e-mail usage had some of the highest ratings of ability by both SSC and CC students
- ❖ *Scanning messages and attachments for viruses* was the item about which students were least confident (only 57.5% of SSC students and 78.5% of CC students reported at least some confidence).
- ❖ Virus scanning is the task where CC students were least likely to report that their education here had contributed to their skills (compared to all other tasks mentioned on this survey).
- ❖ This section had some of the lowest ratings of Sinclair's contributions to ability. This might be due to the fact that for many students some of these skills are already at a high level when they enroll here and therefore there is less room for improvement.

### Internet use

- ❖ More than 75% of SSC respondents and almost 90% of CC respondents had at least some confidence in their abilities to perform each of the internet related tasks included in the surveys.
- ❖ *Search revision and refinement* and *advanced search features* were the items rated lowest by both groups.
- ❖ The biggest difference between the two groups was in recognizing and using hyperlinks which 77.8% of these SSC respondents reported they were confident about compared to 93.7% of CC respondents.

### Research strategies and information use

- ❖ Students from both groups were less likely to report high levels of confidence in their abilities in these areas, which are less computer oriented than the previous categories.
- ❖ *Integrating multiple pieces of relevant information* was the area in which SSC respondents were least confident.
- ❖ *Integrating multiple pieces of relevant information* was also the item with the largest difference between the ratings of the SSC students and the CC students (64.5% of SSC and 89.3% of CC students reported at least some confidence).
- ❖ *Evaluating sources for credibility, relevancy & scope* was the most troublesome for CC respondents, but was also the item for which the most CC respondents reported that their education here had helped them some or a lot.

## Conclusion

- ❖ The confidence level of CC students (those who have been here longer) was higher than that of SSC students on all 45 items.
- ❖ While respondents' ratings of their abilities related to information literacy were generally lower than their ratings of computer related items, many of the information literacy items did rank highly in terms of reports of Sinclair's contributions to those abilities. So, while there is still room for improvement, this is an area where Sinclair seems to be contributing to students' skills.
- ❖ It is unfortunate that scanning for viruses in e-mails and attachments is an area in which students have little confidence in their abilities. They are also unlikely to say their education here has helped them much with this important aspect of computer literacy.

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## *Additional Resources*

Sinclair's Web sites:

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

\*click on the Guest Login link 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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**Sinclair offers many institute sessions and workshops throughout the year as a way of providing meaningful opportunities for faculty and others to learn more about curriculum, assessment, and general education. For a listing of those sessions being offered in the Spring Institute, please refer to the following page.**

# Spring Institute 2007

Sessions related to assessment, general education, and curriculum development will be offered at the 2007 Spring Institute. Register online at <http://our.sinclair.edu/sites/dlis/profdev/>.

## **Assessment 101**

Wednesday, March 21  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Building 14, Room 14115  
*Ned Young*

Have you ever wondered where you were in terms of your assessment understanding and practice? The Assessment Committee has developed two tools which allow individuals as well as groups to make that kind of determination. Intended to encourage effective discussion and introspection, these tools will form the discussion basis of this workshop. Participants will receive copies of these tools as well as experience in using them for either their own purposes and/or their departments.

## **Assessment 102**

Thursday, March 22  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Building 14, Room 14115  
*Ned Young*

This workshop will provide examples of cross-disciplinary assessment techniques. Studying and evaluating the specific assessment tools in Sinclair's Curriculum Management Tool (CMT). Choosing assessment tools and techniques for particular outcomes/courses. Participants are encouraged to bring copies of course outcomes for a course they would like to assess. They will be able to work on the development of an assessment plan for particular outcomes within that course.

## **Fun with Direct Measures: Engaging in Written Communication Assessment for General Education Outcomes**

Tuesday, March 20  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Building 14, Room 14130  
*Lori Zakek*

Assessing student learning can be a very worthwhile activity. Not only will participating in the session enlighten you about college wide assessment of general education, but you will be providing the college a needed service. During this

session you'll learn about direct measures for General Education outcomes at Sinclair, and you'll help measure student success in the Gen Ed outcome of Written Communication. Please attend: you'll learn; we'll learn: it's a Win Win! This session is for all faculty in all disciplines at Sinclair.

## **SCC 101: A Toolbox for Facilitating the New Student Experience Course at Sinclair Community College**

Tuesday, March 20  
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Building 14, Room 14130  
*Judy Kronenberger*

In this 3-hour session, you will be given the master syllabus and samples of teaching syllabi used by experience faculty who have taught this course in previous quarters. As a group, we will brainstorm ideas related to student success outcomes and discuss factors the prohibit student success across all divisions. In addition, you will learn how to: communicate with Early Alert Counselors; use the in-class assessment tools (MBTI, Discover, CSFI); assign and grade the common general education outcome based assignments; and learn a variety of activities to use with students in the classroom. Participants will also meet student services professional staff from multiple areas to gain a better understanding of their role in student success.

## **The ABC's of Assessment**

Friday, March 23  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon  
Building 14, Room 14107  
*Lalitha Locker & Douglas Bradley-Hutchison*

Are you confused about assessment? Tired of muddling along? This workshop will focus on the practical aspects of this important subject through concrete examples illustrating the various types of assessment (alternate, formative and summative) and research findings that indicate that assessment does impact student achievement. Learn how to design and/or adapt assessment tools, rubrics to evaluate the results, and methodologies that are suitable for your discipline and classes.