

**Arts and Sciences Division
2015 Assessment of Student Learning Report**

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In May 2015, the Assessment of Student Learning Committee recommended that all divisions transition from the academic year assessment cycle to the calendar year. The expectation is that the change will decrease many of the reporting problems the divisions were encountering and ensure the quality of the final analyses. The 2016 assessment cycle will include spring, summer, and fall.

Fall 2015 semester served as the Arts and Sciences transition period. The Arts and Sciences Division viewed the change to the calendar year cycle as a way of allowing faculty more time to collect data and to meet to analyze and discuss the results during the semesters, rather than at the end of the academic year when final data were often collected during final exams and when faculty was close to completing their contracts, often rushing through the analyses of data or leaving the chairs to work on the results. Thus, this change is intended to improve the quality of both the department's and the college's final Assessment of Student Learning report.

CALENDAR YEAR 2015 TRANSITION PLANS

The fall 2015 semester began with much confusion as to how we were to apply the AAC&U VALUE rubrics, putting our analysis of the fall data on hold until we could receive training. CTEAL, under the leadership of English faculty Jamie Patti, helped provide this training; but, most interesting, the faculty professional development revitalized or incited faculty's interest in assessment of student learning as we accepted new ideas and, in the process, demonstrated that in the Arts and Sciences Division, there is, indeed, a culture and commitment to the assessment of student learning.

The Assessment of Student Learning Committee requested that all faculty assess critical thinking, one of our institutional SLOs, as part of their department's or program's assessment report. Faculty were required to use the AAC&U VALUE rubrics until the Colorado Department of Higher Education finalizes its version of the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Table 1: Institutional SLOs Assessed by Departments describes the number of institutional SLOs that each department assessed and makes a comparison to the number of institutional SLOs assessed in the 2014-15 assessment cycle.

**Table 1: Institutional SLOs Assessed by Departments
Transition Calendar Year 2015**

	BIO & PHYSICAL SCIENCE	CRIMINAL JUSTICE	ECE, ED, LT	ENG-COM	FINE ARTS & HUM	MAT	SOC.SCL.,	Total GenEd SLOs assessed	Fall 2016 %	Comparison to AY 2014-15
Read, write, speak effectively	0	0	0	1	3	1	2	7	16%	-15%
Interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information	6	1	3	3	5	4	8	30	67%	+19%
Information/Communication technology	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4%	-9%
Interpersonal skills	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	4	9%	+4%
Cultural/global awareness	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	4%	+1%
<i>Total GenEd SLOs Assessed</i>	6	1	3	7	10	7	11	45		

Many departments improved their plans by rethinking their tools for assessment. Table 2: Elements of assessment Planning summarizes how each department planned and fulfilled the main elements of fall 2015 transitional plans:

1. As noted in Table 1, the majority of departments continue to use rubrics as their preferred assessment tool. This assessment cycle, all departments used the AAC&U Critical Thinking Rubric to assess critical thinking. Many department created rubrics to assess department specific SLOs, a few departments used other AAC&U VALUE rubrics in such areas as writing, oral communication, and Intercultural knowledge to assess institution SLOs. We will continue to encourage the use of VALUE rubrics, specifically Colorado Department of Higher Education's VALUE rubrics, to increase consistency among departments in assessing general education outcomes. Thus, the possibilities of across discipline comparisons of students' level of mastery of core competencies may lead to more meaningful discussions and changes.
2. The A & S Division also achieved an increase of 13% in part-time instructors' participation in the assessment of student learning process (from 57% in 2014-15 academic cycle to 70% for 2015 transition cycle). However, as the A & S assessment of student learning lead faculty reported last assessment cycle, it's difficult to assess the number of part-time instructors actively involved in the ASL process; therefore, the level of participation needs to be clarified within the actual assessment plans. Branch campuses involvement in the assessment process still remains a challenge.
3. Table 1 also lists the types of assessment methods, tools, and scoring methods employed by each department.

Table 2: Elements of Assessment Planning

	NUMBER OF SLOS ASSESSED	Part-time instructors Participation	NUMBER AND TYPES OF ASSESSMENT METHODS	TYPES OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS	SCORING METHODS
Bio & Physical Science	7	1	Selected Response: 3 Extended Written Response: 4 Performance Assessment: 0 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 3 • Essays or Research papers: 4 • Oral Presentations: 0 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 0 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 0 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 4 • #/% of correct answers: 3 • Checklist: 0
Criminal Justice	3	0	Selected Response: 0 Extended Written Response: 3 Performance Assessment: 0 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 0 • Essays or Research papers: 3 • Oral Presentations: 0 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 0 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 0 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 3 • #/% of correct answers: 0 • Checklist: 0
Early Childhood Education; Education; Library Science	3	0	Selected Response: 4 Extended Written Response: 0 Performance Assessment: 3 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 3 • Essays or Research papers: 0 • Oral Presentations: 1 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 2 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 1 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 5 • #/% of correct answers: 2 • Checklist: 0
English & Communication	18	19	Selected Response: 5 Extended Written Response: 10 Performance Assessment: 4 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 0 • Essays or Research papers: 12 • Oral Presentations: 1 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 3 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 3 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 13 • #/% of correct answers: 3 • Checklist: 1

	NUMBER OF SLOS ASSESSED	Part-time instructors Participation	NUMBER AND TYPES OF ASSESSMENT METHODS	TYPES OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS	SCORING METHODS
Fine Arts & Humanities	8	2	Selected Response: 1 Extended Written Response: 6 Performance Assessment: 2 Personal Communication: 1	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 1 • Essays or Research papers: 5 • Oral Presentations: 1 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 0 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 0 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 13 • #/% of correct answers: 1 • Checklist: 0
Mathematics	7	15	Selected Response: 4 Extended Written Response: 3 Performance Assessment: 0 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 4 • Essays or Research papers: 3 • Oral Presentations: 0 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 0 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 0 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 2 • #/% of correct answers: 4 • Checklist: 0
Social Sciences	10	2	Selected Response: 0 Extended Written Response: 10 Performance Assessment: 0 Personal Communication: 0	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 0 • Essays or Research papers: 10 • Oral Presentations: 0 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 0 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 0 • Reflection: 0	• Rubric: 10 • #/% of correct answers: 0 • Checklist: 0
Totals:	56	39	Selected Response: 17 Extended Written Response: 36 Performance Assessment: 9 Personal Communication: 1	<i>Direct:</i> • Quiz/Test/Exam: 11 • Essays or Research papers: 37 • Oral Presentations: 3 • Problem or Team-based Projects: 5 <i>Indirect:</i> • Surveys: 4 • Reflection:	• Rubric: 50 • #/% of correct answers: 13 • Checklist: 1

As illustrated in Table 3, during the 2015 assessment cycle, faculty closed the loop in 55% of SLOs assessed, an increase of 40% from the 2014-15 assessment cycle. 71% of departments closed loops. The A & S faculty lead will need to continue to examine the number of SLOs that are annually reassessed and document the rationale for those SLOs that are continuously reassessed, and, if necessary, open a discussion with department chairs to analyze the problem—what has been done, changed, tried that have resulted in little or no change.

Table 3: Closing the Loop

	NUMBER OF SLOS ASSESSED	SLOS TO BE REASSESSED 2016	LOOP CLOSED	% Closed 2015	% Increase from AY 2014-15
BIO & Physical Science	7	5	2	30%	+30%
Criminal Justice	3	3	0	0%	n/a
ECE, ED, LT	3	2	1	33%	0%
ENG-COM	18	5	13	72%	+47%
Fine Arts & Hum	8	8	0	0%	0%
MAT	7	0	7	100%	+100%
Soc. Sci., C.J.	10	2	8	80%	+69%
Totals	56		31	55%	

The completed 2015 transition reports were due from department chairs in the first week of April 2016 to allow ample time for chairs to meet with their faculty and part-time instructors. The time may be used for additional meetings and discussions/analysis of the data and to reflect on the assessment process.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following challenges persists from previous assessment cycles:

1. A few chairs continue to control assessment. Each faculty member is responsible for creating, planning, tabulating and gathering data, and recommending changes for specific SLOs. All members of the department should meet to collaborate on the final analyses and the results to report. The chair should collect these reports to incorporate into and present as one report. Because assessment of student learning is part of faculty’s professional responsibilities and also part of faculty’s performance evaluation, chairs must address the degree of each faculty member’s participation in the ASL process.
2. Although at the end of each stage, the ASL faculty lead receives 100% of the assessment plans, punctuality continues to be a problem.

3. Professional development is crucial. As the complexity of assessment continue to grow, faculty's understanding of assessment must follow. Developing appropriate assessment tools and understanding when multiple measures become necessary to assess specific SLOs/performances is important.
4. We need to continue to increase the number of part-time instructors on all campuses who actively participate in assessment, but, most importantly, we need to define the role of part-time instructors in the assessment process realistically.
5. General education is the responsibility of the Arts and Sciences Division; therefore, all departments must focus assessment on more than two institutional SLOs to document that PCC graduates exit with those abilities.
6. As recommended last assessment cycle, the Arts and Sciences Division should, where possible and practical, consider engaging in collaborative, cross-discipline assessment of general education objectives. For example, if assessing communication competency, disciplines such as psychology, social sciences, or biology may partner with the English and Communication Department who will act as outside evaluators to assess the writing quality of the papers or projects. In this case, the benefits are two-edge: the disciplines validate their own assessment of students' communication skills, and the English department will have broader and more realistic data to justify changes or need for further contextualization. In addition, such interdisciplinary assessment may provide the motivation for general education reform, leading to changes on a broader scale.
7. Also, as recommended last assessment cycle, the Assessment of Student Learning Committee should assess its own effectiveness as a committee and the state of assessment at PCC as perceived by faculty. The lead instructors should get together to determine the survey and work with Cory to implement, and analyze the results. The information gathered will help the committee members determine how to improve PCC's culture of assessment.

FACULTY'S INSIGHT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING PROCESS:

At the end of the assessment cycle, chairs asked their faculty to reflect on their experience during the assessment process and include in the plans a brief statement indicating insights they or the department as a whole gained as a result of assessing students' learning. In their final assessment report, chairs submitted the following statements:

1. Biological and Physical Sciences Department:

The department understands and recognizes the necessity of institutional assessment. Critical thinking is a valued skill that is imperative to scientific inquiry. In our first foray using institutional assessment, the department found the institution's rubric limited in its ability to accurately assess critical thinking as it relates to our disciplines. At this time, we hope to at best have established a baseline. Moving forward, we hope to use a discipline specific rubric in the fall to establish an even stronger baseline.

2. Criminal Justice Department:

I learned many things as I went through my first formal assessment cycle as a PCC faculty/chair.

The biggest thing I learned was how challenging it can be just to get out of the gate. Deciding what to assess, and formulating meaningful and measurable outcomes takes time, and I found myself rethinking and rewording those outcomes several times before settling on them.

I also found the rubric creation process to be tedious and time consuming. However, the rubrics have saved much time in the long run, as I utilize them not only for formal assessment efforts, but for most of the assignments students turn in. They have been a gift that keeps on giving.

As far as results go, I was surprised but not shocked as how much more focus I need to put on student writing and critical thinking skills. I learned my students write consistently OK, but not as well as I would like, across the board. I am in the process of implementing strategies to improve writing fundamentals which I plan to introduce next fall.

Critical thinking was also not where I'd like it to be. I believe my students did well identifying and discussing the concepts assessed. On the whole however, they struggled with higher levels of analyzing, applying and synthesizing those concepts.

I say I was surprised, but not shocked, because these are things I think I've known for some time, and seen declining in recent years, but to have the data staring you in the face is both humbling, but also motivating.

I know I can be a tool in improving my students' overall writing and critical thinking skills, and I accept the challenges to improve their performance in those key areas.

3. Early Childhood Education Program:

The department's focus this cycle has been on the 6 Developmental Domains and how they are integrated into every course. We discovered that overall the students have an awareness of each domain. The students were able to apply each of the domains into lesson plans, discussions and scenarios. We did learn that many students struggled with identifying diversity or cultural elements within lesson plan, presentations and in-class activities. This discovery is very important as we teach to the "whole" child and all child care programs and preschools are required to be inclusive. The department will continue to independently evaluate students understanding of the 6 Developmental Domains in all ECE courses.

4. English and Communication Department:

Like a puzzle, all the parts are fitting together smoothly the more experience we have in assessing student learning. The English and Communication Department faculty are seeing the differences among the different levels of assessment and are understanding the need to use multiple measures for more complex SLOs. This assessment cycle, we are recognizing the necessity of developing common standards for some SLOs to bring consistency in the way we assess. Assessment continues to define our teaching and driving how we organize and implement our curriculum. Faculty made the following observation:

"[Assessing student learning] is encouraging because we see students improving when we focus on a particular task, but on the other hand, we find that other skills tend to slip. We feel that it would be interesting to assess a previous SLO to see whether or not our efforts have been resulting in success despite the lack of an SLO to focus on."

“Most students in CCR 092 begin the course with an appropriate understanding of the definition of critical thinking. Most do not, however, identify themselves as critical thinkers, nor do they expect to become critical thinkers at the end of their college career. This attitude about critical thinking must be addressed with multiple and varied learning experiences in order to make progress toward the improvement of critical thinking skills.”

“Assessment needs to be across the department with sections chosen from faculty and part-time from both Orman and satellite campuses in order to achieve a valid tally of the results. Part-time instructors need to be utilizing the same guidelines, both face to face and online, for grammar and organization structures in ENG 121 to avoid issues in ENG 122.”

5. Fine Arts and Humanities Department:

For the 2015-16 academic year, the assessment process for the Fine Arts and Humanities Department, was both frustrating and engaging. It was frustrating due to much of the confusing communication received from various offices as to what exactly was required in terms of critical thinking data and the rubric to be used. We found the mandated rubric to be more appropriate for classes with a strong writing focus, but not for skills based classes such as drawing, ceramics, and jewelry which had a stronger emphasis on visualization and technical skills that relied more on concept sketches and notes than written communication. After we discovered that we could use multiple critical thinking rubrics instead of one standardized rubric, the frustration basically went away.

The numerous conversations that faculty had about assessment during and after the critical thinking rubric confusion was engaging because we were, ultimately, able to reaffirm that there was real value in our assessment process. We agreed that assessment wasn't just about data, but more about the resulting improvements we made in the classroom.

6. Mathematics Department:

In reflecting back on the year's assessment activities the faculty gained valuable insight on the value of problem solving. Providing problem solving opportunities really emphasizes the usefulness of mathematics in the everyday world. Developmental students were able to apply basic math and algebra skills to solve applications. While upper level math students were able to apply critical thinking skills to solve open ended problems. The use of rubrics in MAT 135 & 201/202 aided the students in producing higher level work.

7. Social Sciences Department:

The Social Sciences faculty in the areas of Geography, History, and Political Science, in approaching our SLOs, gained incredible insight into the student learning process, and individual learning styles. Throughout the assessment cycles, we continued to refine and modify both the assignment and the rubric to adjust to deficiencies in our assessment process.

This is the first semester assessing the SLO for PSY 101 and the SLO for PSY 235. Looking at the initial data, there is room for improvement, as average class scores were below the targets. At this point, it is not clear if changes need to be made in instruction and/or the specific assignment. Before making major changes, additional instructors will be assessing the same SLOs in the spring of 2016. After reviewing the data for both semesters and additional instructors, needed changes will be made for fall of 2017.