

2019-2020

Annual Assessment Activity Report

A Review of Assessment Activities and Progress

SOUTHEASTERN ILLINOIS COLLEGE
COMPILED BY CLINTON GARMANE

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INTRODUCTION

The 2019/2020 academic year presented many assessment challenges to colleges and universities across the globe. The Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent shutdowns left many institutions and students in a state of shock and distress. Consequently, many well-intentioned and valuable plans were either difficult or impossible to implement. As the situation continues to develop and remain fluid, the meaning behind assessment in higher education needs to be reinforced.

Linda Suskie, vice president of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, explains that assessment's most-important purpose is not improvement or accountability.¹ Rather, the most-important purpose is to give students the best-possible education.² She explains that in order for assessment to be most-effective, we must unify our mission to be student focused. By focusing our purpose, we can unify the administration, faculty, staff, and students.³ This unification is ever more pressing as we continue to navigate the quagmire of Covid19.

Though the pandemic has caused assessment issues, its impact has been an impetus for development. The pandemic has forced many in higher education to reevaluate the future of education and the increased the role technology is going to play in it. When the Spring 2020 semester began, no one could have expected that everything would come to a halt by mid-March.

¹ Linda Suskie, "Why Are We Assessing? | Inside Higher Ed," Insidehighered.com, October 26, 2010, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/10/26/why-are-we-assessing>.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

SIC's administration, faculty, and staff sprang into action and worked to ensure that we met the most-important purpose of assessment – to give students the best-possible education.

THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

SIC's assessment committee is 20-member consortium of administration, faculty, and staff. The committee serves as a major part of SIC's institutional process. The purpose of the committee is to ensure that all instructional and non-instructional programs at the college are routinely and accurately evaluated.⁴

The assessment committee is directed by the "A Team". This group is chaired by the Executive Dean of Student Services (Dr. Tyler Billman), a Humanities faculty member (Clinton Cory Garmane), a Math/Science faculty member/Division Chair (Jason Fitzgerald), and a Diesel Tech instructor/Applied Technology Co-Chair (Robbie Lindhorst). The group is advised by the Vice President of Academic Affairs (Dr. Karen Weiss). The purpose of the "A Team" is to provide leadership to the assessment committee.⁵

ASSESSMENT REPORT

SCOPE

Contained within this report is a condensed review of assessment activity from the 2019-2020 academic year. This review will include awards, developments within the assessment

⁴ "Annual Assessment Activity Report Assessment Annual Report: A Review of Assessment Activities and Progress," *Southeastern Illinois College*, 2019, http://www.sic.edu/files/uploads/global/Assessment/Annual_Assessment_Activity_Report_2018-2019.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.

committee, an overview of assessment plans from selected programs within the instructional and non-instructional areas, as well as a summary of future assessment endeavors. This report will also address new assessment activities requested for the 2020/2021 academic year as a result of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

AWARDS

The “Achievement in Assessment” award for the 2019-2020 academic year was awarded to long-time Assessment Committee Co-Chair and Executive Dean of Academic Services, Gina Sirach. During her tenure at SIC, Dean Sirach helped to cultivate a climate of assessment excellence working across campus and departments. Dean Sirach’s contributions and leadership in assessment set a precedence of greatness for the future. We wish Dean Sirach much happiness and fulfillment in her well-deserved retirement from SIC.

NEW ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY FOR 2019-2020

The 2019-2020 academic year had many developments in assessment. The new curriculum mapping initiative has been implemented to provide a visual representation of the student learning via General Education goals. The assessment form benefited from a couple of modifications. The form was reformatted to better represent the alignment of instructional plans with General Education goals. Additionally, the form was modified in May 2019 to include CTE goals. These CTE goals will be utilized by the CTE instructional units in creating their assessment plans.

Special consideration must be given to the global pandemic and the subsequent campus closure in the spring semester 2020. These events were unexpected and required tremendous

levels of change in a short amount of time. As a result, some instructional and non-instructional units were unable to complete their assessment plans as written. It should be noted that the college as a whole worked diligently to deliver quality programs to students and was able to successfully complete the semester with minimal disruption.

REVIEW OF 2019-2020 INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS

The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the assessment activities for each instructional division for the 2019-2020 academic year. In most cases, each instructional division will be represented by two individual departments. Assessment plans and results for all instructional departments can be viewed on Intrinsic.

HUMANITIES

Philosophy 121 students composed a brief philosophical dialogue in response to Raphael's painting, "The School of Athens". The dialogue was to be Socratic in nature, reflecting the philosophical insight depicted in Raphael's representation of Plato and Aristotle, with special attention to their hand gestures. A 5-point scale was used to assess the dialogue: 5 (90%-100%); 4 (80%-89%); 3 (70%-79%); 2 (60%-69%); 1 (0%-59%). Successful completion was to be indicated by a score of at least 3 (70%). The results of this assessment showed that 91.7% of students in the course successfully completed the assessment. This indicated a rudimentary understanding of dialogue form and Socratic Method, and a basic understanding of differing philosophical insights of Plato and Aristotle. The instructor indicated that this was the first year for this assessment. The instructor stated, "for results comparison, this assessment should be administered again."

Spanish students were going to explore solutions to the vast number of Latin Americans immigrating to the United States by coming up with ideas on how the United States government might be able to help these people without them having to leave their country. Additionally, the students were to research ways to assist immigrants when they come to the United States. They were expected to explore who is responsible for helping them. Should it be the government's responsibility, or should citizens be more involved in helping? Each student was expected to come up with two ways that the immigrants should be assisted once they arrive in the United States. A rubric was used to assess the quality and thought put into this assignment on a scale of 0-100. Unfortunately, these assessments plans were not able to be completed as planned. The spring campus closure due to the Coronavirus rendered this plan unable to complete. The instructor stated, "Again, due to the college closing because of COVID I was unable to do this assessment; because I was going to do this activity as a follow-up to their research activity from the first means of assessment. They were going to do this activity before the end of the spring 2020 semester."

SOCIAL SCIENCE, BUSINESS, AND EDUCATION

American Government students read *Founding Brothers* and wrote an analysis of the founders' personal behavior and how it specifically impacted their decision-making and the formation of American society. Additionally, students were given an open-ended pre-test where a baseline of knowledge regarding the founders would be established. The pre-test came in the form of an essay question. The post-test came in the form of an analytical paper on *Founding Brothers* where students specifically discussed the elements of the founders' behavior including the famous duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. The essay was scored using a

seven-point Likert scale with seven representing the highest level of knowledge/mastery and with 1 representing inadequate/poor knowledge of the content. The results showed an overall class average on the pre-test essay question of 1.25 indicating inadequate knowledge of the content (while students averaged a 5.6 on the 7-point Likert scale on the Analytical Essay.) Thus, the stated goal of a 25% improvement was met and exceeded. The students' knowledge and awareness of the American Revolution, the founder's personal behavior and its broader aesthetic increased significantly during the course of the semester. The instructor stated, "As noted above, students posted a significant improvement in both areas. Thus, I do not plan on significantly altering the approach to the course in terms of the American Revolution. It does, however, tell me that assigning materials that present the founders as real people (who were brilliant and brave but also like the rest of us flawed) rather than marble figures is especially effective. An accurate view of the actors leads to a better understanding of the aesthetic and context of the American revolution."

Sociology 121 students wrote an analysis of personal behavior; specifically, how the mind works and its biological orientation towards division. Students were given an open-ended pre-test where a baseline of knowledge regarding brain science would be established. The pre-test consisted of an open-ended essay question. The post-test summarized Johnathan Haidt's analysis of the various works of neuroscience. Students were also asked to describe their own experiences with a "divided mind." Both tests were scored using a seven-point Likert scale with seven representing the highest level of knowledge/mastery and with 1 representing inadequate/poor knowledge of the content. Results showed a baseline of the students' knowledge of what drives personal behavior; specifically, how the mind works and its biological orientation was established via a pre-test through a test embedded essay question. Students

scored a 1 (indicating inadequate/poor) knowledge of this area entering the course. Conversely, they scored a 5.76 exceeding the stated goal of a 25% improvement in this area. The instructor stated, “the assessment process demonstrated the course is especially effective in improving students’ knowledge of the drivers of personal behavior specifically its biological tendency towards division.” The instructor does not plan on making significant changes to the material.

MATH, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

The assessment plan for **Physics 121 and 222** students included a means of assessment where the students were to write a poetic description of the color array in an element emission spectrum. The criteria for success was to be a class average of 70% or above for each course. Unfortunately, this means of assessment was unable to be carried out as planned. The instructor stated, “students were unable to perform the poetic description assignment due to the pandemic. The color array is from an element emission spectrum which is performed over the last laboratory experiment. The pandemic caused us to be unable to meet for the performance of the assignment.” The instructor goes on to say that this assessment will be attempted again in the next year.

Students in **Information Technology** were expected to demonstrate increased problem solving and critical thinking skills. In order to measure this, students enrolled in IT 153 were tasked with fixing a sabotaged computer systems. The first means assessment describes that the students will each be provided with two computers. The first computer suffers from a sabotaged electrical system and the second computer suffers from a sabotaged storage system. In each instance, the students were expected to fix the issues and bring the computer back to a working state. The criteria for success was set at 90% of the students being able to fix the issues and score

a minimum of 8 on a defined scale. Results showed that 100% of the students were able to bring the computer back to working order with an average score of 9.7. The instructor stated, “for IT 153, additional class time was spent with hands-on troubleshooting exercises working through the A+ troubleshooting methodology. This increased emphasis will be used in future semesters.”

NURSING AND ALLIED HEALTH

The CNA students focused on clear communication with residents and colleagues. The first intended outcome focused on effective patient communication. To measure this, an exam regarding the rules of effective communication was given. The exam was 20 questions in length and consisted of true/false and fill-in-the-blank type questions. The exam was given twice during the semester – once at the beginning and again near the end. Success would be achieved if the scores between the two exams increased by an average of 20%. Like many of our programs, CNA was impacted by the campus closure and pandemic. This is shown in the results of this assessment. The average score of the pretest was 76% and the average score of the post test was 88%, thus falling 8 percentage points below the criteria for success. The instructor stated, “The class average of pretest was 76%. The class average of post-test was 88%. While improvement is noted, the benchmark of a 20% increase in scores was not achieved. Results may have been affected by the extended schedule created by COVID quarantine guidelines. Students began the program in February of 2020 and were scheduled to complete by mid-May. Due to infection control guidelines and campus-imposed safety guidelines, the students could not complete until early October. It is also noteworthy that the clinical instruction (SIC’s CNA instructors would have provided that) was replaced by actual work experience the students gained by working as Temporary Nursing Assistants (TNAs) in local, long-term care facilities.”

APPLIED TECHNOLOGY

Students enrolled in the **Diesel Technology** program were expected to model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management by agreeing to and adhering to the goals set forth in the new Diesel Technology student handbook. The handbook sets clear code of ethics for technicians as they work on customer vehicles, ethical leadership as they go into the work environment, and effective management of time, resources and property. To test this goal, the students were given a role-play scenario to service a piece of equipment. The students were expected to demonstrate adherence to the code of conduct while communicating clearly with the customer. The program planned to utilize a checklist of specific goals that would measure student success in standards of conduct. The assessment measure would be successful if the students were able to demonstrate 6 of the 8 goals on the checklist. Unfortunately, this assessment measure was unable to be completed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS

The following paragraphs give a brief overview of the 2019-2020 assessment activities in all non-instructional areas. This is only a small sampling of the assessment activities in these departments. The complete assessment plans for these areas can be found on Intrinsic.

CO-CURRICULAR

The assessment of co-curricular activities at SIC is key to understanding the entirety of our students' learning experience. SIC defines co-curricular activities to be any student

organization on campus that is funded by the institution's Student Government.⁶ Co-curricular organizations were among those that sustained the greatest injuries as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. This is evidenced in the plan submitted by the **Math and Science Club**.

For 2019-2020, the Math and Science Club chose an outcome that stated, "club members will demonstrate positive social interaction skills and strong interpersonal relationships by positively interacting with their peers and club sponsors." One means of assessment was an on-campus video game tournament. This tournament is a unique event and is co-sponsored with Student Government. Students involved in both organizations were expected to take an active role in the on-campus video game tournaments. Club members were to register participants, monitor participants during gameplay to ensure tournament rules were followed, assist with food service at the events, participate in the gameplay, assist with the awards portion of the event, and assist with set-up and tear-down of the event. Success would be achieved if a student completed a minimum of 3 of the above-mentioned expectations.

The reported results stated that there was only one video game tournament offered during the 2019-2020 academic year due to the COVID pandemic. The only tournament was offered in the fall semester and was not a typical MST video game tournament, rather it was a trivia-based tournament. The participants competed using their smartphones or tablets as an entry device. The competition had the largest participant turn-out in many years. The report states that the fall tournament had a large turnout and was quite successful. They plan on offering a similar type of event in the future. The report author stated, "When the COVID pandemic has subsided and

⁶ "Annual Assessment Activity Report Assessment Annual Report: A Review of Assessment Activities and Progress," *Southeastern Illinois College*, 2019, http://www.sic.edu/files/uploads/global/Assessment/Annual_Assessment_Activity_Report_2018-2019.pdf.

student organizations are once again able to be active on campus, the club will continue to host social activities on campus” and that, “the social events provide lasting memories for the club members and help to develop positive social skills within them that they will use long after their time at SIC.”

STUDENT AFFAIRS

The 2019-2020 assessment plan for **Enrollment Services** addressed the need to develop strong relationships with in-district high schools in order to promote higher enrollments at SIC upon graduation. The effectiveness of this recruitment can only be determined via an examination of the penetration rates for each in-district high school. It was noted that this is an expansion of the plan presented in 2018-2019. The first means of assessment looked at each in-district high school graduates from 2019 and examined how many were then admitted/enrolled at Southeastern Illinois College for the fall 2019 semester. The criteria for success was set at 65% of these graduating seniors enrolling at SIC for the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Results showed that 35.67% of in-district high school graduates enrolled in SIC for the fall of 2019. The spring semester of 2020 showed 30.66%. The second means of assessment examined those students who chose to not enroll at SIC. The students who didn't enroll at SIC were entered into the National Student Clearing House to see if they enrolled at other institutions.

The results of both means show that SIC is not competing with other institutions for enrollments. Evidence shows that the actual competition is with students who choose to not pursue any post-secondary education. The results show that 41.08% of in-district high school graduates did not attend college in the fall of 2019 and that 47.09% did not attend college in the

spring of 2020. Based on these numbers, Enrollment Services will develop a recruitment initiative targeted at recruiting the identified student population.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, BUSINESS OFFICE AND SERVICES

SIC's **Business Office** is working to reduce the number of students turned over to collections due to errors with WA's. In order to achieve this, the office looked at students who dropped all but one or two courses during the refund period and those that dropped all but one or two after the refund period. For the students who drop during the refund period, 80% will have their billing statements held and reviewed for accuracy and to ensure that they were attending classes. For those who dropped after the refund period, 80% will be verified by instructors to determine if they are still attending class. Results show that efforts are improving and progress is being made in the accounts receivable department. It was also noted that students are being administratively withdrawn from courses but then let back in to those same courses. This has created confusion and thus errors in bookkeeping. The Business Office will continue to review each student account thoroughly before turning any accounts over to collections.

Marketing determined the best time frame for geotriggered campaigns targeting high school students who visit a defined list of university campuses. SIC works with MediaCross for mobile marketing. One of the tactics is a geotriggered campaign targeting high school students who visit universities. These students and parents who have visited the SIC website and then visit a defined list of universities in the region will receive affordability ads directing them back to SIC. We want to know if this campaign is more effective in the fall or spring semesters. The fall geotrigger campaign (one of the highest performing digital campaigns to date) ran for 12 weeks and had a .48% CTR. The spring geotrigger campaign was stopped after 16 days due to

COVID-19 because students were no longer visiting university campuses. During that brief time, the CTR was .29%. We feel this is inconclusive data because of COVID-19.

FUTURE STEPS

As we continue to navigate the new world that is Coronavirus, we must examine how to effectively and efficiently deliver quality assessment in our respective areas. The Assessment Committee recognized that old assessment methodologies may not transition well into an online world. Rather than face another year of disrupted or failed assessment plans, we asked that all departments adopt plans that work remotely. In requesting this change, we recognized that some programs are not able to do remote means of assessment. These programs are being treated as exceptions and are therefore allowed to use more traditional assessment methods.

The 2020/2021 academic year brought changes to the Assessment Committee's A-Team. Assessment Committee Co-Chair, Gina Sirach, retired leaving her position open. Clinton Cory Garmane, Music Instructor, has moved into the co-chair role and handles all instructional plans. Dr. Tyler Billman remains as co-chair and handles all non-instructional plans.

Continuing education and training remain key areas of focus for the Assessment Team. Access to training during this time is limited and difficult to access. The HLC is offering limited virtual trainings and these trainings fill up quickly. The A-Team leadership will continue to attend virtual conferences in General Education Assessment to build upon comments from the most recent HLC visit in 2019.

CLOSING STATEMENTS

Through our assessment process, SIC is able to evaluate the efficacy of its programs and ensure the needs of its students are being met. This report offers a small sample of the 2019-2020 assessment projects for SIC's instructional and non-instructional areas. In reading through this report, one can see SIC's commitment to student learning and academic success despite unexpected challenges.

The 2019-2020 academic year was a year of many dramatic and sudden shifts. When the year began, no one could have predicted the Coronavirus and the changes that would come in March 2020. Without much warning and with limited time and resources, the administration, faculty, and staff of SIC efficiently transitioned to an online-only format. In doing this the focus on student success never faltered.

In creating this report, it was of utmost importance to show both the positives and the negatives. Some plans proved to be successful while others proved to not be successful or halted. The effects of the Coronavirus are evidenced in some of the feedback given in the assessment results. Regardless of the challenges presented, assessment at SIC remains a top priority. We will continue to grow, educate, and prosper.

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