

# ASSESSMENT *Fall 2003*

“Do assessment for improvement; nothing else matters.”

Northwestern Michigan College

August 2003

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## Report to Faculty

### From: College-Wide Assessment Team and Office of Institutional Research

This fall Curriculum Committee will be initiating actions to improve the four areas listed as **CHALLENGES** below. Activities at the October 21 Professional Development Day will focus on improvements based on the results of our research about what our students know and can do. Each of you has an opportunity to play an important role in improving our students' achievement. In the next few weeks, Curriculum Committee will invite you to offer proposals on any of the four areas cited for improvement. These proposals will help them determine the structure of the Professional Development Day. They are particularly interested in interdisciplinary projects that promote greater emphasis on incorporating our general education skills and abilities into the curriculum.

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The following information has been condensed considerably. Reports on the results of each of the assessment methods are available electronically on the Shared drive in the Institutional Research public folder under General Education Assessment. All PSSA (Program/Services Self Assessment) reports will be online later this fall.

## Strengths

- 60% of students taking the CAAP Critical Thinking test scored higher than the national average. Students scored the highest in identifying the parts of an argument correctly (67%) and in problem resolution (58%).
- 91% of students taking the CAAP Writing test scored at or above the national average. Most scored in the mid-range of the ACT rubric (between “adequate” and “competent.”)
- Student scores on artifacts show definite improvement. The trend observed last fall continues: Scores are moving upward. For the most part, faculty scoring teams rated more student work in the “Proficient” and “Advanced” areas than previously. Very few samples of student work fell in the “Developing” area of the rubric in the Spring semester scoring.\*
- Those courses which support the Cultural Perspectives outcome have done well in helping students realize the importance of other cultures. Scoring of artifacts in May 2003 show a significant gain in student understanding of other cultures. Results of the Retrospective Survey show that students self-reported the greatest gains in this area, especially since Fall Semester 2002 results were so dismal. Students reported a significant gain in their ability to see and recognize different cultural viewpoints and in their ability to understand the contributions and influences of different cultures and people. About 50% of the students also said their ability to talk about the economic, historical, political or social aspects of a culture and their ability to evaluate how different cultures affect each other had greatly improved.
- All academic programs have now completed their self assessment and submitted their PSSAs. This three-year process was developed to help us document student achievement of program outcomes.

To ensure this process is more than a formality, programs will review assessment results annually and make improvements as needed. This process is designed to help programs

continually assess and improve student learning whether they be seeking employment or transferring to another institution.

- Assignments that generate the student artifacts are consistently improving: Out of 27 courses providing artifacts in May, all but two were scored.

This fall 54 courses will provide student artifacts for scoring. This is doubled from previous semesters and brings our sample closer to what is needed for validity. The assessment program in place—scoring of student work with faculty-developed rubrics, the unique retrospective survey, various standardized tests—meets current accreditation agency requirements.

## Challenges

**While we can certainly congratulate ourselves on these strengths, the assessment results point to several areas where curriculum needs improvement.**

### **Area 1: Research/Thinking skills**

The CAAP Critical Thinking test told us that the weakest area in our students' thinking skills was in evaluating claims (arguments) and developing conclusions.

The ACT CAAP writing rubric calls it "learning to support claims with evidence." No one would deny there is a strong connection between thinking and writing, especially when both appear as weaknesses.

### **Area 2: Cultural Perspectives**

Our greatest challenge with the Cultural Perspectives outcome is increasing students' exposure to the contributions of other peoples and cultures. While the courses that do emphasize cultural perspectives are doing a great job, only a very few in our curriculum are supportive of this outcome. When courses are selected to provide artifacts for scoring on Cultural Perspectives, the same courses come up every semester. Our challenge here is to make the discussion of other peoples and cultures much more pervasive in our students' educational experience. (See Graduate Exposure to General Education Outcomes, April 16 2003, and Curriculum Commitment to the General Education Outcomes, May 13, 2003.)

### **Area 3: Program Outcomes**

While all academic areas have submitted a self-assessment based on outcomes, not all outcomes are measurable and not all areas have fully developed a process for measuring progress on their outcomes. Some will need to revise these outcomes to better define the skills, knowledge and abilities that pertain to their programs students. Outcomes must also be linked closely to program curricula. This is a process each academic area will exam this fall.

### **Area 4: Assessment Process**

Several issues remain as challenges in refining our process. 1. Artifact scoring rubrics are cumbersome and overly complex; 2. Outcomes presented in levels may be very informative for scoring and improvement purposes but may not be the best way to define how these outcomes occur in the curriculum; 3. The three outcomes, mostly the higher levels and in particular all levels of Cultural Perspectives, should be more widely supported, especially in the Liberal Studies areas.

### **Student Awareness**

One concern that defies categorizing is student awareness of assessment and what it means to their educational experience. It could be considered process but is much more than that. The Higher Learning Commission, the branch of NCA that deals with colleges and universities, requires that course and General Education outcomes are included on every course syllabus.

Faculty have been encouraged to discuss course and General Education outcomes at the beginning of each semester. We strongly encourage you to continue to do this. When students know what is expected of them, they can more readily comply.

## Artifact Scoring Results: Spring 2003

**Standard:** 80% of student work scored is at “proficient” or higher. The scores in the tables below represent % of students at “proficient” or higher.

### Communication Skills

Level 1

<b>Spring 2002</b>	64.4 %
<b>Spring 2003</b>	66.7 %

Level 2

<b>Spring 2002</b>	43.3%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	60%

Level 3

<b>Spring 2002</b>	80%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	96.2 %

**Level 1:** (The student) Understands, organizes and expresses ideas using standard English.

**66.7 % of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 2:** (The student )Uses appropriate qualitative or quantitative information-gathering methods, and communicates with a sense of audience and purpose.

**60 % of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 3:** (The student) Applies strategies, theories, or technologies to communicate in an appropriate manner in one or more disciplines.

**96.2% of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

### Critical Thinking Skills

Level 1

<b>Spring 2002</b>	90%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	56.6%

Level 2

<b>Spring 2002</b>	50%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	90%

Level 3

<b>Spring 2002</b>	<b>only 10 artifacts scored*</b>
<b>Spring 2003</b>	48.2%

**Level 1:** (The student ) Identifies issues or problems and articulates a process for resolving them.

**56.6 % of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 2:** (The student) Constructs arguments, evaluates claims and develops conclusions using evidence and logic to resolve problems or issues.

**90 % of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 3:** (The student) Demonstrates the ability to resolve problems or issues in one or more professions or disciplines.

**48.2 % of students scored were rated “Proficient” or higher.**

(\*Spring 2002: While 20 percent of the students scored were rated “Advanced” at this outcome level, 50 percent were rated “Developing.” The remaining student artifacts were not scored. Scorers determined that the student work presented was not closely enough linked to the outcome.)

## Cultural Perspectives

Level 1

<b>Spring 2002</b>	50%
<b>Spring 2002</b>	90%

Level 2

<b>Spring 2002</b>	31%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	56.7%

Level 3

<b>Spring 2002</b>	50%
<b>Spring 2003</b>	100%

**Level 1:** (The student) Demonstrates an awareness of diverse peoples and cultures.

**90% of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 2:** (The student) Analyses the contributions and influences of diverse cultures upon people(s).

**60% of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Level 3:** (The student) Evaluates the impact of diverse cultures in the context of one or more disciplines or professions.

**100% of students scored were rated “proficient” or higher.**

**Because of our small sample size, the reliability of our results could be questioned.**

**Assessment Team members:** Sallie Donovan, Marilyn Jaquish, Craig Mulder (coordinators); Jack Berman, Sue DeCamillis, Ann George, Darby Hiller, Kari Kahler, and Keith Kelly.

**Meetings:** Every Monday beginning Sept. 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. in the Educational Services Conference Room.