Measuring, Managing, and Communicating Learning Outcomes of General Education

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Southern Association for Institutional Research
Annual Conference, Charleston, SC
October 24, 2005
History of Writing Portfolio

- Early 1990s Discussion of repercussions of removal of remedial courses from curriculum → how will we make sure our students can write well?
- 1995-1996 Committee vetting and faculty approval as graduation requirement.
- 1996-1997 First portfolios collected for students entering under the Fall 1996 Bulletin.
- 2005-2006 Expansion to additional general education competencies.
Conceptual Design

- Graduation Requirement (stakes are attached)
- Process-Oriented (skill applied over time)
- Goal-Oriented (6 goals for writing competency)
  - **Clarity of Purpose:** Students will demonstrate the ability to establish a clear purpose (thesis or announced intent) and an appropriate awareness of audience (reader).
  - **Quality of Thought:** Students will demonstrate a level of rational thought that recognizes and examines complexity of ideas and is supported by credible and logical evidence.
  - **Organization of Content:** Students will demonstrate effective unity, coherence, and general arrangement of content, all in the appropriate support of purpose.
  - **Use of Sources:** Students will demonstrate correct and effective use of sources with clear attribution and accurate documentation.
  - **Language and Style:** Students will demonstrate the ability to make stylistic choices in vocabulary, diction, and syntax.
  - **Grammar and Mechanics:** Students will demonstrate competence in grammar, usage, punctuation, and spelling.
Logistics of Writing Portfolio

- 3 graded papers, previously submitted for a course and 1 reflective essay.

- Submitted after 60 hours have been earned.

- Portfolios collected once during Fall, Spring, and Summer terms.

- 2 graders (paid by nominal fee assessed at Bookstore); readers get about $3 per portfolio.

- Ties broken by 3rd reader.

- Readers assess student competency for each of the six goals on a scale of 1 to 5.

- Minimum aggregate score of 3 (out of 5) to pass.

- Students who do not pass may resubmit or take AEGL 201 Writing in the University.
Goals of Web Interface

- Transform data from collection of individual scores to meaningful information (including statistical analysis) that can be used for program improvement.

- Deliver information to faculty and staff to identify relative strengths and weaknesses of various groups of students.

- Provide better methods for data collection (under development).

- Expand faculty investment in both improving students’ writing skills and developing assessment systems.
Web Interface Link

- Link to web tool:
  GEORGE: General Education Outcomes Report GEnerator
  http://ie.usca.edu/tools/
  (Password protected)

- Link to USCA IE Office Web Site:
  http://ie.usca.edu/
  Click on “Interactive Tools”
## All Majors Report

### English Portfolio Score Report for All Majors

**Term(s):** Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Summer 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clarity of Purpose</th>
<th>Quality of thought</th>
<th>Use of sources</th>
<th>Organization of Content</th>
<th>Language and Style</th>
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[Return to Report Generator](#)
## Business Majors

### English Portfolio Score Report for Business Majors

**Term(s):** Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Summer 2005

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[Return to Report Generator]
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## English Portfolio Score Report for Sociology Majors

**Term(s):** Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Summer 2005

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[Return to Report Generator](#)
Advanced Reporting Features

Advanced Report Generation

English Portfolio Assessment Interface -> Reporting -> Advanced Report Generation

Filters

Select term(s):
- Summer 2004
- Fall 2004
- Spring 2005
- Summer 2005

Select major:
- All Majors

Select gender:
- All

Select race:
- All

Select basis/type:
- All

Column/Row Variables

- Use row variables
- Use column variables

Column/row variable 1:
- Race

Column/row variable 2:
- Gender

Performance Variables

- Performance variable 1:
  - Average
  - English Portfolio Scores (All)
- Performance variable 2:
  - Average
  - SAT Critical Reading
- Performance variable 3:
  - Average
  - High School % Rank
- Performance variable 4:
  - Average
  - Cumulative College GPA

Generate Report
**Advanced Report: Race & Gender**

*English Portfolio Report*
*Average English Portfolio Scores, Average SAT Critical Reading Score, Average High School % Rank, Average Cumulative Collegiate GPA for All Students by Race, Gender*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Average Clarity of Purpose Score</th>
<th>Average Quality of Thought Score</th>
<th>Average Use of Sources Score</th>
<th>Average Organization of Content Score</th>
<th>Average Language and Style Score</th>
<th>Average Grammar and Mechanics Score</th>
<th>Average Aggregate Score</th>
<th>Average SAT Critical Reading Score</th>
<th>Average High School % Rank</th>
<th>Average Cumulative Collegiate GPA</th>
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<td></td>
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## Advanced Report: English 101 Grade

### English Portfolio Report

*Average English Portfolio Scores, Average SAT Critical Reading Score, Average High School % Rank, Average Cumulative Collegiate GPA by AEGL 101 Grade*

**Term(s):** Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, Summer 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEGL 101 Grade</th>
<th># of Students</th>
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<th>Average Quality of Thought Score</th>
<th>Average Use of Sources Score</th>
<th>Average Organization of Content Score</th>
<th>Average Language and Style Score</th>
<th>Average Grammar and Mechanics Score</th>
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<td>496</td>
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[Return to Advanced Reporting Options]
System Specifications

- Windows Server 2003 backend with
  - Internet Information Server 6 (IIS6)
  - MS SQL Server 2003

- Interface implemented with Active Server Pages using VBScript
Database Sources and Design

- **Data Sources:**
  - Flat files from mainframe:
    - Current student records for academic information and demographics
    - Admissions data for high school performance and entrance test scores
  - Excel files provided by English Department (in future, Departments will have online data entry)

- **Implementation:**
  - Raw datasets are run through Perl scripts to ‘de-mainframe’ and select only pertinent data, then imported into database
  - Reports are generated from two main tables, one for storing portfolio scores, another for storing demographics and performance variables
Security Overview

- Server is protected by university and local firewalls; server software is kept up to date
- Users must authenticate to USCA domain
- Transactions are encrypted by 128-bit Secure Socket Layer (SSL) protocol
- Local database table keeps track of who has access to what data
- Online scripts are written with input checking to guard against buffer overflows and SQL injection
Future Plans

- Expand usage to additional general education competencies:
  - Foreign Language (Fall 2005).
  - American Political Institutions (Spring 2006).

- Conduct additional institutional studies.
  - Performance by race, gender, and other variables.
  - Graduation rate studies.
  - Assist faculty in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)

- Promote use of system for program review and assessment of learning outcomes in the major.
  - Present uses to various faculty groups.
  - Document use of data for curricular adjustments.

- Design administrative piece to revise goals and objectives.
  - Add, deactivate, transform, and map goals and objectives.
  - Add more general education competencies.
  - Encourage units to adopt system for assessment of majors.
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