Introduction

The College made significant strides on academic assessment during 2005. The College’s Progress Report on Assessment, mandated by the 2002 HLC Visit Team, was accepted by HLC staff. The primary tasks were comprehensive export of activities to AHE and continuation of the master syllabus revisions to include course objectives and measurable learning outcomes. When the syllabus project concludes in 2006, more than 600 master syllabi will have been rewritten by full-time faculty and approved by CAP. This process has required faculty to answer three questions about each course: What is the body of knowledge? What do undergraduate/graduate students need to know about it? And how do we know they know? Significant credit goes to CAP and its chair Dr. David Roebuck for keeping this project on track.

Far more AHE students were assessed by the MFT and AP than ever before. Results of these assessments and analysis are highlighted below. The EVP/DAA emailed every student in the culminating experience class – home campus, nationwide campus, online campus – with the message about the MFT and, as appropriate the AP, reminding them of the requirement to take the test and encouraging them to do their best.

Far more culminating experience instructors submitted Assessment of the Major (AM) forms than previously. Instructor observations and analysis as recorded on these forms is more substantive than before, giving the faculty more information to address issues of curriculum and pedagogy. The AM form is an important instrument and will be improved.

Day students in culminating experience courses began taking the MFT online in 2005. Among the many advantages of online administration are ease of administration and instant score results (paper test score results are not known for three months). All other things being equal students are more motivated to take the MFT conscientiously if they receive immediate feedback on their performance.

In other words, significant progress has been made on all the priorities noted in the 2004 assessment report.

The Academic Assessment Committee, under the leadership of Dr. Ann Bledsoe, also contributed to a successful year. Among other accomplishments, it analyzed academic department chair analysis of progress toward building an assessment culture at the college. A report written by Dr. Eddie Christie notes that the College has made progress toward a maturing assessment culture on all points but that students still lack basic information on and engagement in academic assessment activities.

This report is a summary of results and analyses. The HLC Progress report and complete departmental results and analyses are available in the Academic Affairs office.
General Education
In 2005 the AP was administered to 130 Day seniors and 228 AHE seniors. The AP tests “a student’s ability to read carefully, make judgments about clarity, correctness, or organization of material, think critically about issues, and arguments and work effectively with mathematics.” Content areas tested are humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

AP norms are derived from students at baccalaureate liberal arts colleges who have completed more than 90 semester hours. Results for the Day program are clustered around national means with no area more than .39 standard deviations from the national average. All AHE scores were consistently below the national average but were within one standard deviation. The 130 seniors in the 2005 senior group did not perform as well as the 124 students in the 2004 group.

Day freshmen (153) took the AP in their INCC class. Compared to baccalaureate liberal arts freshmen, Columbia College freshmen scored above the national norm in all areas with writing and natural sciences being the highest. The 153 students in the 2005 group scored better than the 2004 group in writing, math, natural sciences and overall and not as well in critical thinking, reading, humanities and social sciences.

Dr. Larry West has written a fine analysis of general education assessment. His conclusion is quoted below in its entirety (the report is available in it the Academic Affairs Office):

The Columbia College Day program attracts bright students who, as a group, perform notably better than their peers in all measured areas. It is not clear that this advantage is maintained through graduation. However, more longitudinal data is needed in order to draw useful conclusions. The quality of students in the day program has improved markedly in the past few years as admission standards have been raised. This is evidenced to some extent beginning in 2003 in the post-test scores…

Students graduating from the Columbia College AHE program consistently underperform their peers. The AHE program is largely open admission and many students who graduate from the AHE program have a significant number of transfer hours. However, despite these confounding factors, it is apparent that rigor and/or content need to be carefully examined across the AHE system. These data and the subjects of rigor and content need to be placed on the agenda of future faculty integration conferences. It is also suggested that AHE be asked to investigate the issue of general education transfer credit among their student population so that this factor may be appropriately considered when evaluating assessment results. AHE should develop plans and measurable goals to narrow the gap between the performance of their students and those in the Day program. In particular, those sites that consistently under-perform should be identified and targeted for special action.

Degree Programs

Art
Fifteen Day students were assessed in 2005 (six BFA, seven BA and two BS). All BFA students passed the written test and put up quality shows and gave an adequate defense of their show. In addition all completed the departmental survey and required CD.
The BA and BS students were assessed with department survey and through the culminating experience course. All but one either showed outstanding performance or met expectations.

More detail is needed in the completed AM forms. The department will adapt the form and process to its needs and will improve the response rate.

Faculty Recommendations:

Photography: Get advanced software programs and develop new handouts.

Painting: Develop a timeline for the course, require more meetings.

Graphic Design/Illustration: Improve print production, start web design courses.

BFA recommendations: Be more restrictive in admittance to the program, develop a more standardized written test.

General (recommendations from surveys): Improve coverage of composition and ARTS 222.

Business Administration

Undergraduate

Day undergraduate students (39) were assessed with the MFT and by case analyses. The majority of students scored at or above the MFT national average. Test results indicate additional learning experiences may be required in accounting, finance and quantitative analysis.

Faculty Recommendation:

Importance of taking the MFT seriously must continue to be emphasized. Additional efforts should be made by the instructors of the capstone course to apply course content to actual strategic planning situations.

AHE

AHE undergraduate students were similarly assessed. Generally instructors took the AM form more seriously but wide variability of content remains. MFT results from AHE continue to show considerable variance with improvement shown at some campuses. St. Louis, Orlando and Ft. Leonard Wood continue to produce comparatively weak results.

Faculty recommendations:

Continue to build assessment culture in AHE.

Target weak performing campuses for special intervention.

Graduate

Twenty-two graduate students were assessed using the comprehensive strategic case analysis in the capstone course. The comprehensive case analyses were at a generally high level and were viewed as incorporating MBA course content.
Faculty recommendations:

Improve the linkage between individual MBA course assignments and the final capstone course case assignment. Adjust capstone course for online delivery.

**Computer and Mathematical Sciences**

Seventy-four graduating computer science/computer information systems (CS/CIS) students and three mathematics students took the MFT. CIS students are at a disadvantage as some content areas on the computer science MFT are not taught. Students from all venues scored below the national averages with the average for AHE students more than one standard deviation below the norm. AM forms reported that most students were strong or satisfactory in all categories. More Math MFT results are required before conclusions can be drawn.

Faculty recommendation:

Continue to develop a departmental senior exam for CIS and MIS degrees.

**Criminal Justice**

**Undergraduate**

The MFT was administered to ten Day students and to 125 AHE students. The national mean was 152. Day students scored an average of 154. Most AHE campuses were above the national average with Evening and Online doing especially well and Ft. Leonard Wood and St. Louis scored below average.

AM forms suggest that most students enrolled in the capstone course are well-equipped in the major content areas and have the necessary job skills to succeed in the job market. A few evaluators suggested redundancy in the curriculum and the need for more writing and communication skills.

Faculty recommendations:

Continue to build the assessment culture.  
Review faculty loads and course sequencing at troubled campuses; consider a chair visit.  
FIC attendance

**Social Work**

Sixteen students completed SOWK 495. The capstone assessment occurred through papers and participation in field placement. All students passed SOWK 495. Program strengths included understanding the value base of the profession, non-discriminatory practice, advancing social change, understanding the history of the profession and using theoretical frameworks. Weaknesses include applying generalist skills, analyzing, formulating social policies, evaluating research and using communication skills.

Faculty recommendations:

Successfully complete the conversion to Human Services  
Emphasize more writing in Human Services courses.
Graduate
Nine graduate students completed the MSCJ capstone and were assessed through papers, presentations and surveys. All students completed the course successfully. Surveys showed students were generally satisfied and faculty and institution and recommended several new courses. Assessment activities indicate that the program is meeting designated learning goals. Students continue to perform well in the classroom and in their work and professional environment.

Faculty recommendations:

- Revise MSCJ curriculum as necessary to reduce redundancy and provide more currency.
- Inject more rigor into more MSCJ courses to stimulate exceptional students.
- Utilize results from forthcoming program review.

Education

Undergraduate
Most program completers exceeded the expected level of performance on all quality indicators. After fall 2004 there was a 100% pass rate on the 14 portfolio assessments with an overall average score of 83% (eight Day and six Evening) and an 85% first-time pass-rate for the PRAXIS-II (6/8 Day and 6/6 Evening). After Spring 2005 almost all students exceeded performance indicators: an 81% pass rate on the portfolio assessments and the overall average score was 80% (Day 90%, Evening 79%). Of the 14 program completers who took the PRAXIS-II exam, there was a 92% first-time pass rate (4/4 Day and 11/12 Evening). Surveys indicated that program strengths included knowledgeable and helpful faculty and much practical experience. Weaknesses include technology, too much change in the program and not enough assistance with the portfolio. First and second year teachers were also surveyed. Of the thirteen who completed the survey there were generally the same strengths as graduating students and weaknesses included more help with gifted student needs.

Three extended campuses (Rolla, Lake Ozark and Kansas City) have been authorized to accept Education students. Five graduates of the Lake program finished in May and were immediately employed. Their PRAXIS scores and portfolios validated the rigor of the Lake program.

Faculty recommendations for change:

- Complete the transition of BEACON to an undergraduate program.
- Complete the transition to a content area degree from a BAIS.
- Add Mild/Moderate/Cross-categorical and Secondary Science certifications.
- Reinstate K-12 Art Education certification.

Graduate
Program completers are assessed on meeting the core proposals of the national board for teaching standards. Five students completed the program in the capstone EDUC 508. The portfolio/oral presentation indicated that the students met the standards. Exit interviews show that program strengths include practical knowledge and theory, caring professors who use quality instructional techniques and rigorous classes. No content weaknesses were identified. Graduates complained that course offerings are not always predictable.
Faculty recommendation:

Include latest research on federal guidelines for special education

**History and Social Sciences**
There are not yet sufficient data to assess adequately most majors in the department; psychology is the exception.

**Psychology**
Psychology was assessed using MFTs, exit interviews and senior projects. The national MFT mean was 156. Thirteen Day students averaged 149, seventeen Evening students averaged 155, 96 AHE students averaged 149 and 21 Online students averaged 148. Psychology MFT scores varied widely by campus. Campuses with the highest overall scores were Crystal Lake and Hancock Field. Two campuses had average scores more than one standard deviation below the national mean (Lake Ozark and Orlando). Fort Leonard Wood scores were also low.

According to instructor feedback on AM forms, students expressed concern that faculty with poor evaluations continued teaching (Evening). Day students believe they had rigorous and supportive faculty and appropriate class sizes. They mentioned lack of lab space and concern over course rotations.

Most MFT scores were below the national mean but less than one-half a standard deviation. The trend will be monitored. If the below-mean trend continues, the department will look for explanations. There is concern for those campuses that score more than one standard deviation below the mean.

Faculty Recommendations:

Address Orlando and Lake Ozark problems and monitor the Online Campus.

**History**
Seven Day and 22 AHE students took the MFT. The national mean was 145. Day students scored 147; AHE students (all from Jefferson City) scored a 136. MFT scores are suggestive, but many more scores must be collected and analyzed.

**Political Science**
Six Day students took the MFT. The national mean is 151 and Day students averaged 152, scoring slightly above the average in both subcategories.

Faculty Recommendations:

Monitor MFT results over time to identify strengths and weaknesses.
Discuss the possibility of moving the research course to the sophomore year.

**Sociology**
Sociology assesses learning outcomes with the MFT and senior project. Five students took the MFT, which has a national mean of 149. Two Day students averaged 148 and three Evening students averaged 150. The Instructor AM form included comments that Evening students are
not prepared for Research Design but competent in theoretical areas. The Day instructor indicated students needed to be more familiar with sociology as a discipline.

Faculty Recommendations:

Monitor MFT results over time to identify strengths and weaknesses.

**Philosophy and Religious Studies**

Three students took the capstone course. The instructor reported that they were not appropriately prepared in the manner and method of contemporary philosophy.

Faculty Recommendation:

Consider separating Philosophy and Religious Studies tracks within the major.
Provide students more access to current literature.

**Humanities**

Nine Day and four Evening students completed the senior seminar class and the MFT. All Day students scored within one standard deviation of the national mean of 154 as did all but one Evening student. The majority of Day students scored above the national average. In addition to the MFT students submitted portfolios. The faculty have begun developing portfolio assessment strategies. Assessments currently test students who have experienced both the old and new English curricula. Real assessment will not be possible until all graduates have completed the new major.

The AM form showed program strengths to include research methodology, critical writing skills, mastery of canonical literature and understanding of major theoretical movements. Weaknesses include revision skills of advanced writers.

Faculty Recommendations:

The major has been reduced by 20 hours affecting breadth of elective offerings which may in turn affect MFT scores. The Department is considering prerequisites that require 200-level English courses that are general education.

**Nursing**

Results for 2005 are from the Home Campus; the Lake Ozark Campus did not graduate its first class until July 2006.

Nursing graduates take the NCLEX, a national-licensure exam. December 2004 and May 2005 results were reported in 2005. In December, 21 of 26 (80.7%) passed and in May, 19 of 22 (86.3%) passed. The December group included the first graduates from generic track. The faculty were disappointed by the pass rate. Most failures were attributed to lack of adequate preparation for exam. The May group performed better.

Faculty Recommendations:
The primary measure we have used to assess program quality has been performance on the NCLEX licensure exam. There are several additional sources of data that can and should be used to assess program quality and to make decisions about curricula, policies, etc.:

- Pre-NCLEX Standardized assessment test given two weeks before graduation.
- Graduate/Alumni Surveys sent six months after graduation.
- Employee Surveys sent out six months after graduation.

Data collection from the above three sources has not been consistent and return rates for the surveys have been poor. The Graduate/Alumni Surveys and the Employee Surveys need to be revised.

Although the overall pass rate is respectable, it is not as high as desired. The faculty always strives for a 100% pass rate. The curriculum has been evaluated to determine if there are any areas of content/skills that need to be revised and/or enhanced. The results of the Pre-RN Assessment test have been reviewed to look for trends. The printouts from all failures on the NCLEX are reviewed to look for trends. Based on suggestions from a faculty retreat, a more formal Skills Checklist has been implemented that begins in the first clinical nursing course and is continued in all clinical courses throughout the curriculum. Students will continue to be encouraged to utilize the computerized NCLEX review program the school has available on the NEC computers and all of the Stafford Library computers. Students are also encouraged to utilize review books and to enroll in review courses that are offered by various companies.

Program Assessment needs to be improved in the following areas:

- Revise Graduate/Alumni Survey instrument.
- Revise Employee Survey instrument.
- Administer consistently graduate and employee surveys for each class.
- Improve return rate for graduate and employee surveys.
- Develop reporting mechanisms that will allow the data from each campus to be viewed separately and also aggregated to analyze overall program trends.
- Develop action plans based on assessment/evaluation data.
- Correlate entrance exam results with NCLEX scores to validate the entrance exam.

**Science**

Twenty-two Day students took the MFT. Compared to the national norms, student scores are poor (5th percentile average; consistent with previous years).

The AM forms reports that the majority of students have acceptable skills in writing about and presenting scientific information. Student ability to think critically about science and scientific literature is weak. Students do not seem to have an integrated understanding of science and in many cases are unable to apply specific knowledge to current events. Potential aggravating factors in poor MFT scores include a high percent of transfer students in the program, lack of knowledge about previous coursework and the inclusion of forensic science students in the biology/chemistry MFT pool (they have significant coursework in the sciences, but not the breadth that biology and chemistry majors have).
Faculty Recommendations:

Consider a departmental exam that will allow degree-seeking students to determine if they are ready to continue to upper level courses.

Develop a system for keeping detailed information on individual students including transfer status, location and type of coursework taken at other institutions, major and career goal.

Itemize essential skills and fundamental areas of knowledge and determine how each of these can be progressively developed through course sequencing.

Examine current course sequencing to be sure students are receiving adequate preparation for upper-level courses.

Emphasize critical thinking at all levels and attempt to develop students’ analytical skills.

Conclusion

2005 saw a significant expansion of assessment in AHE, especially in the use of the MFT and the AM form. Many campuses and individual students produced strong MFT scores. An assessment culture is taking shape.

The assessment plan continues to be implemented steadily. All 600 undergraduate and graduate courses will have course objectives and measurable learning outcomes in their master syllabi. Compliance with AM forms continues to improve and better information is being gathered from them. Key 2006 initiatives will include:

- Strengthen language about the MFT and AP in Online course syllabi;
- Include a statement in the master syllabi of all core courses in the major that the content of this course is tested on the MFT;
- Making all MFTs available online;
- Switching to the MAPP;
- Hiring lead faculty at those AHE campuses that have weak business MFT performance (Ft. Wood, Orlando and St. Louis).

Above all, the culture of assessment will continue to be enriched as students take more ownership and it becomes increasingly obvious that curricular and pedagogical improvements are the result of assessment feedback.