1998-1999 Annual Assessment Report

Dr. Brad Lookingbill, Chair
Academic Assessment Committee

Dr. Terry Smith
Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs

August 1999
1998-99 Annual Assessment Report

INTRODUCTION

The 1998-1999 report updates the College and its constituencies on multiple measures of outcomes assessment. The direct and indirect measures assessed General Education and the academic majors, and program reviews were conducted. Additional assessment activities this year included alumni surveys and retention council actions.

The objective of the faculty and administration is to obtain useful data for the improvement of teaching and learning. Both groups have begun to analyze data on student learning and to develop feedback loops helping faculty improve instruction.

GENERAL EDUCATION

The College made uneven but forward progress in assessing General Education during the 1998-1999 year. The Academic Profile (short form) was administered in the Fall and in the Spring on the home campus and administered in the Spring through a pilot at the Jefferson City site. Data indicated that test results positively correlate with grades and that students completing a higher percentage of the General Education courses perform better on the test than those completing fewer. Moreover, the College is
administering pre and post tests, which will demonstrate the "value added" by General Education. The Assessment Committee and Faculty voted to make course-based pre and post testing in General Education optional for departments. Also, they recommended that the Academic Profile (short form) (AP) be administered as a pre and post test beginning with the forthcoming academic year. However, assessment of the sizeable off-campus population has not been implemented at the other 20 Extended Studies sites (ESD), and no data have been reported on student achievement learning outcomes in General Education. Assessment activities have been focused on the home campus; more needs to be done to demonstrate student learning across the College.

Fall 1998 AP Testing

The AP was administered for the third time by the College. The fall 1998 test, which was taken by 41 students enrolled in culminating experience classes (compared to 81 in spring 1998), showed small declines in performance in all seven areas measured – humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, reading, writing, critical thinking, and using mathematical data. Compared to national norms, the students taking the AP in the fall of 1998 scored above the national norms in the area of natural sciences, and below it in all other categories, although again by small amounts in all instances. There were three subgroups that showed meaningful differences. Students who transferred more than 30 hours scored better than students with no
transfer hours; students with a 3.5-4.0 g.p.a. scored significantly better than students with a 3.0-3.49; and students who had completed all of their General Education courses scored significantly better than students who had completed only about 75%.

Spring 1999 AP Testing
The spring 1999 AP testing was taken by 145 students, including a group at the Jefferson City site. While Columbia students performed at slightly below national norms for liberal arts college upperclassmen, they improved upon their fall performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 98</th>
<th>Spring 98</th>
<th>National Norm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>113.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Math Data</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is comforting to know that seniors (102 total) performed better than juniors (34) and students with higher grade point averages performed better than lower grade point average students, and students who had completed their
general education requirements performed better than students who completed 75%. There were no significant differences between transfers and native students, between students who work part-time and full-time.

Pre-Post-Tests

Several departments administered either pre-post-tests or standardized tests to assess general education. CIS began using a pre-post-test in CISS 170 class. Results summarized by text chapter were returned to individual instructors for comparison with the class average. Education administered the CBASE to examine general education. History/Political Science gathered pre-post-test data, but have not yet analyzed it.

Natural Science and Mathematics use pre-post-tests in both BIOL 110 and MATH 150. The first administration of the pre-post-test for BIOL 110 showed no significant difference between pre- and post. The test will be modified. The MATH 150 pre-post-test showed "value added," but requires further refinement.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

All culminating experiences were upgraded to make their outcomes assessment more effective. Each was designed to assess learning outcomes in the major and to provide feedback about teaching and learning. Effective program assessment uses multiple direct and indirect measures, which
include, but are not limited to, standardized field tests, capstone projects, exit interviews, portfolio reviews, program reviews, and/or retention and graduation studies. The Education program, for instance, developed and implemented a model demonstrating clear feedback loops, while other programs developed variations on the model that provided faculty with useful data. Data were not collected from all ESD sites. As the master syllabi are refined, faculty – especially adjuncts teaching at ESD sites and in the Evening and Graduate Division – will obtain a clearer understanding of how the culminating experience assesses the foundational skills, electives, and requirements of the major. Furthermore, strategies will be refined for improving the curriculum and for collecting data on cognitive, behavioral, and affective learning.

Art

The Art Department continued to refine its culminating experience. It was assisted in this effort by a successful program review (see below). Art Appreciation was added as a general education course.

Business

The department administered the Major Field Test for business administration. Majors scored slightly below the national mean overall. Faculty analyzed the detailed results as preliminary indicators of areas of strength and weakness.
within the curriculum. The department reported no activities for assessing the learning outcomes for the MBA.

**Computer and Information Sciences**

In addition to administering the pre-post-test in CISS 170, the department adopted a comprehensive objective exam to administer in the 1999-00 year. The same test will be administered as a pre-test in CISS 240. The department adopted the Computer Science GRE as its culminating experience for the Computer Science major. It will be administered when Computer Science students approach graduation. The department also conducted student exit interviews.

**Criminal Justice Administration**

The department administered a 192-item comprehensive objective exam to students in CJAD 495, the culminating experience course. The small number of students (thirteen) who took the test did show improved scores when taking the test as a post-test. The test and the process need to be refined before results can be used to change curriculum. The department reported no activities for assessing the learning outcomes for the MSCJ.

**Education and Psychology**

Data obtained from the culminating experience (Senior Seminar) through analysis of the portfolio and exit interview outcomes were used to revise the
curriculum. Several course changes were adopted. The Psychology program expanded the Integrative Seminar to a three-hour culminating experience and added an oral report and writing component to all Psychology classes. The MAT culminating experience (Integrative Project) got a new format and several preliminary ideas for curriculum change emerged. All three programs used student exit interviews as a part of the culminating experience, and Education alumni are surveyed annually, with an extensive survey being conducted in the fifth year.

History/Political Science

The department reviewed AP scores for majors, but it reported no activities for assessing the learning outcomes for the BA.

Humanities

The department decided not to use pre- post-tests in the Composition classes. It has used the culminating experience (Senior Essay) for curriculum revision in the past and continues to do so. The department reported no activities for assessing the learning outcomes for the BA.

Natural Sciences and Mathematics

In addition to the pre- post-tests mentioned earlier, faculty continued to offer the Senior Seminar in Biology and Chemistry. Because the emphases are
relatively new, there are few students enrolled in these courses. One Biology major field test was administered, with inconclusive results.

Social Work
Senior students write a learning plan in SOWK 490 and 495 that details implementation of program objectives and professional knowledge, values and skills. A pre/post test is administered in the other culminating experience class, SOWK 498. The post-test observed gains in values and knowledge.

Sociology
The department used SOCI 495 Integrative Seminar to assess learning in the major. Between last year's program review and information gleaned from the culminating experience, several curricular and faculty assignment changes were made.

PROGRAM REVIEWS
Four academic departments and one administrative department underwent program reviews during 1998-1999. Although each external review team addressed the academic issues related to particular programs, a number of common themes emerged. Reviewers underscored the quality of the full-time faculty teaching courses on the home campus, while also observing the academic issues related to the heavy reliance on adjunct teaching at the ESD sites. Absent from the reviews was significant information related to teaching
and learning at ESD sites. Faculty and administration will use the information provided by the reviewers as benchmarks for subsequent reviews and will enhance the academic programs through a continuous process of quality improvement. See Appendix for the Program Review Schedule.

Art

The self-study and visit team recommended expanding general education offerings; reviewing the curriculum to be sure that traditional studio techniques as well as cutting edge technology are incorporated; updating recruitment materials; continuing professional development; and reducing the isolation of the Art program from the mainstream of campus. The department responded affirmatively to all the recommendations, including the addition of Art Appreciation as a General Education Course.

Psychology

The self-study and visit team recommended making the Integrative Seminar truly integrative rather than review, developing plans for a Psychology lab, and moving research earlier into the student’s course sequence. The faculty responded affirmatively to these recommendations and conclusions. The Psychology program was separated from the Education program and will become a part of the History and Social Sciences Department in the fall of 1999.
History/Political Science

The self-study and visit team suggested that work loads be addressed and that Day and Evening programs be better coordinated, that a Political Science faculty position be added, that courses on cultural diversity and global themes be offered, that the department have minimum reading and writing standards in courses stipulated in master syllabi, that assessment of learning at ESD sites be a priority, and that the combined History/Political Science major be reconsidered. The department responded affirmatively to several of the team recommendations and disagreed with others.

Social Work

The visit team was positive about the long-term employment prospects for graduates of the Social Work program and the program’s fit to the institutional mission. The team suggested changing the sequence of several courses and enhancing the curriculum to include more electives and more experiential opportunities. It supported the plan to combine Social Work into a larger department. Social Work faculty concurred with some recommendations and disagreed with others.

OTHER ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

In addition to assessing General Education and the academic programs, the institution collected useful data through Alumni Surveys and Retention Council activities. The data from indirect measures were collected by
administration and by faculty, providing feedback about the student learning environment.

Alumni Survey

The Alumni office administered a nationally-normed survey developed by ACT during the Fall semester. The response rate was relatively low (10%). Compared to national data, our alumni represent a fairly large minority population; have relatively low debt; have higher incomes (due to more of them being older); and are less “well-prepared” for employment. Among educational experiences and outcomes, alumni differ from national norms significantly (±0.3) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More Positive than National</th>
<th>More Negative than National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree requirements</td>
<td>Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for individuals</td>
<td>Cultural opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regard for non-traditional students</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit transfer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retention Council Recommendations

Annually the College Retention Council, which has existed in its current form since 1996, makes a set of recommendations. Many of them are based on the biennial administration of the ACT Student Opinion Survey. The most recent administration was in the fall of 1997. Many of the findings in the student survey were systematically and meaningfully addressed by the College: e.g., enhancing the academic environment in the residence halls; improving the food service; creating the academic programmer position in the residence halls; and planning to renovate an underused space as a new Student Commons.

Trends in satisfaction with academic advising since the last administration of the survey (1995) have shown decreases. Advising was not addressed meaningfully during the 1998-99 year, but will be with faculty workshops and an upgraded computerized student records system in 1999-2000.

Perceived or anecdotal strengths were validated by the survey: attitude of faculty towards students, availability of instructors, and the testing and grading system. The registration system had been seen as confusing and disorganized in survey results. It was reorganized and streamlined significantly, and feedback on it shows increased satisfaction.
The 1998-99 Retention Council continued to recommend improving academic advising, including improving the ability to provide early alerts to at-risk students. It added several recommendations about improved communication, including a suggestion that the week-at-a-glance posters be continued and that students keep the same mailbox for the length of their stay at the College.

In 1996-97 the Retention Council recommended the creation of a new Freshman Orientation course, and INCC 111 was the result. It has been taught for two years, and retention statistics have been kept. Preliminary indications are promising but inconclusive. First-year-to-second-year retention is higher for the INCC freshmen, compared to the control group, but more longitudinal data are needed before a recommendation can be made to the faculty to make INCC 111 mandatory. Retention Council also studied problems caused by differences between the Day and Evening programs and made a number of recommendations, including one that has been adopted before the recommendation was made public: raising Evening tuition to help fund increased services.

CONCLUSION

Columbia College assesses the outcomes of student learning in its general education curriculum, in its undergraduate degree programs, and of the student experience generally. It does so with faculty-developed culminating
experiences, nationally standardized and normed tests and other assessment activities. Faculty and administration collaboratively evaluate the data and have begun to use the results to improve instruction. Through this process, the College will continue to fulfill its mission to assist individuals in gaining a broad understanding of the liberal arts and sciences through exemplary teaching.

New or enriched assessment activities planned for the 1999-2000 include offering the AP as a pre-test for the first time, expanding the use of the AP as a post-test in adult learning venues, and conducting the biennial enrolled student survey. Ongoing implementation will include more sophisticated use of information gleaned from culminating experiences and the AP. The College will continue to create an effective assessment culture, which will serve both as a diagnostic tool and also demonstrate the quality of teaching and learning.