Malcolm X College
Assessment Academy
Student Learning Project

Malcolm X College

Vision

Malcolm X College will be a leader in post secondary education to enlighten and empower the urban community.

Mission

Malcolm X College , a learning and assessment-centered community college, empowers students of diverse backgrounds and abilities to achieve academic, career, and personal success.

Core Values

Accountability: We emphasize diligence and innovation in order to promote efficient and effective learning.

Communication: In order to promote understanding and accessibility we encourage sharing ideas and information.

Community: We support our community by promoting collaboration and cooperation in activities that enhance the quality of life.

Diversity: We value differences among individuals and prepare ourselves to live successfully in a global society.

Integrity: Our policies and practices center around honesty, professional ethics, responsibility, and fairness.

Learning: We promote student-centered learning and lifelong learning among faculty, staff, and students.

Quality: We emphasize continuous improvement in the quality of student learning experiences.

Respect: We appreciate and consider the choices, endeavors and relationships of others.

Service: We are committed to providing supportive services that meet the needs of our students.
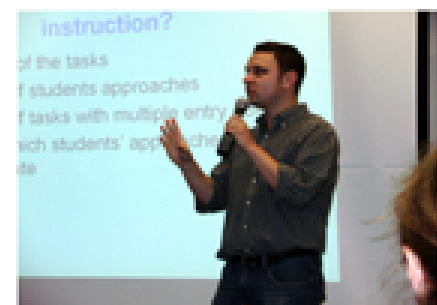
Assessment Committee

Mission

The Assessment Committee promotes conscious efforts to ensure accountability in effective learning and teaching.

Implemented in Two Phases Track 1 and Track 2

Track 1 – Design and Implementation

A common rubric was selected by the Assessment Committee. The rubric included criteria to address the following components of critical thinking:

Faculty from the various departments took on the challenge of creating a discipline-specific question, problem, or prompt. Responses were then collected from students in corresponding courses – Chemistry students were asked to respond critically to a Chemistry question, for example.

The sample population included all of the students enrolled in selected sections. Overall fifty-two sections participated in the pre-test data collection: thirty-nine from the General Education division, and thirteen from the Career programs. The total number of students that participated in both the pre- and post-test was 724.

Track 1 – Results and Analysis

After all of the necessary computations were done, the results were analyzed and reviewed by faculty. According to these assessment results, students performed exceptionally well during the post test. The findings show that the results are statistically significant in all areas.

Faculty were asked to address the following:

- What strategies did students use to demonstrate critical thinking?
- What specific course content in your department addresses critical thinking?
- How can your course content be modified to better address critical thinking in the future?
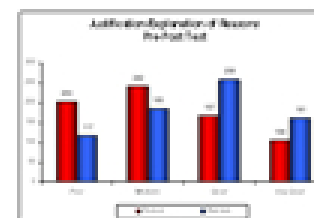
Faculty then discussed how they will use the results to improve student learning. Some examples of action steps are: Instructors felt it was important to change course content; Instructors felt courses needed to include new technologies; Instructors felt additional courses needed to be developed for the program.

Track 2 – Design and Implementation

For the second phase, "Track 2", we used a standardized test that we determined would be an appropriate instrument for measuring critical thinking that is valid, reliable, can be graded promptly and promote more demographic information. We hope that these lessons will be useful to the other participants in the HLC Academy as well!
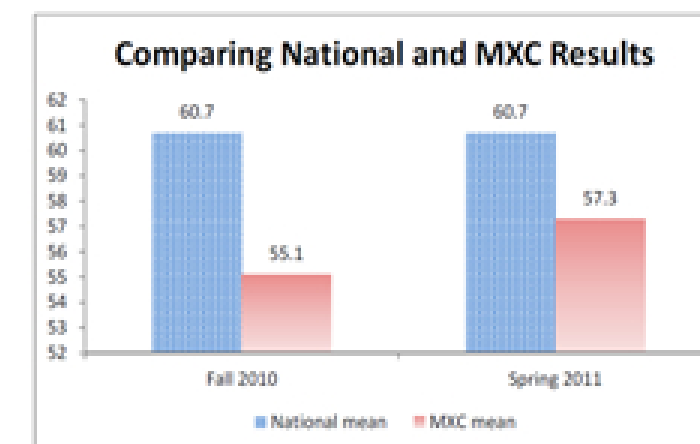
We then set out to measure the critical thinking abilities of students who were new to college to compare with students completing capstone courses. This design was picked so that our data could answer the question: does the students' experience at Malcolm X College across the years improve their ability to think critically?

- Project will be conducted in Fall 2010 using CAAP as our instrument.

Track 2 – Results and Analysis

After reviewing the test results, we were concerned about whether or not there was a statistical difference between the score of students in their freshman year and those who were already in higher level courses.

When we compared the scores between the two groups, a difference was evident between the lower classes of the distribution and the higher classes.

Comparing National and MXC Results

	Fall 2010	Spring 2011
National mean	60.7	60.7
MXC mean	55.1	57.3

Overall the Results Indicate:

- There was a significant difference between the critical thinking skills of the students in our sample and the national sample of students used to norm the test

- There was a significant difference between the critical thinking skills of students in the lower course levels and those in higher level courses

- There were meaningful differences in critical thinking skills between different student groups of MXC students when analyzed by demographics and other student information.

Closing the Loop
Challenges and Lessons Learned

Some advantages of using the discipline specific faculty-developed assessment tool:

- It increased the level of faculty engagement.
- It allowed faculty to provide department-specific input on how critical thinking should be assessed.
- It allowed the committee to implement the project quickly and for a nominal fee.

Some drawbacks of having a faculty-developed assessment tool:

- Grading and compiling the results was a laborious task, as each paper was graded by two different graders.
- Significant disagreements occurred among graders about the level of critical thinking demonstrated for each of the six areas.
- It is difficult to determine how reliable individual tests are for measuring critical thinking. Can we know if the test measured critical thinking and not course content?

Next Steps for Utilizing These Results

The following list is not exhaustive and it only represents some general ideas. Each department/program will develop their own goals and objectives regarding critical thinking and its assessment.

- Examine the curriculum map (General Ed and Careers) to determine where exactly the Critical Thinking student learning outcome is placed.
- Administer assessments in courses that enroll a large proportion of students who have completed critical thinking courses.
- Compare students who have completed the critical thinking curriculum to those who have not.
- Identify strengths and/or weaknesses in specific critical thinking skills (e.g., analysis of arguments, evaluation of arguments, and extension of arguments).
- Determine the actions to be taken for curriculum development and improvement.
- For continuous improvement, establish test administrations that target specific level gains and develop an action plan to achieve this goal.