

Spring 2018
English, Speech, & Theater Department
Unit-Level Assessment Liaison Report
Amy Rosenquist

I. Department Buy-In and Outcome Definition

With the successful completion of the Theater Arts/Soft Skills project in Fall 2017, a two-part project was identified for Spring 2018: Identify qualified faculty, including adjunct faculty, who might wish to take on the role of Unit Level Liaison, and design an assessment that could identify some of the factors that lead to retention in English 102.

II. Assessment Research and Design

Using the 2017 Student Perceptions of Online Learning report as a model, I designed an indirect assessment of student perceptions of factors that they believed helped them to succeed, factors they relied on for support, and challenges they encountered in English 102. The assessment asked students to rate their level of satisfaction with aspects of their course, and in detail, to share what factors helped them succeed in the class. The design was intended to elicit data that would highlight particular success factors and challenges, and included optional comment sections for more detailed responses.

III. Assessment Tools and Processes

The English 102 tool was developed as a pre- and post- survey given to students in Week 2 and Week 14-15 (on or after the final research paper due date in that course). It consists of a Google survey (see Appendix A below).

IV. Administer Specific Assessment

Fall 2017

The Theater Arts assessment (pre-survey, post-survey, and instructor rubric) were disseminated to faculty in the fall of 2017, as planned. However, due to a retirement, fewer faculty members were present, and fewer sections of classes were offered than in the pilot semester. Due to limited Theater Arts offerings in the Fall of 2017, only 25 student responses were recorded to the Theater Arts-Soft Skills assessment. Circumstances occurred which prevented the instructor rubric from being administered, so the Spring 2018 pilot data - with more responses and including instructor assessment of one course - were retained in combination with Fall 2017 responses.

Spring 2018

The initial indirect assessment for English 102 was finalized in Week 7. Therefore, the pre-test was not part of the pilot but will be part of the full-scale assessments in the future. In Week 8, it was distributed to eight faculty members with a request to participate in the initial pilot. Two

faculty members responded that they were willing to share the link with their classes. As of Week 11, 0 responses had been recorded.

The post-survey was sent to the same eight faculty members during Week 14, with a similar request. Two faculty members again responded that they would share the link with their classes. In addition, I shared the link with both of my English 102 classes, totalling 40 students actively attending. The post-survey received 46 unique responses.

The Spring 2018 assessment tool will be administered as a full assessment in Fall 2018. I will request participation from all faculty teaching English 102, both in Summer and Fall 2018, as well as perhaps requesting support from the Chairs in strengthening departmental buy-in. It will be important to include a cross section of day, evening, hybrid, and online courses.

V. Data Analysis

Fall 2017

Results from the Spring 2017 and Fall 2017 initial surveys given to Theater Arts students confirmed that students do value acquiring soft skills.

Due to the limited number of student responses and lack of instructor rubrics for Fall 2017, data was not presented to data analysts for further analysis. However, both a survey of literature and the combination of both semester surveys suggest that students a) value the acquisition of soft skills and b) in the aggregate, overwhelmingly believe they have mastered or approach mastery of a variety of soft skills after taking a performance-based Theater Arts class.

Spring 2018

At the time of this writing, 46 students have responded to the post-English 102 survey. Raw data is presented in Appendix B. In summary: Students overwhelmingly perceived instructor, tutor, and writing lab support as vital to their success; they commonly cited the length of the English 102 paper (8-10 pages) as something that presented a challenge; locating, incorporating, and citing sources are not skills that students generally feel confident about prior to English 102; and a significant number of students also cited balancing their work and personal lives, support from administration, and being willing to ask questions or ask for help when needed as vital factors.

VI. Supporting Evidence-Based Change (Use of Findings)

Fall 2017

Currently, there is a trend to ensure that students graduate from college with marketable skills, a worthy goal when serving a population of urban students who look to successful careers to secure their futures. Regardless of major, most students in professional settings will need the identified soft skills to varying extents in order to obtain and excel in their professional careers. The evidence from these two assessments strongly suggests that students pursuing all types of

professional careers that require critical thinking, dependability, presentation skills, communication with the public, resilience, and positive response to evaluation would greatly benefit from being advised to take a performance-based Theater Arts class as a way to meet their fine arts requirement or as a useful elective.

In addition, it is well documented that businesses are increasingly hiring theater professionals who specialize in improvisational comedy techniques to provide training, workshops, and consultation for their business professionals. The business community overwhelmingly accepts theater arts skills as a proactive, competitive skill set for creating successful professionals and leaders in the industry. As such, it would be in the best interest of students pursuing a business or related career to engage in that training at the undergraduate level, with the added benefits of highly skilled theater arts educators who have studied not only performance but pedagogical techniques, and with the additional benefit of a 16-week semester rather than a training period lasting only a few hours to a few days.

In collaboration with the Business Department, a formal recommendation was made that students interested in pursuing coursework or a major in business strongly consider Acting I as their fine arts general education elective. The process of disseminating and emphasizing this information to advising is ongoing, and complex.

Spring 2018

The tentative results of this pilot suggest that instructor engagement is a vital factor in student perseverance in English 102. A close second is the involvement, availability, and accessibility of tutors. Following the full assessment in Fall 2018, data analysis and recommendations for evidence-based change will be considered.

Success Factors

The Fall 2017 assessment was limited by the low number of Theater Arts course offerings. Only one instructor was assigned to performance-based classes in the fall, and several courses were not offered that had previously appeared on the schedule. This was unexpected when designing and administering the pilot.

Following collaborative meetings with the Business Department Chair, Business Department Unit Level Liaison, Theater Arts Chair, English, Speech, & Theater Department Chair, and myself, the recommendation to students pursuing a business major, focus, or concentration to select Acting I as their fine arts general education elective was formally adopted. This information was shared with Advising, C2C, the English, Speech, & Theater Department, and college-wide.

Theater Arts classes that were eligible (Acting I, Acting II, Improvisational Theater, and Theater Production, Direction, and Management) were added to the GECC list .

Spring 2018

The pilot assessment showed promising results in terms of capturing valuable data about student perceptions. I will request chair and Unit Level coordinator support to maximize participation in the Fall 2018 full pilot, as the data that could be captured if the assessment is shared and encouraged over most of our English 102 sections could be quite valuable.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Spring - Fall 2017 assessment, the following recommendations are presented to the department:

1. In collaboration with the Business Department, Career Center, Chairs, PACC committee, and administration, formally adopting Acting I (Theater Arts 133) as the fine arts general education recommendation on the business pathway pdf.
2. Consideration of adding Theater Arts as a preferred fine arts elective to other professional pathways that utilize the associated soft skills.
3. Consideration by administration of reinstating biannual theater productions, additional Theater Arts class sections, and additional Theater Arts full time faculty positions, given the transferable soft skills that they convey.

Following the full assessment of the English 102 student perception survey, formal recommendations will be presented to the department. At present, it is recommended that as many faculty as possible encourage participation by their English 102 students in both the pre- and post- survey in the fall, especially in terms of obtaining a variety of types of classes (online, face to face, evening, weekend, hybrid).