

ACADEMIC
QUALITY
IMPROVEMENT
PROGRAM

The Wright

AQIPment

Formerly the Assessment Newsletter




Celebrating 75 Years of Wilbur Wright College

AQIP Learning Project:

The main goal of the AQIP Learning Project is to embed into courses the skills and abilities that most likely lead to a successful first year.

Students keep track of activities involving the skills and abilities in a First Year Experience Passport. The skills and abilities include, career and academic planning, using support services, making social connections within the Wright College community, and study skills. In addition to the passport, some courses are also documenting the significance of the activities through a portfolio of reflections.

Just a few of the benefits of the project are that students get to know their campus, take charge of their education, optimize career choices and advancement, use support services effectively, and make valuable long-lasting connections.

The project is being piloted in 18 classes, approximately 500 students, this semester, with plans of expansion in Fall 2010.



First Year Center (FYC) Update

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The First Year Center is gaining more visibility at Wright. In January, the center kicked off the semester with a three-day pizza party that attracted over 100 students. In February, the FYC sponsored several events. In collaboration with the Financial Aid office, the FYC sponsored Financial Aid Awareness Day and several workshops on the financial aid application process. The FYC also collaborated with the Instructional Support Office in offering a Q & A session "Getting Students Connected the Wright Way", with

the highlight of online registration, use of CCC student email, remote access to library databases and Blackboard course management. The FYC organized "Finding Wright Academic Services" open day in collaboration with Academic Support, Disability Access Center, Instructional Support, Library, Trio and the Writing Center. Representatives from the support services offices volunteered their time to talk with the students about their programs. The month of March is to highlight student outstanding learning achievements. Several faculty from across all disciplines: the Visual and Performing Arts, Business, and Biology welcomed the invitation. The month of April is to focus on student well being activities.

This semester, the First Year Center welcomes Amy Aiello, Assistant Dean of Student Services as the office coordinator. The center is also collaborating with Phi Theta Kappa and Future Teachers students to volunteer as mentors. More students are now on board as work-study students and volunteers enthusiastic about the First Year Center mission.

We ask you to encourage your students to stop by the First Year Center located at A127 to get connected the Wright way.

Thank You,
The First Year Center.



AQIP Action Project: Registration and Advising

by Romell Murden

We are moving forward with the AQIP Registration and Advising Improvement Project. The AQIP Registration and Advising Sub-Committee met on February 11, 2010. Work is under way to analyze the reports for the course misplacement and the relationship between the time of registration and students' subsequent course success rates. The committee will reconvene the week of April 5th to develop an action plan, an implementation schedule, and a way to evaluate and measure our progress in regard to the above action items. This project will be completed by December 2010.



Empowering Community College Students to Become Scientists

by Helen Rarick

Last year, I received a \$2000 grant from the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, which is a professional honor society of women educators. The grant project supports a research mentoring program for biology students. The goal of the research program is to empower students, especially from under-represented minority groups and women, to

become scientists and pursue sciences as a future lifelong career.

This program in research mentoring was developed in the fall of 2006 by Joseph Oyugi and Helen Rarick with input by Kurt Leslie and the support of the college administration and an NSF grant obtained by faculty members in other CCC colleges. Through this program, we sought to encourage involvement of undergraduates in research by tapping into the talent and diversity of the Wright College student population and individually mentoring potential scientists. Most of the students supported with this research program are the first in their families to attend college, overcoming many cultural and language barriers. Our research program gives students the chance to become interested in science and the opportunity to learn the research skills needed to become future scientists.

The specific research that students participate in is the analysis of a newly planted prairie at Wright College. The reconstructed prairie has provided an outdoor, living laboratory made up of virtually untapped chemical, physical, and biological resources that are invaluable for hands-on field laboratories for biology students. Students learn to develop their own hypothesis about the relationship between different organisms found at the prairie. Students examine the progress of the prairie by conducting soil nutrient analyses from the prairie reconstruction site and comparing their findings to two other prairies within a one-mile radius.

The impact on the students has been great. For example, Nicholas Mensah and Caitlin Lotte, male and female minority students, respectively, who participated in our research program, were both the first in their families to go to college. They had never

ICCCA 2009 Innovation Award for their efforts in "Individualizing the Classrooms"

by Richard Zelenka

At the annual Illinois Council of Community College Administrators conference held in Springfield, IL on November 19th, Wright College's Foundational Studies department received the ICCCA Innovation Award for their quality improvement project, named "Classroom Individualization".

"Classroom Individualization" was piloted in summer 2008 and fully launched in fall 2008. The project entails three main strategies: (1) learning styles assessment, (2) diagnostic testing and (3) follow-up interventions. Learning styles assessment gives the students an understanding of what type of learners they are which also provides the instructors with a class learning style profile. The class profile lets the instructor align his/her teaching styles to a class's learning styles. Diagnostic testing allows the instructor to develop lesson plans based on the class summary and also provides additional attention to the class's weaker content areas. Early intervention involves meeting with students to identify their needs, creating individual lesson plans, recommending support services and tutoring, if necessary.

With firm belief that each class has its own personality, individualizing classroom practices based on student needs means virtually no two classes are taught the same way. Replacing the one-size-fits-all classroom has produced improvements in grade distribution while maintaining high retention.

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participated in research. After one year in our research program, both decided to become scientists. Both transferred as juniors to Loyola University with majors in biology and are involved in an undergraduate research laboratory there. Their story has been highlighted in the news: (http://www.chitowndailynews.org/Chicago_news/City_colleges_students_dive_into_scientific_research,17236).

Assessment of the research mentoring program in all the CCC campuses is ongoing by an independent research firm. As soon as this assessment data is fully analyzed and released, we can give a report of this. In terms of subjective analysis, our program thus far has been important in empowering community college students, especially minority students and women, to engage in research and become more interested in pursuing science and health-related careers.

Putting the power in their hands:

Preliminary writing surveys to improve student writing

by Terrence T. Doherty

I am an English instructor, and as psychologist Abraham Maslow notes, "He that is good with a hammer tends to think everything is a nail." Accordingly, I see many of the problems that students have writing complex assignments as being rooted in a need to better understand the structure and requirements that their writing assignments demand. Rubrics, when given to the student ahead of time, have been shown to help clarify the assignment requirements. I have started taking that process a step further by spending some class time in focused draft evaluation through writing surveys. For many instructors, writing and otherwise, these surveys may be old news, but I have found that especially outside of composition classes, the class time invested in having students actively assess their own writing pays off in the quality of the writing that I end up grading. Regardless of the content, these surveys can help students evaluate their writing based on the specific learning outcomes of the assignment.

A writing survey is essentially a rubric that students have to fill out longhand once they have their writing assignment drafted. If my students have an essay due in two weeks, I set aside about twenty minutes of class time for students to fill out surveys one week ahead of time. Students must copy each piece of the text that is appropriate to the given criterion in the survey, or, if that criterion is not yet fulfilled in their essay, write that they need to fix that problem in the next draft. For example, in my first Introduction to Literature essay, I want my students to write their introduction such that it presents a problem, some lack of crucial knowledge about the text, that their essays will resolve.

I put the question "What problem or mystery does your introduction identify?" in my survey and leave a blank for them to copy it verbatim. If they do not identify a problem or mystery in their introduction, then they should write "I need to put a problem into my introduction." in the blank. One key feature of these surveys is that they help students identify what is missing.

If an instructor chooses to collect the drafts and surveys, they provide insight into what the student understands about the essay requirements, which gives the instructor a chance to correct any miscommunications or misconceptions before the final draft is turned in. If a student brings a completed survey and draft to the Writing Center, TRIO or the Academic Support Center, it can help the consultant immediately isolate a specific issue to address during a session, which can make an appointment significantly more efficient. If an instructor leaves some space for students to fill in their own questions, the survey can work in conjunction with a writing assessment and development application like MyComplab, giving students a place to remind themselves about recurring mechanical issues that their writing diagnostics have exposed. I have found that these surveys are especially helpful in the non-composition classes that I have taught that still involve a writing component because they help clarify the instructor's expectations, reveal structure and content issues rather than just the mechanical ones, and reinforce the notion that writing assigned outside of composition classes still needs to go through a careful drafting process.

If you have questions about writing surveys or would like some samples to build off of in your own classes, please email me at tdoherty1@ccc.edu.

Directed Paraphrasing

Classroom Assessment Technique 23, modified from Angelo and Cross, 1993. Classroom Assessment Techniques, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 232-235.

by Sydney Hart

When I really want to know if students understand a concept or a procedure, I ask them to put it into their own words. It's even more powerful if they can teach the idea or steps to other students. In this assessment, I choose one or two key ideas and ask students to summarize them in their own words in no more than two to three sentences. These summaries must be in writing and for the purpose of teaching other students. Angelo and Cross (1993) also suggest that teachers in occupational fields can direct students to write the summaries or paraphrase the steps of a procedure for use with specific clients. The paraphrases can be evaluated on accuracy and how well they meet the needs of the intended audience (for example, fellow

students or clients). This assessment works best over time; students may have little experience in using their own words while they may have spent many years memorizing the words of authorities. Therefore, they need practice. We can expect students' paraphrasing skills to improve with practice and their understanding of ideas to deepen over time. In my own classes, I find that students struggle with finding their own words, but once they can frame an idea for themselves, they tend to be able to identify it even if presented in different words or with different examples.

One modification I use, which requires less effort, is to have students give an example of an idea from their own lives. This helps with classroom discussion but is less effective in assessing individual student understanding. Angelo and Cross (1993) argue that paraphrasing for a specific audience helps students to see the real-world relevance of an idea, master giving necessary directions in professional-client relationships, provides practice writing with clarity, and gives teachers information about the depth of understanding for each student.

For more information about how and why to use CATS, look at the Classroom Assessment Techniques book at our library and check out these websites:

Vanderbilt Center for Teaching

http://www.vanderbilt.edu/cft/resources/teaching_resources/assessment/cats.htm

The National Teaching and Learning Forum

<http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/assess.htm>

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UPDATE: The Holiday Door Decorating Contest

GUESS WHAT? THE BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT WON AN AWARD. YES THEY DID. THE BEST HOLIDAY DOOR DECORATION.

The Biology Department. Really?

This isn't fair. There's no justice here. I say, How come it's never any of the rest of us? The chemists, poets, philosophers, historians, social scientists. Darn Biology Department. They win everything.

Solid research, core service to student goals, most number of chairs, coolest study aboard program, most animals as wallpaper in the dept. hallway, those two chairs again—Alicia Anzaldo and Henry Herzog, and now this? They beat us with the Holiday doors thing, too?

Problems have solutions. Ours is simple. I call it RESOLUTION # 1:

Since Biology is LIFE itself,

And since life itself cannot be beaten by anything but death itself,

And since only gods, angels, demons, gargoyles, certain prophets and exceptional athletes, fairy creatures from A Midsummer Night's Dream, and all other supernatural beings—think Twilight's handsome hunk-vampires—can defeat LIFE itself,

This bill introduces to the Floor of the school cafeteria,

Wright College shall become a religious institution based on extra-worldly myth. We will defeat the Biology Department and cheat death at the same time!

We can do this. Think about it. This could help retention and graduation rates throughout Wright. We'd free students who struggle with science and our other, less-decorative departments with their challenging curriculums. Students will have more free time thanks to our prohibition of unnecessary labor and study—no more Bio, no more of that dreaded LIFE part to college. We'll teach vampire lure instead. Students will write blogs comparing and contrasting Team Edward and Team Jacob. The Gateway will be able to recommend vampire theology credits to replace any general education requirements. Overachieving faculty members will eventually have to stop bothering students with homework demands coupled with study requirements with quizzes and tests.

Want to learn about LIFE? No thanks.

Please. Think about this. The pitch to students will be the easy part.

- Can't pass Nadas? Study Buddha and the Art of Bicycle Repair.
- Don't like mandated attendance in Weightlifting? Go online and study the CCC Ethics quiz. And write a compare and contrast essay—CCC Ethics and/or the Book of Leviticus?
- Astronomy or Astrology: What the Stars Tell Us.
- History or Mystery? This is a Learning Community class. Students take both Zenes and Wagoner. Students in Jim Zenes's Civil War class—you know, the one where they did the re-enactments the last few years on the fields of Wright, just in front, right beyond security cameras—well, these students will also register for Pr. Jane Wagoner's 102 Course specializing in Murder Mysteries in Chicago. The big question for this class is, Will final essays be admissible as state evidence?

If we want to get serious about this, we need to get syllabi together. Student learning outcomes will be created that will define measures by which we can determine that the Biology Department is not winning as much. And that's the point of assessment—Beating the Biology Department!



Denotes an AQIP Project