“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Actually it was assessment time. In this issue of the newsletter we are sharing two tales of assessment. One story comes from a long-time faculty member at JCCC, the other from a new faculty member. The first assessment tale is from Susan Johnson, Professor and Chair, Engineering Technology.

I came to the “assessment process” with a good dose of dread and an even bigger dose of skepticism. I’m sure I am like many faculty, I was perfectly happy teaching my courses the way I had been teaching them for a long time. I’ve always been committed to my students’ learning and kept my classes up to date with new technology and the latest information from industry. I believed the measure of how I was doing my job was reflected in the grades of my students; however, the grades I assigned not only reflected the mastery of material but also participation, completeness, and other factors which were all lumped together to determine grades. The assessment process led me to look at my teaching and my students’ learning in another way.

I attended a few presentations at JCCC and I decided to start small and selected one of the Student Learning Outcomes and assessed that outcome in one of my courses. I didn’t want to develop a new assignment, so I decided to try using embedded assessment. While grading the assignment, I scored each student’s assignment using a rubric. I was measuring Student Learning Outcome #7 – the extent to which each student could identify the relevant problem, select and execute an appropriate method to explore a solution, and analyze the solution.

After the first year, I noticed some students were having trouble determining what equation to select to solve the problem. The following year, I modified the course to include more discussion on how to determine the best method to solve a problem. By reassessing the same item the following year, I found a greater percentage able to select the proper equation. This clearly shows how this assessment technique works. Using it, I identified something the students weren’t all able to do (selecting the proper equation to solve a problem). Then I brainstormed about ways to address it and decided to emphasize not only how to solve the equation, but to also emphasize how to select the proper equation to use. This was implemented in my course and the most recent year of data shows I was successful!

My skepticism has melted and I know assessment works. I am now assessing another component of my course and am excited to see the results.

Tom Renfro started the Fall 2012 semester as a new Assistant Professor in the Information Technology Program. Interested in SLO #8 – use technology efficiently and responsibly, Tom started devising an assessment plan his first semester. Tom developed a pretest / post-test over IP Subnetting administered via ANGEL. The test is self-grading and the students and instructor receive immediate feedback of results.

Tom started his assessment journey at JCCC through a presentation in his LENS program. He was initially less than enthusiastic to be hearing another presentation about an “assessment process.” He was surprised to hear that assessment was faculty-driven and that the Assessment Office was here to help. Tom accepted the invitation to come to World Café VI. “When I went to World Café, everyone I talked to at the round tables said I was trying to do too much, too fast! When I found out I could focus my assessment strategy on one thing and actually use the results to impact my students, I was excited. That had not been my experience previously. It gave me the opportunity to impact student learning one area at a time.”

Tom wants to send a message to new faculty, “Everyone has at least one thing that they are targeting to improve in their class. Call the Office of Outcomes Assessment (OOA), or go to one of their training opportunities. OOA can help you design a meaningful assessment centered on student learning outcomes.”
Announcement

“Got Data?”

Brown Bag Brownie Break
Thursday, March 7
Noon
GEB 264

So you’ve collected your assessment data, now what? Bill Robinson and Sheri Barrett will present information on how to analyze and report on assessment data to help you understand student learning in your classroom or department.

Quote of the Month

“As commonly used today, the term assessment can refer to two different activities: (a) the mere gathering of information (measurement) and (b) the use of that information for institutional and individual improvement (evaluation). We believe that there is a fundamental distinction here between the information we gather and the uses to which it is put, and that this distinction is often blurred when people talk about assessment in higher education.”

Alexander Astin & Anthony Lising

Antonio, Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education

Read more by checking this book out through the OOA.

Ask Assessment Annie

Answering your assessment questions

Dear Assessment Annie,

I was thinking about going to the Assessment Conference that JCCC is hosting on April 19, but wasn't sure if it would be all that helpful. Should I take the time and energy to attend?

Vacillating Frank

Dear Frank,

Of course you should go! You will have the opportunity to not only hear a great plenary speaker, Dr. Susan Hatfield from Winona State University, but also the chance to hear from your colleagues across the region about the activities and best practices they have been involved in. There will also be a vendor fair, lunch and prizes. Don’t miss out on this great experience that is coming right to your doorstep!

Assessmently yours,

Annie

Assessment Focus Groups

Please attend one of the seven scheduled Focus Groups:

- Monday, March 4, 10:00-10:50 am, SCI 124
- Tuesday, March 5, 9:30-10:20 am, RC 183
- Wednesday, March 6, noon-12:50 pm, GEB 212
- Wednesday, March 6, 2:00-2:50 pm, GEB 264
- Thursday, March 7, 2:30-3:20 pm, ATB 134
- Thursday, March 7, 5:00-5:50 pm, CLB 203
- Friday, March 8, 1:00-2:30 pm, OHEC 209

Join us as we focus on JCCC’s student learning outcomes and the current activities, resources and communication strategies employed by the Office of Outcomes Assessment and the Assessment Council.