



JOHNSON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Volume 6, Issue 2  
October 2014

## Save the Date

**Brown Bag  
Brownie Break**  
Monday, Oct. 13  
3-4 p.m.  
GEB 264

**Coffee Break**  
Thursday, Oct. 23  
9:30-10:30 a.m.  
JavaJazz

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photos by  
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# Spotlight on Assessment

## Assessment – More than Numbers

by Dr. Sheri Barrett

*Excerpt from the October viewpoint in the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment newsletter*

From my first forays into the realm of assessment, I have heard colleagues assert that assessment of student learning is a faculty issue. I agree wholeheartedly with the statement, but then I came up against examples of assessment processes that seemed to be driven more by the need to satisfy accreditors, state agencies, or other external bodies, and ill-suited to foster faculty engagement in assessment. While I believe that Institutional Research or Assessment offices act in the capacity of colleagues who come alongside faculty to assist, the actual work of assessment belongs to faculty and processes of assessment within institutions should be constructed in a way to ensure faculty ownership of assessment of student learning.

At JCCC we frame our assessment work through the cycle of assessment. The cycle provides both a theoretical and practical framework to engage faculty in authentic assessment activities.

### What Was the Question?

The cycle of assessment begins with a **“Question.”** It is the faculty’s role to identify the relevant question to assess learning in their classes, courses or programs. Basic guidelines for writing a good assessment question are to make the question:

- **Meaningful** – the question is one that faculty want to know the answer.
- **Actionable** – the question is one that provides faculty with information to make changes.
- **Relatable** – the question is tied to course objectives, program goals and campus-wide student learning outcomes.
- **Measurable** – the question can be answered! Usually that means narrowing down the question.
- **Manageable** – the process of collecting data is manageable.



### Planning Makes Perfect

After the question has been developed, faculty **“Plan”** for the collection of the assessment data. Some universal decisions must be made:

- Which program goal, college-wide learning outcome, and/or course objectives are going to be assessed?
- What tools are best to conduct the assessment, such as portfolios, rubrics, embedded test question(s), pre/post tests, etc.?
- What are faculty expectations of student performance?

### I Have Data, So What?

**“Collecting and Scoring”** the data is best considered prior to collecting a single data point. OOA frequently helps faculty create Excel templates to facilitate recording the data. Once the data has been collected, deciding what the data is saying can be challenging. It is important that faculty grapple with this task. Faculty must understand the data to make meaning of the results. OOA continues to offer sessions to help faculty and departments decipher their data.

### Do Something!

The final steps in the assessment cycle, **“Report and Act,”** involve making curricular or instructional changes informed by the assessment results. In a very broad sense, there are four possible outcomes of assessment data.

First, faculty may find the assessment instrument was ill-suited to measure the intended learning outcome. When this happens, faculty members need to either modify the instrument or change to a different instrument.

Another common result of analysis is that the findings indicate an area of challenge for students in the course or overall program. Determining what changes faculty should make to the curriculum or program to improve student learning is an obvious next step. Assessment data can provide an opportunity for robust discussion by the faculty.

Sometimes it is time to move on from an assessment simply because results indicate that students are successfully hitting the benchmark criteria. Continuing to assess a learning outcome in which students show proficiency may not be the best use of time and energy for departments.

*continued on back*

## Announcements

### “Program Review and Assessment”

Assessment is now an integral part of the Program Review process at JCCC. Whether you are in the cycle of review this year, or coming up in the next round, plan now for how your assessment strategies intersect with Program Review.

*Brown Bag Brownie Break*  
Monday, October 13  
3-4 pm  
GEB 264

### Coffee Break

Join us for a free cup of coffee and some one-on-one discussion on assessment in your course/discipline/department.

Thursday, Oct. 23, 9:30-10:30 am  
JavaJazz

## Quote of the Month

“Most campuses are indeed ‘doing something’ in assessment. But the kinds of fundamental transformations in instruction that might have resulted from examining systemic evidence of student learning have mostly not happened. Instead, for the majority of institutions, assessment remains an add-on, done principally at the behest of administration and sustained as a superstructure outside the traditional array of academic activities and rewards.”

Banta, Trudy, et. al. (2002) *Building a Scholarship of Assessment*, p. 23.

Check out this book today at the OOA resource library in GEB 262.

## New in the Resource Library in OOA

*Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment* (2001). National Academy of Sciences.

## Assessment – More than Numbers, *continued*

Faculty may question when it is time to move on and choose a different outcome to assess. Some questions to explore:

- Was there improvement?
- Did students meet the benchmark performance? Setting these benchmarks early in the process are important as the unfortunate tendency of setting them later results in expectations “sinking” to the level of performance.
- Are the faculty satisfied with student performance?
- Do faculty see a greater need/question that needs to be asked? Often what emerges from an assessment that has reached its benchmark is another question.

Finally, assessment can lead to changes, not only in student learning, but also in faculty training. When discussing assessment of student learning, the assumption is that all data leads to students. Sometimes the assessment process leads not to the students, but to the faculty. It may be that faculty need more training on a new textbook, learning management system, etc.

### Write About It

It is important to report results that are meaningful to multiple stakeholders, internal and external. Good reports provide a history of assessment activities, help crystalize what was learned, and provide a road map for next steps.

An assessment report should answer the following questions:

- What was the assessment question?
- What assessment was completed to answer the question?
- What were the results of the assessment?
- What are the next steps?

### Conclusion

In using the Cycle of Assessment as a means of framing assessment at JCCC, we have found its most important result: a highly engaged faculty invested in an assessment process that is focused on student learning.

— Mark Your Calendars NOW —

### 5th Annual Regional Community College Assessment Conference Theme: *Moving Forward with Assessment*

Hosted by JCCC Office of Outcomes Assessment  
Friday, April 10, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Tom Angelo, author of *Classroom Assessment Techniques*

### Assessment by Design Workshop

January 9, 2015, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Offered for the first time this past Summer, OOA will present another daylong workshop focused on assessment. Attendees participating in this workshop will build an assessment strategy to address their course, general education or program needs. In addition, participants will gain a theoretical framework for understanding the cycle of assessment. The workshop is free to JCCC faculty and includes course materials, beverage and snack breaks, and lunch. This daylong workshop also counts toward a faculty development day. The session is appropriate for individual faculty, or small groups of faculty from a department. Registration is limited, so register now with CRN 34141. Call OOA if you have any questions.

### Outcomes Assessment Mini-Grants

Don't Forget OOA Mini-grants are available on a rolling deadline. Submit by the 15th of the month to be considered in that month.

Use mini-grant funds to jump-start or continue your assessment projects. Funds may be used for assessment resources, travel for assessment-related activities, equipment or software dedicated to assessment efforts, assessment retreats, costs associated with data input or external consultants, and more. **Mini-grants are now available for up to \$750.**

New guidelines/applications are available from the Office of Outcomes Assessment, GEB 262, on InfoShare or on the Outcomes Assessment blog.