

# THE ASSESSMENT CHRONICLES

OF LANEY COLLEGE

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## ILO # 1: Writing Assessment Results and Actions

by David Mitchell

In case you missed it on January 15, we had a very informative and engaging campus-wide discussion about our Institutional Learning Outcome #1 writing assessment results from the fall semester. For this discussion, we asked a group of instructors from a variety of disciplines (English, ESL, Communications, Mexican/Latin American Studies, Psychology, Sociology and the Library) to be on our “panel of experts”. The instructors who volunteered to be on the panel either teach writing, or often assess their students using writing assignments. There were nearly 70 instructors who attended the flex day discussion, many of whom shared their own experiences with regard to their students’ writing.

There were three goals we wanted to achieve with this flex day discussion: a) let instructors know about existing resources (on campus and online) to help students write more effectively, b) get feedback/suggestions from the college community on institution-wide initiatives to help students write better, and c) work on implementing an action plan: develop college-wide resources/initiatives and effectively use existing ones to help students improve their writing skills.

During the flex day activity, Cheli presented graphs of the preliminary results we got from the writing assessments completed in fall. These results show that 808 writing assignments were assessed by 21 different instructors from these disciplines: Anthropology, Art, Asian/Asian American studies, Biology, Chemistry, English, History, Political Science and Psychology. Below you’ll find a breakdown by criteria on how students performed on their writing assignments.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Work	Not Done
Understanding of Assignment	33%	31%	14%	7%	15%
Content & Support	27%	26%	19%	11%	15%
Structural Organization	28%	27%	19%	11%	15%
Grammar & Mechanics	20%	30%	23%	13%	14%

As you can see, we have a lot of work to do in all of these areas of writing to help our students become more successful in their assignments.

During the flex day discussion, we received a lot of great suggestions from participants for ways faculty can help students improve their writing skills. Here are a few of them:

- Provide ongoing professional development workshops for instructors who give writing assignments to teach instructors how to a) create and structure a writing assignment, b) better convey expectations about what instructors want from students with regard to writing, c) give models of good (and poor) writing to students, d) develop Directed Learning Assignments to help students with their writing.
- Fund in-classroom support people (Teaching Assistants) to help students with writing assignments.
- Arrange library orientations for students to help with research papers.
- Link courses from different disciplines, especially content disciplines/ courses (Chemistry, Sociology, Latin American Studies) that could connect to Foundation Skills courses (Math, English, ESL).

The Learning Assessment Committee is planning to hold a series of meetings in spring, 2015 to discuss and evaluate all of the suggestions that were made during the college-wide discussion. We hope to create an action plan to implement some of these recommendations, and we will keep you informed on what is decided, so stay tuned!

## **IT'S SPRING, TAKE ACTION**

If you assessed ILO #1 or an SLO in your classes last semester, now is the time to analyze your assessment results and meet with your colleagues to consider how you can improve your course(s) so that students perform better the next time you assess them. **USE THIS SEMESTER TO MAKE PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND ACT ON THEM.** These actions could include: revamping your course outline, updating or changing books, materials, assignments, grading rubrics, exams, integrating more technology into your classroom, making your course more hands-on or project-based, taking a more student-centered approach to your teaching. Go for it!

## **YOU COULD WIN!**

As you may remember, the Learning Assessment Committee sponsored a student contest last semester to help students become more aware of Laney's Institutional Learning Outcomes. Well, there's another ILO awareness contest this semester that involves taking a selfie and posting it to the Learning Assessment Committee's Facebook page. Instructors and staff can also enter and win one of five \$20 gift certificates for the Laney Bistro. The contest is happening now, so check flyer and email announcements for detailed directions, and get your hunger on! Contest directions can also be found here: <http://www.laney.edu/wp/assessment/?p=2248>

## **TASKSTREAM WORK SESSION**

Our next TaskStream work session will be held in F-170C on Friday, March 6 from 1:00 to 3:00. If you need help entering your assessment plans for this semester, or if you have any leftover reports from the fall, stop by to get help from your friendly Learning Assessment team.