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Introduction

As professional educators, Henry Ford College (HFC) instructors assess student learning on a daily basis. We do this in many informal ways such as discussing content with students, monitoring student discussions, or reviewing student work. Additionally, we do this in formal ways such as grading student quizzes, projects, tests, and other evidence of their learning. We do this work for two purposes. First and most importantly, we do this to inform our practice and to improve student learning. Second, we document our assessment practices to demonstrate to our accrediting body and our community that we are dedicated to improving student learning through exemplary practice.

During the 2015 – 2016 academic year, we held a mini-conference focused on assessment. Our guest speaker, Barbara Walvoord, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Notre Dame University, presented background on the increased call for assessment at higher education institutions and a model of assessment that appeared to address the needs of assessment for accrediting bodies and constituents that was rooted in teaching practice. Shortly after the mini conference, our Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) adopted Walvoord’s model of assessment described in her 2010 book Assessment Clear and Simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments and general education (Second Edition).

In this annual report, we summarize the work of CASL to use Walvoord’s model to assess student learning of our General Education and Program Learning outcomes. We thank HFC administrators for their support of our efforts. We thank HFC instructors for their willingness to adapt their assessment techniques to reflect Walvoord’s model, and for their efforts to gather data, report results, and create action plans to improve student learning.

CASL Co-Chairs:
Robert James, Cynthia Scheuer, Debra Smith, and Deborah Zopf
Purpose of General Education

Henry Ford College (HFC) defines General Education as courses and/or experiences that enable students to attain the knowledge and skills needed by every college graduate. General Education establishes a foundation of skills and understandings to enable success in employment and/or further education. In line with our belief that General Education competence should be defined by the College to meet the needs of the external communities in which its graduates must function, HFC collected and restated expectations identified by employers, alumni and four-year colleges. The following statement of General Education outcome requirements embodies those expectations.

### HFC MISSION STATEMENT RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LEARNING OUTCOMES

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<td><strong>Mission</strong>&lt;br&gt;We empower learners through the development of independent, critical and creative thinking.</td>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking &amp; Information Literacy</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Demonstrate the ability to analyze &amp; evaluate information.&lt;br&gt;• Identify the need for research to draw conclusions, formulate inferences, solve problems and make decisions.&lt;br&gt;• Demonstrate information literacy skills by locating, evaluating, selecting, organizing, synthesizing and ethically documenting information from multiple sources using both formal and informal formats, as appropriate for diverse writing situations.</td>
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<td><strong>Mission</strong>&lt;br&gt;We foster diversity, tolerance, understanding and acceptance to prepare learners to succeed in a global society.</td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Effectively communicate ideas appropriate to their discipline using Standard English, through written and verbal communication.</td>
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<td><strong>Mission</strong>&lt;br&gt;We anticipate and respond to the needs of our stakeholders, exceed their expectations and serve the public good.</td>
<td><strong>Quantitative Literacy</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Apply quantitative skills to analyze situations.&lt;br&gt;• Make decisions in a variety of contexts.</td>
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<td><strong>Mission</strong>&lt;br&gt;Civil Society &amp; Culture</td>
<td><strong>Civil Society &amp; Culture</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Compare and contrast the United States with other nations or world regions.&lt;br&gt;• Address social (economic, political and cultural) issues, patterns of diversity, or aspects of inequality.</td>
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<td><strong>Mission</strong>&lt;br&gt;Computer Technology</td>
<td><strong>Computer Technology</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Demonstrate skills for computer technology, including Internet, network and advanced file operations.&lt;br&gt;• Include organizing, managing, and presenting data using office productivity software.&lt;br&gt;• Identify security and integrity threats.&lt;br&gt;• Identify unethical actions within their social or professional environments</td>
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Assessment Development at Henry Ford College

The charge of the Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) at HFC is to gather information on student learning and development that can be used to increase student achievement. The college’s efforts to improve student learning through instructional and curricular changes are to be informed in part by effective assessment procedures.

Our work to develop assessment procedures that would make sense to our instructors, inform instructors’ work, and document the use of data to make decisions about how to improve student learning moved forward in significant ways during the 2015-2016 academic year. The following is a summary of committee actions:

- **Assessment Mini Conference (September 24-25, 2015):** At this college-wide event, our facilitator, Dr. Barbara Walvoord introduced faculty and administrators to a method of assessment rooted in teaching practice.

- **Members of CASL General Education and CASL Programs:** Adopted Dr. Walvoord’s model of assessment as described in her 2010 book, *Assessment Clear and Simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments and general education (Second Edition)* and deployed a three-step assessment process based on this model.

- **Template Development:** At the request of faculty, the committee developed and adopted several tools to guide assessment work such as graphic organizers and annual assessment report templates.

- **Strategic Planning On-Line (SPOL):** Faculty learned how to input their assessment data into SPOL, a software solution used to manage key aspects of institutional effectiveness adopted by the College.

- **Assessment Roles and Responsibilities:** CASL General Education and CASL Program committees defined the roles and responsibilities for everyone participating in assessment.
• **Course Application Process**: Revised the course application process and forms for courses to be considered by each General Education sub-committee for meeting the General Education outcome.

• **Spotlight on Program Improvements (SPIF) (April 14, 2015)**: Faculty showcased assessment results of five programs and two general education outcomes during an inaugural SPIF Day. The program featured six of the colleges programs of study: Criminal justice, Graphic Design, Hospitality, Nursing, Paralegal and Physical Therapist Assistant. The day also featured two General Education outcome areas: Computer Technology and Quantitative Literacy. Each of the programs, and the General Education areas presented an overview, the learning outcomes, assessment information, and plans for future improvements to enhance student learning. All six academic programs have completed a comprehensive five-year review as the basis for the presentation. The following are the highlights of each of the academic programs and the General Education areas:

  o **Criminal Justice**: The faculty of this program have plans to use a variety of methods to promote and recruit students to increase enrollment. They have also implemented a more efficient and effective course sequence to guide student as they progress toward graduation.

  o **Graphic Design**: This program has been re-written to reflect the industry needs based on the review process. They have also been able to replace and update the most current software and equipment to offer a state of the art program.

  o **Hospitality**: This is the one area of the college that now offers a bachelor’s degree. They have also recently added the accreditation of the bakery and pastry program. They have been very busy creating enhancements to the restaurant, the baking and pastry area, as well as to the marketing, communication and advising plan for students to be able to complete certificates along the way to the bachelor’s degree.
o **Nursing:** The Nursing program is undergoing the implementation of a new academic and clinical curriculum. They have moved to a competitive admission process to eliminate the waitlist, since HFC has the largest Nursing program in the state of Michigan. Other changes that they are implementing to enhance student success is a new mentoring program, embedding the use of the simulation lab in all courses, and interdisciplinary collaboration with other health care programs.

o **Paralegal:** The Paralegal program has implemented curriculum modifications and offerings to meet the needs of the students. They have been engaging the faculty to participate in the marketing and recruitment of the program, and maximizing the use of technology in and out of the classroom for paralegal program students. They are also looking at the possibility of special topics courses and expanding the legal writing opportunities for the students.

o **Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA):** The PTA program has increased the use of video technology both in and out of the classroom to provide students with the recordings of the special techniques for patient assessment and treatment. Based on the program review and assessment they plan to use electronic documentation in the lab setting, implement discussion boards for ethical dilemmas throughout the program, and promote altruism by adding a community service component to the program.

o **General Education-Computer Technology:** The Computer Technology subcommittee reviewed the results of the pilot to develop a plan to assist instructors to revisit formative assessment to provide students with opportunities to apply their computer skills in new contexts. They are also planning to implement professional development opportunities for instructors to share best practice on how to take the students to the next level in computer technology.

o **General Education-Quantitative Literacy:** Following the assessment pilot, the math faculty met to discuss the results and create a plan to improve student learning. They identified five critical computational skills in each course and mapped them across the courses. Department members are creating additional resources and support for both faculty and students to improve students’ skills from course to course.
**Co-Curricular Assessment:** We initiated Co-Curricular assessment (May 2016). We used the Higher Learning Commission’s definition of Co-Curricular programs; “Co-Curricular programs are suited to the institution’s mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students. Co-Curricular activities must be academically related, and not part of a course at HFC. Co-Curricular activities enable student intellectual, social, emotional, moral and aesthetic development” (Higher Learning Commission Accreditation criteria, 3.E.1) to identify areas of Co-Curricular activity at the college.

- Examples of current HFC Co-Curricular activities are: Mirror News; Historical Museum, Cooperative Education courses; Honors Program; CLP (Internships); Engineering Day; Democracy Institute; Student clubs and subsequent activities; Conferences and seminars such as the annual Political Issues Conference; Student Math league; student art exhibits; Student Council events; Student Athletics; CHAMPS; WHFR Radio Station.
- We will form a sub-committee composed of the CASL co-chairs and Co-Curricular program leads to develop learning outcomes, rubrics and methods to assess student learning in co-curricular activities.
- CASL Programs committee charge and membership was revised to include Co-Curricular members.

**Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy:** We applied and were accepted as academy participants. The following are the three most pressing needs that we will address via our participation in the academy (as described in our application):

- **First,** HFC needs a strong formative assessment plan that is implemented systemically. Currently, assessment is divided into assessment of programs and assessment of general education outcomes. Each is at different stages of development. Our program assessment plan has been implemented by two-thirds of associate degree programs with the remaining one-third of programs lagging in their implementation to varying degrees. Mentoring of program leads to move this work forward is critical. The General Education assessment plan is in a pilot phase. Implementing and learning from this pilot is critical to developing an assessment plan for General Education.
To support this work, HFC needs to be clear about what assessment is by defining what assessment is and is not, by providing examples of best practice, and demonstrating how these practices can be adapted to our work. Further, we need a step-by-step process that can be modified to fit the varying needs of disciplines and programs. Additionally, HFC needs to provide time for faculty to reflect on assessment results, talk with professionals around the College, and design ways to improve student learning outcome achievement, readiness for work or continued education.

- **Second**, HFC needs a summative assessment plan. Current use of third party tests that do not address learning outcomes fail to provide data on student learning of the content addressed at HFC. Identification of a summative assessment plan is a critical goal.

- **Third**, HFC needs to build a culture of inquiry into student learning in which professionals engage in, and value assessment. Developing a robust assessment plan that faculty embrace and deploy may help in this effort. However, HFC needs to find a mechanism by which professionals review data, examine underlying causes for results, discuss strategies to address these causes, implement these strategies and study results. This mechanism may include the development of professional communities around the work of assessment, providing faculty the resources for this work. HFC may learn many strategies, which would foster the development of a culture of assessment to improve student learning in courses and programs.

During the four-year Academy, HFC will work to develop and nurture the habit of gathering and responding to data so these practices become a professional way of working that will continue beyond the duration of the Academy. To initiate this work, we established a committee composed of the CASL co-chairs and faculty members to participate in the academy. Our focus is the development of an institutional commitment to assessment as a means of inquiry into student learning. To accomplish this, the leadership team will learn about exemplary practices, ways to inform and engage faculty, and create an institutional culture dedicated to using data to inform practice.

- **Assessment Process Map**: The following flowchart is a visual roadmap of HFC’s operationalization of Walvoord’s three-step process.
Assessment Path from Outcomes to Implementation

This flowchart shows the operationalization of both General Education and Program Learning Outcome assessment.
Program Assessment

PROCESS

In fall 2012, we redesigned our Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment process based on a recommendation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). By fall 2013, all associate degree programs had specific learning outcomes.

Our assessment process uses formative and summative assessment measures, focuses on aligning course and program learning objectives, specifies a level of performance for each course, and emphasizes a coherent progression of learning in the program’s course sequence. To facilitate summative assessment, all associate degree programs are encouraged to have capstone courses.

We implemented a plan and the processes to support the meaningful review of all programs on a five-year review cycle. Program reviews include a summary of assessment projects and their impact on student learning. Our Program review also includes a peer review. This academic year we strengthened our peer review by adding more cross-disciplinary faculty participation in the review.

In fall 2015, we adopted and piloted Dr. Barbara Walvoord’s 3 Step Assessment process from her 2010 text, Assessment: Clear and simple: A practical guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education. This three-step process has enabled our faculty to focus their data collection efforts on opportunities for actions to improve student learning. This process also enabled us to ‘close the loop’ by following up on how well our actions were achieving the intended results over time.

**Our first program improvement actions from the pilot will be implemented in winter 2017.**
DATA COLLECTION

Data from existing course formative assessments is collected at three points throughout a program of study; at the beginning, middle, and end to capture evidence of students’ knowledge and skill at what we have described as introductory, developing, and competent knowledge and skill levels. These levels have specific descriptions developed by faculty to guide instructors’ assessment of student work. The assessment expectations at each level are detailed in the assignment and or activity rubrics.

First, students are assessed at the introductory level. At this level, students are learning basic information about a subject. This level corresponds to Bloom's Taxonomy levels 1 and 2. Objectives at the introductory level might include tasks that require students to recall information, list ideas, name objects, locate places, discover or observe.

Second, students are assessed to determine whether their knowledge is developing as they pursue additional courses. At this level, students should be able to express more fully their understanding and provide added detail with greater proficiency than at the introductory level. Tasks used to assess student knowledge at this level would be written to capture knowledge at Bloom’s Taxonomy levels 2 or 3. Objectives at the developing level might require students to understand, translate, summarize, demonstrate or discuss ideas. Tasks at this level might have students demonstrate understanding, translate, summarize, or discuss ideas.

Third, toward the end of their tenure at HFC, students will be assessed to determine whether they are competent in their knowledge and skills. At this level, students will demonstrate that they have the ability or skills to be able to do something well or well enough to meet a standard.

Tasks designed to measure competence are written to capture knowledge at Bloom's Taxonomy level 3 or 4. Assignments or test items used to demonstrate knowledge at level 3 might include tasks that require students to use and apply knowledge, use problem-solving methods, manipulate, design or experiment to build upon their knowledge. Tasks at level 4 might require students to identify or analyze patterns, organize ideas, or recognize trends.

In addition to the collection and use of formative assessment information, we are also using summative assessment to measure student learning at the end of the associate
degree. This may entail completion of an exit exam, portfolio review, and/or authentic assessment of skills.

Data collected from these formative and summative assessments is analyzed by a cross-discipline faculty committee and recommendations (actions) are made to improve student learning. The recommended actions to improve student learning are implemented as described in the program action implementation plan.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Program Leads are responsible for mapping their Program and General Education learning outcomes to their courses using the Introductory, Developing and Competent designations. The purpose of outcome mapping is to assist faculty with recognizing how the achievement of learning outcomes occurs outside of General Education designated courses where additional opportunities for accomplishment and reinforcement are possible. Mapping enables faculty to see how the outcomes are embedded in our curriculum. Refer to the Physical Therapy Assistant program mapping snapshot below.

To support the five-year review cycle, faculty program leads identified the outcome indicators, data sources, performance benchmarks and the results. This information was rolled into an Annual Report. The Program Annual Report also details the faculty data analysis, identification of student strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for improving student learning, implementation timing and post action implementation re-assessment timing.
General Education Assessment

In fall 2015 after the Assessment mini conference, we initiated guided conversations about how to implement Walvoord’s three-step process in ways specifically suited to each of the General Education outcomes. To learn how to implement the three steps, we tasked the outcome sub-committees to develop a pilot project using the three steps for each of our General Education outcomes: Civil Society and Culture, Communication (Written & Oral), Computer Technology, Critical Thinking and Information Literacy, and Quantitative Literacy.

The three steps are:

- **Step 1 Outcomes**: Verify course-learning outcomes are aligned with General Education outcome(s). Identify assignments & tests that address the outcome.
- **Step 2 Information**: Identify a large enough sample of student work to reach a reasonable conclusion about how well students are achieving the outcome. Look for common themes in the data & organize the results for sub-committee discussion.
- **Step 3 Action**: Analyze student work. Prepare a 2-page report that identifies areas of strength & areas of concern in student achievement of the outcome. Explain how the proposed action(s) will improve student learning. Include responsibility & timeline.

Our goal is to demonstrate that we are using what we have learned from our data collection and analysis to put actions in place to improve student learning.

Each sub-committee was tasked with learning the Walvoord process and applying it in a way that made sense for the discipline(s) involved. As we attempted to put the Walvoord process into practice, we discovered that our outcomes and the rubrics we developed for measuring them needed some revision to enable assessment. For example, the Civil Society and Culture sub-committee re-wrote that outcome and completed the internal approval process.
The following graphic shows the status of each outcome sub-committee as they worked through Walvoord’s three-step process for their pilot project.

**Annual Reports:** Each sub-committee prepared a brief summary of their data collection process, instructor discussion of student strengths and weaknesses, recommendations for improving the assessment process, recommendations for improving student learning (their action plan), and their action plan implementation.

**Rubrics:** Our rubrics contain four competency descriptions, Not Meeting, Approaching, Meeting and Exceeding. CASL leadership provided some suggestions near the end of the academic year for ‘polishing the rubrics’ when the decision was made to use the terms, Introductory, Developing and Competent to describe student learning. This work will be addressed during the 2016-2017 academic year.