IT TAKES A VILLAGE: CONVERSATIONS IN ASSESSMENT

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2015 ASSESSMENT SYMPOSIUM

May 1, 2015
INTRODUCTION

This year's presentations at the annual Assessment Symposium focused on assessments across programs and assessments across disciplines. Assessments across programs and disciplines can be challenging, as assessments of individual programs may have employed different measures. But this is a very timely topic here at Nassau Community College because we are working to more effectively employ assessment results to inform the College’s strategic planning.

One panel’s topic was “Assessment Conversations Across Disciplines,” presented by Dr. Elizabeth Gaudino-Goering and Dr. Pamela Flores, from the Psychology Department, and Dr. Christine Marchese from the Department of Accounting and Business Administration. In addition there were two panels on “Assessment Conversations across Programs.” The first included Dr. Lisa Korman, from the Psychology Department, and Dr. Joyce Stern, from Reading/BEP; the second panel included Professors Anne Kopstein and Mary Ann Snow, in the Nursing Department, and Dr. Vasiliki Lagakis, from Reading/BEP.

Professors Gaudino-Goering, Korman, and Kopstein prepared summaries of their presentations for this year’s Highlights of the Annual Assessment Symposium, and these are included in the following pages.

Dr. Gaudino-Goering (p. 3) described assessing the academic success of a project initiated in response to the observation that students who took Developmental courses while enrolled in General Psychology courses were at greater risk of failure than those who were not taking Developmental courses at the same time as General Psychology. This suggested that students who had not yet mastered the academic skills necessary to do well in General Psychology courses might be aided by additional support within the psychology course itself.

Accordingly, Dr. Gaudino-Goering’s group established several special General Psychology classes of 26 students currently taking Developmental Education classes as well (compared to the usual class size of 36 students, some of whom are taking Developmental courses and some who are not) and reinforced the general academic skills they were learning in their Developmental and NCC 101 classes. Dr. Gaudino-Goering’s assessment data shows that students co-enrolled in Developmental and General Psychology courses had greater success rates when placed in the smaller classes than when they were placed in the larger ones. The Department plans to continue the special classes.
Dr. Korman presented the results of the first assessment of the many programs and activities initiated through the new Academic Senate First year Experience Committee (p. 9). The objective of this Committee is to provide opportunities for students to become integrated into and take advantage of all the resources available at the College, and the assessment results suggest that the Committee has succeeded in doing that.

Professor Kopstein’s narrative (p. 13) describes how the Nursing Department has employed the automated assessment program ÒTaskSteamÓ to not only assess student learning outcomes, but to organize relevant information into categories required by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. This has provided invaluable information about student learning in Nursing Department courses, but has also helped to organize the information into the categories required by accrediting agencies.
ASSESSMENT CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES:

Enhancing Opportunities for Success in General Psychology for Developmental Students at Nassau Community College: A Report on Student Outcome Assessment

Prepared by
Dr. Elizabeth Gaudino-Goering
Professor, Psychology

Dr. Gaudino-Goering earned her doctorate in Experimental Psychology/Cognitive Neuroscience from SUNY Stony Brook. She has conducted research and published in scholarly journals on chronic neurological illnesses, cognition, emotion, and disabilities. Dr. Goering has been teaching at NCC since 2007 and currently teaches General Psychology I: Introduction to Psychology, General Psychology II: Research Methods and Human Development. She has also taught Child Psychology, Adolescent Psychology, Brain and Behavior, and Abnormal Psychology. In addition to the classes she teaches at NCC, Dr. Goering is the co-founder and a faculty advisor for the Moms Club, Chairperson of the Student Activities Committee, a member of the Assessment Committees, and a founding member of the NCC Organic Community Garden.

Summary of Presentation

The challenge of teaching students who require remediation is growing, as evinced by the rising number of these students in our classes over the past few years. If pedagogical techniques can be developed that are shown empirically to improve remedial student retention and/or course grades, this could benefit NCC as a whole. Faculty members across the college continue to debate whether these students are best served by allowing them to take introductory level courses before they have completed their developmental courses or if they should be restricted from introductory courses until they are reading and writing at college-level.

This project was designed to identify effective support systems for developmental education students who are taking General Psychology. The Psychology department maintains open enrollment for these students despite the fact that they lack the reading and writing skills necessary for college-level work. We are particularly interested in maintaining their access to General Psychology because we believe that they could use this course material to develop their

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1 The research was conducted by Elizabeth Gaudino-Goering PhD, Lisa Korman PsyD, Pamela Flores PhD, and Diana Milillo PhD. Dr.s Gaudino-Goering and Flores presented the results at the Assessment Symposium. This work was supported, in part, by an OAPR mini-grant.
academic skills and motivation. Thus, it may serve them well to take this course early in their college career. However, these students, who usually go undetected and unsupported in typical classes where the enrollment is 36 students, are at very high risk for failure or withdrawal. Data that we have collected with the help of the Office for Institutional Research has revealed that students co-registered in remedial classes have twice the withdrawal rate of typical students (Gorman, Spring 2011). Furthermore, we have observed that this group of students is growing. In 2011, 20% of our General Psychology students were co-registered in at least one remedial class (Gaudino-Goering, Spring 2012). In 2012, that number had increased to 50% (Flores, Spring 2013).

Table 1. Grade distribution of all students in the same General Psychology courses divided into those also taking Developmental Courses (“Developmental”) and those who are not (“Typical”). Note that students in developmental education courses while co-registered for General Psychology have a much higher rate of W or UW and F grades and are less likely to finish the course with a satisfactory grade of C or better.

The Intervention: Five sections of General Psychology were reserved for developmental students only. In order to register for one of these sections, a student had to be in at least one developmental education class (Reading 001 or 002, English 001 or 100, or Math 001, 002, or 003). These sections were smaller than the typical General Psychology class with a maximum enrollment of 25 students, so that more attention could be paid to individualized instruction. In these smaller sections, faculty supplemented the typical General Psychology curriculum with
regular discussions on active reading, note-taking skills, test-taking skills, and motivation. By integrating these study skills into the every-day operation of the class, students had the opportunity to hone them, thereby improving their course grades and their retention. Faculty members met before the semester began and several times throughout the semester to share ideas, plan both direct and indirect outcome measurements, and trouble-shoot. In addition to these regular discussions of study skills and motivation, each faculty member also developed pedagogy that could potentially improve student grades and retention. These techniques included:

- more frequent quizzes,
- teaching students to create outlines and cognitive maps for each topic,
- teaching students how to use flash cards to help them study.

**Outcome Measures:** In order to clearly describe our students, we needed to review each student’s transcript to identify their placement, current course enrollment, and outstanding remediation needs. We gathered data regarding study habits, work status, family obligations, and other related factors using a modified version of the Student Engagement Survey (Gaudino-Goering, et al., 2013). We closely tracked performance on quizzes, noting overall class GPA and degree of improvement from the start of the semester to the end. Qualitative data analysis was also conducted to determine the students’ impressions of how his or her learning style and skills changed over the semester. A comparison group of developmental education students placed in typical General Psychology classes was also developed for this research in order to determine whether this intervention resulted in improved retention or grades.

**Results:**

**The impact of new study skills.** In one class, students were taught how to create and use flashcards for each topic that they studied. At the end of the course, the faculty member noted that for students who never used flashcards, 85.3% passed their quizzes. For students who did use flashcards, 95% passed their quizzes.

In another class, students were taught how to outline while they read their textbook and the faculty member took note of whether students outlined and their final course outcome. Students were divided into those who did outline, at least some of the time and those who never outlined. For students who did not outline during the semester, only 12.5% ultimately passed the course.
For students who did outline (even if it was only some of the time), 83.4% passed the course.

**Final course grades.** The final course grades for students in the special General Psychology sections were compared to the same cohort of students in typical General Psychology courses noted above. As can be seen in the graph below, the students in the special sections had a lower withdrawal rate than developmental education students in typical General Psychology courses and a higher rate of satisfactory grades of C or better than their counterparts in the typical class.

Table 2. Grade distribution of students taking developmental and Psychology courses at the same time who were enrolled in smaller classes with extra support.

![Graph showing grade distribution]

**Results of Student Engagement Survey.** Students were asked to self-report on a variety of behaviors that impact their college success using the Student Engagement Survey. Their responses were compared to a group of students in typical General Psychology classes. In the typical General Psychology classes, 59% of the students indicated that they were consistently reading their textbook. In contrast, at the end of the semester, 87% of the students in the PSY 203R sections reported that they consistently read their textbook. In student course evaluations, 50% of students reported that reading before class helped them do better. 60% indicated that they had learned new study skills. They were most satisfied with the availability of the instructor (73.2%), class size (80.5%), their sense of belonging in class (71%), and their sense of faculty
Recognizing Qualitative Shifts in the Classroom. Faculty members also noted important changes in the classroom. They felt that there was an increase in their own sense of familiarity with their students. Students were more animated and eager to participate in discussion in class. They also saw an increase in student visits during office hours. PSY 203R sections reported that they consistently read their textbook.

Another Noteworthy Intervention. Two of the same faculty members who teach these special sections have also been teaching a learning community that connects NCC 101, The College Experience, with PSY 203, General Psychology. In this intervention, students have the added benefit of using the NCC 101 class meeting to learn and practice their study skills using the General Psychology curriculum. Since the faculty member who teaches the NCC 101 section is also familiar with the General Psychology curriculum, she can help students both in their study skills and in understanding the subject matter. The withdrawal rates were as low in this class as they were in the special General Psychology classes, but the final course grades were even higher, with about 76% of the students earning grades of C or higher.

What’s Next. As a result of the positive results from these pilot studies, the psychology Department plans to:

- Increase publicity of PSY203R sections
- Make it easier for students to register in these courses
- Collect qualitative data on comparison groups of developmental students
- Consider Learning Communities as another alternative to improving support for developmental education students, and
- Refer students to Academic Success Workshops when they do not have the study skills that they need to pass college-level classes.
ASSESSMENT CONVERSATIONS ACROSS PROGRAMS:

First Year Experience

Prepared by
Dr. Lisa Korman, Assistant Professor, Psychology

Dr. Lisa Korman has been affiliated with the College since 1990 when she began teaching as an adjunct. In addition to her psychology courses, Lisa also teaches NCC101. She is an active member of the First Year Experience Committee, where she co-chairs the annual Day of Service event held at the college each spring. Lisa earned her BA in psychology at Boston University, her MSEd and Professional Certificate in School Psychology at CUNY Queens College, and her PsyD in School-Child-Clinical at Ferkauf Graduate School at Yeshiva University. In addition to her work at the college, Lisa teaches an AP Psychology course at the high school level, and is in private practice.

Abstract

This presentation focuses on describing how the First Year Experience (FYE) Program is thinking about and using assessment as it defines its role, plans its programs and brands itself on our campus. This relatively newly formed Senate Committee (2014-15) develops programs aimed at helping students make connections with their classmates, their professors, their courses and the campus at large. Each initiative encourages involvement and engagement, and aims to foster a supportive environment for student learning, academic and personal success, and retention. The members of FYE value the discussion and practice of assessment, and are using the data to guide the development and refinement of programing.

Summary of Presentation

In addition to discussing our assessment efforts, the opportunity to educate the NCC community about the presence and programming of the First Year Experience (FYE) was enjoyed. FYE programs and services include:

- What’s Up NCC? Blog
- FYE on Twitter
- New Student Orientation
- Common Reading
- Day of Service
- Conversations about College
- NCC 101
These programs share the goals of providing a welcoming environment for new students and assisting them in understanding the expectations of higher education. Each component seeks to inform students about opportunities and options that exist on the NCC campus while offering support and encouragement as they seek to improve their academic skills and awareness of academic etiquette.

FYE has been collecting data since September 2012. A renewed effort to collect and use data in a more meaningful way was undertaken in April 2015. This was a direct result of our awareness that we were making an impact and becoming a presence on campus, but did not have the data to demonstrate it. FYE strives to use assessment data to guide future growth. We have collected the following baseline data so far:

- **What’s Up NCC?** (FYE blog, www.whatsupncc.blogspot.com) was launched in 2012. There have been 127 posts and 22,280 page views.

- FYE on Twitter (twitter.com/fye_nassaucc) was launched in 2013, has posted 1200 tweets and has 200 followers (please follow us 😊).

- New Student Orientation (held each August since 2012) has consistently seen about 200 students

- Common Reading books purchased at NCC Bookstore/class sections involved have ranged from 866/41 to 2539/176.

- Day of Service projects have grown from 26 in 2012/13, to 36 in 2013/14, to 54 in 2014/15. This year’s Day of Service activities yielded:
  - 1,690 PB&J sandwiches
  - over 800 pounds of food and $373
  - $800 and eight boxes of school supplies
  - $248 to Habitat for Humanity
  - 18 boxes of pet supplies and $323
  - 225 greeting cards
  - $200 for The Ronald McDonald House
  - $250 for Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program
  - 55 used cell for Soldiers
Seven bags of toiletries, household items, and clothing 20 care packages for homeless.

37 shrubs and five cubic yards of mulch on our very own campus!

And here is what our students had to say about the Day of Service:

- I felt like I had a purpose.
- It brought everyone together for a meaningful cause.
- It felt good to give back to my college and community.
- I was able to contribute to society by advocating for a cause.
- I learned that I don’t have to give money to help. I can volunteer my time and skills.
- I got to do something I love, volunteering with some very awesome people.
- It was healthy and empowering to unite with others for good causes.
- It opened me up to others NCC activities and students. I had never really participated in anything at NCC before.
- I saw students working hard, with various levels of ability, to do some good on Long Island.
- I have spent a lot of my life caring about myself. Now is the time for me to realize that it takes all six billion of us to make the Earth the place it should be.
- It gave me a chance to participate and feel like I did something to help someone.
- The projects focused on problems within society that are hush-hush. Bringing them to light helps solves these problems.
- It opens your mind and helps you understand that there are people out there in need of others.
- I was able to interact with many students who involve themselves with the betterment of others.
- I got to send a message of hope to hospitalized kids.

Conversations About College are held about eight times per year, with some sponsored by the Department of Student Personnel Services. These discussions address a variety of themes and are presented by an interdisciplinary team of NCC faculty members. As of now, we have collected data on attendance rates and student feedback. Topics have included:

- The S Factor: Social and Emotional Intelligence and Your College Experience
- Straight Talk about Addiction and Recovery
- Sex: A Life Changer
- Classroom Communication: Successful Interactions with Professors and Classmates
- Anti-Bullying
- Overcoming Math Anxiety
- What's In It for You? Careers in Nursing and Other Health Services Professions
- Academic Planning
- Disabilities: How Might I Respond
- STEM Careers
- Financing Your Future: Your College Experience

This is a new undertaking for us, but one to which we are devoted. In line with the theme of the Assessment Symposium, we are aware that it takes a village to assess properly. We have identified the need to establish point-persons and methods to set goals, determine our data sources, identify our data methods, collect data and analyze the findings.

Many thanks to the Assessment Committee for allowing us to share our experience and our message and passion about the activities of the First Year Experience at Nassau Community College.
ASSESSMENT CONVERSATIONS ACROSS PROGRAMS:

Using TaskStream: From Findings to an Operational Plan

Prepared by
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Mary Ann Snow, RN, MS, CCRN, ANP-BC
Nursing Department

Professor Kopstein is an assistant professor of nursing with a specialty in psychiatry. She is serving in her sixth year on both the departmental assessment committee and on the college-wide Academic Senate Assessment Committee. She is both the Co-chair of the committee and the TaskStream Coordinator for the Nursing Department. She is recently Board Certified as a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and works with patients in several acute care psychiatric facilities on Long Island. She is also the proud mother of soon-to-be college bound twins and will hopefully have more time for herself and her assessment endeavors.

Professor Snow is an Assistant Professor in the Nursing Department and a graduate of NCC’s Nursing program. She is on both the college-wide Academic Senate Assessment Committee as well as the Nursing Department’s Assessment Committee. She is one of the Nursing Department’s TaskStream Coordinators as well as Co-chair of the Nursing Department’s Assessment Committee. She works per diem as an Adult Nurse Practitioner in Pre-Surgical Testing for a local hospital.

Abstract

This presentation focused on how the Nursing Department approaches data gathering according to program and student learning outcomes and goals based on the criteria put forth by our program accrediting body, ACEN (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing—formerly the NLNAC). Program findings such as attrition, completion, NCLEX pass rates, employment rates and employer/BSN program satisfaction rates are recorded in TaskStream. An operational plan is then developed based on the findings for each of these measures. For course level assessment, the Nursing Department Assessment Committee recommends an outcome area to assess, faculty collects course data and then findings are recorded in TaskStream. An operational plan emerges based on findings.

Summary of Presentation

Associate programs of Nursing are reviewed and awarded accreditation through the ACEN (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing—formerly the NLNAC). External accreditation is extremely important to Associate Nursing programs for many reasons, including:
• Earning recognition by respected peers
• Establishing eligibility for funding support
• Providing students mobility to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs
• Fostering ongoing self-examination
• Addressing Middle States criteria

ACEN dictates program effectiveness goals and their measures such as: NCLEX Pass Rates (board certification exam for RNs); Program Completion rates; Attrition rates; Employment Rates and Employer/BSN program Satisfaction Rates. The Nursing Department identified acceptable and ideal targets for these program outcomes, and findings have been documented annually since 2011 in the TaskStream program. By 2012, based on program findings, our committee began entering our action/operational plans into TaskStream, and these have been revisited annually since then.

This past academic year, the Nursing Department Assessment Committee decided to measure an aspect of Program Learning Goal and Outcome number one, “Human Flourishing”. Human Flourishing is defined as: “Advocates for patients and families holistically, respecting diversity in ways that promote their self-determination, integrity and ongoing growth across the lifespan”. Under the broad scope of Human Flourishing, the specific sub-learning outcome number 4, cultural competence, was studied in each course. The measures chosen were: specific exam questions in NUR 101; rubric elements of written Service Learning Reflections in NUR 101 and 105 and a cultural competence parameter on the students’ Clinical Rotation Formative Assessment Forms in NUR 203 and 204.

The NUR 105 evening class recognized the importance of Service Learning and selected various activities which would meet the Student Learning Outcomes for the course. One group put together a short video of the photos they took, which was shown at the Symposium.

In summary, the Nursing Department uses TaskStream to record assessment findings of student learning outcomes and goals and then creates an operational plan to “close the loop”. The faculty continues an existing plan when findings indicate that students are meeting or exceeding expectations for a given measure, and adjustments are made when findings indicate that students are not meeting targets. TaskStream facilitates tracking data and revealing trends in assessment outcomes, easily toggling back and forth from various cycles with electronic access and storage. Each year, our process becomes more comprehensive as more assessment layers are subsumed under the TaskStream umbrella.