

Turtle Mountain Community College
Assessment Coordinator's Report
June 2007 – Dr. Ron Carpenter

This report has been prepared for the Turtle Mountain Community College students, faculty, administration, the Board of Directors, the Board of Trustees, TMCBI Tribal Council and other enrolled members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. It documents the actions taken by the Assessment Committee and Coordinator as part of the ongoing faculty-driven assessment at Turtle Mountain Community College. It also contains a line-item budget and recommendations to the Administrative Council.

I. Annual Agenda

After serving on the Assessment Committee last year, I reviewed all the assessment files provided to me by previous Coordinators, as well as NCA reports, TMCC reports and formal appeals. I met with the Academic Dean, the CTE Director, the Student Services Dean, and previous resident Coordinators all to determine what items were most critical to transforming our “episodic” and incomplete assessment data into a feasible, sustainable, and simple assessment process. This is the general agenda (goals) I set for myself and the faculty.

1. Create a culture of assessment.
2. Shared governance: Involve faculty in all decision-making processes.
3. Implement a two-tiered system of assessment: national and local instruments.
4. Conform to NCA and TMCC standards.
5. Gather and utilize relevant student learning outcomes data.
6. Attend NCA conference.
7. Approve Faculty Assessment manual, including changes to the committee's forms, procedures, and policies.
8. Make TMCC an Educational Testing Services Master Testing Center for Praxis and Praxis 2.
9. Create next year's agenda.

II. Our Progress

The minutes of the Assessment Committee's monthly meetings track the progress TMCC has made in each of the areas. I have summarized the various coordinated efforts towards each agenda item.

1. Create a culture of assessment.

A. Established a faculty lounge and library – According to our last report to NCA, TMCC held a number of reference books on best assessment practices for educators. Upon my review, I found we had none of these and so ordered them through the bookstore. The cost was as is accounted in the budget. Through the generous donation of his office, Academic Dean Larry Henry created a faculty lounge and a library space to house our

reference books, teaching resources, and recreational materials. In this space, faculty can confidentially discuss students and their learning; lunchtime, for instance, is often an hour when critical conversations between the Teacher Ed. and Humanities faculty address the issue of assessment. By creating a space for faculty with assessment resources regularly placed out by the Coordinator for their review, we have enabled faculty to evaluate and dialogue about student learning and assessment in general at TMCC.

B. Inform students –

Throughout the year, we were writing the new policy changes that affect students into next year's catalogue. Mainly this policy change requires that entering students under 24 will be expected to take the ACT upon entering TMCC, and the Graduate Cultural Assessment and the CAAP upon completion of the two-year degree. This year, we were able to give our students only a one month notice of this change because it has taken us the year to determine our assessment instruments. We will improve on this and be well-prepared for making students aware of their program responsibilities. The policy changes will be included in the new TMCC catalog.

Nevertheless, we still managed at least a 50% turnout (16 students completed the CAAP; 5 did some of the test; and 17 completed the GCA out of approximately 30 graduates). This is the most students we have ever been able to post-assess at the degree level.

C. Follow through –

The bulk of our goals this year could fall under the category of creating a culture of assessment. We had to involve everyone who is directly responsible, filter out the assessment techniques that worked, determine which to keep and which to revise, and close the loopholes in which data was either not gathered, or not employed in an assessment process or strategic plan. The remainder of efforts documented in this report then, reflect TMCC faculty's ongoing method of creating a culture of assessment.

D. Goodwill –

As the faculty representative of assessment, I wanted to maintain a positive attitude about assessment and keep friendly relations with all TMCC employees. I sought out individuals from every department to communicate with and discuss assessment. This also meant nurturing friendships throughout the year. I distributed rubrics to all departments on employee satisfaction, and these are posted on bulletin boards across the campus. Communication and goodwill have changed the climate of assessment at TMCC.

2. Shared governance-involving faculty

An essential part of creating an assessment-oriented culture was to involve the faculty in the decision making processes of the committee. It was obvious from my observations last year that most of faculty was unfamiliar with the on-going assessment efforts and their roles within the institution and its strategic plan. So rather than meeting with representatives from each faculty department, faculty met as a whole to discuss anything

and everything involving assessment; often that meant that previous assessment coordinators had to explain their efforts on a particular issue during our meetings, i.e. the history of the assessment committee that had been separated from faculty at large. In this manner, all faculty became aware of the significant changes that we had to make in order to ensure accreditation and demonstrate student learning. All faculty represented themselves and voted regarding policy changes and assessment procedures. This collective governance demonstrates the faculty-driven nature of academic assessment at TMCC.

My Recommendation: Next year's agenda should address several issues central to shared governance with which faculty are concerned.

3. Implement a two-tiered system throughout assessment process

This section constitutes the bulk of the work the Assessment Committee has engineered this year and shows where and how we have closed the assessment loopholes that have existed previously. It also demonstrates the input of the entire faculty as we grappled with serious questions about pedagogy, education, and the best interests of our students. Our underpinning strategy was to design an assessment process, which utilized both national and local-developed instruments, to measure the student learning outcomes of seven (7) general education skills that derive from the TMCC mission statement and our unique cultural identity. This holistic approach is a fundamental part of maintaining accreditation, as well as improving student learning, faculty teaching platforms, and the institutional assessment techniques.

A. Degree level: Associate of Arts. Associate of Science.

Nationally-developed instruments

Pre-assessment: Students under 24 years of age are required upon entering to take the ACT. This policy is managed by Student Services. Current issues that still need attention are that many of our students are older than 24 and so lack a pre-assessment; and ACT scores have not been utilized as the baseline in order to determine student learning. By using CAAP as the post-assessment with a linkage report (see below), however we are attempting to use the ACT as a baseline to determine student learning, and thus change our teaching methods to improve learning. But ACT does not do linkage reports if less than 25 students participate in either test and unfortunately we only had 16 students complete the CAAP this year. I do not know how many of them had taken the ACT.

My Recommendation: All of TMCC students should be required to take the ACT regardless of age in order to establish a larger potential pool of people to post-assess with CAAP.

Post-Assessment: Previously, the ACT-designed test CBASE was used to assess student learning of general education objectives. Upon reviewing this instrument and the lack of

student participation, and thus assessment data, the committee decided to try a different means of assessment. Initially, we debated several ideas: a capstone course; an e-portfolio; and a national test. After voting and attempting to get faculty from different areas to collaborate on developing either a capstone course or an e-portfolio, it became clear that faculty were unwilling to perform the work necessary to implement either of these two instruments. Faculty also felt that neither would provide the relevant statistical data about student learning that is currently missing from our assessment process. Student Services and Financial Aid also had concerns about adding another required course as part of TMCC degree programs. So we collectively decided to use a national instrument, recognizing an inherent cultural bias to all such test. We chose the CAAP test, developed by ACT, because we could use the data from ACT scores, which currently serve no assessment purpose, as the baseline, and track our students' progress of the general education skills measured in CAAP. This policy change has been approved by the Administrative Council and will be written into the degree requirements in the TMCC catalog. All graduating students are required to take the CAAP test in March.

This year, we had 16 students complete the CAAP, and 5 partials, at least 50% of the two-year degree graduates. This is the most students TMCC has ever post-assessed.

Problems encountered: coordinating test administrations and staff, the late testing dates in April, students who never took the test, employed students, on-line students or students not enrolled in spring semester.

My Recommendation: Stricter enforcement of CAAP exam as policy for graduation and degree. Move the testing dates to March.

Local Instruments

Pre-Assessment: Several departments have developed placement exams that expose general education skills and the course levels at which students therefore belong in the scope and sequence of TMCC programs. Math and writing exams are used to determine which courses students belong in those sequences.

My Recommendation: We still need to pre-test students' reading abilities, study skills, technological literacy, and cultural knowledge when they arrive in order to determine which classes students need and to improve our methods and resources to meet those educational needs. This would also point to where local high schools need assistance.

Post-Assessment: Recognizing that none of the national-based exams would address the Chippewa cultural component of the TMCC mission, we decided to have our cultural experts design a quick-fix cultural instrument to be delivered this spring; meanwhile, a focused team will develop a standardized instrument

TMCC will be able to use for the next decade. In the past, students would complete the Graduate Student Survey(GSS) at the end of their program, an indirect means of student learning, and which had virtually nothing regarding the Turtle Mt. Chippewa cultural heritage. We wanted to replace that with a direct measurement of student learning that accounted for learning about our unique tribal culture. The result: Faculty administer the Graduate Cultural Assessment (GCA); and the GSS has been modified and employed by Anita as part of the institutional effectiveness.

The first year, 16 students completed the GCA. We have not tallied the results or fully determined how to utilize the results. They will be used to review the degree programs during our semi-annual meetings.

My Recommendation: Stricter enforcement of students completing the GCA. Like the CAAP, this policy change should be a degree requirement that is published in the TMCC catalog. Develop the GCA with a more formal rubric and rationale; the GCA should also be more clearly defined in the structure of the assessment process and strategic plan. This instrument should also be used to evaluate faculty and staff at TMCC who should be able to demonstrate a minimal knowledge of the Turtle Mt. Band Chippewa Indians and its social, historical, and cultural traditions.

Student Learning Outcomes Forms (07)

As faculty reviewed the current system of gathering and evaluating data, we discovered that last year, faculty did not consistently report assessment data. We also agreed that the forms designed by Dr. Brummel were not a direct means of course or program assessment. After debating what sort of information we did want to gather, faculty agreed to the two page form that can be found in the manual and the WebCT site. I also emailed the electronic copy of these to all faculty and the Academic Dean. These forms allow faculty to gather information on students, classes, and general education skills and reflect on what in the assessment cycle or teaching strategy needs changing; permitting both assessment at the program level and the course level. Like the ACT, CAAP, GCA, these forms serve as the basis for the departmental meetings and subsequent reports to the assessment committee (see below). In other words, they are now linked to a larger assessment process whose purpose is to make recommendations to improve student learning at TMCC.

My Recommendation: These forms need to be connected to instructors' individual professional development plans and to a currently non-existent strategic plan for assessment, including promotion and tenure. Faculty lack incentives to respond fully to the results of assessment.

Semi-annual departmental meeting

In the past, while data like the forms described above was gathered and stored in the assessment coordinator's files, assessment data was not linked to a structural process of evaluation by faculty with a specific purpose in mind. That is to say, the data served no particular end or objective. We have closed the loop on data collection by implementing a departmental meeting held twice a year to review the ACT, CAAP, GCA, and Student Learning Outcomes Forms to discuss any and all aspects of assessment, curricula, syllabi, degree programs, and student learning. Each department will then submit a brief report of their efforts with specific recommendations. These recommendations will become part of the assessment coordinator's yearly report and request for resources. In this manner, the ongoing assessment at TMCC will be continuous, reliable, comprehensive, and responsive to change.

My recommendation: Faculty, including myself, is still unclear as to the particulars of these meetings. The first will be held in August. Presumably each department will focus on the Gen. Ed. skills that figure most prominently in the department and how and what to change in order to effect improved student learning. But the assessment coordinator will probably need to generate some guidelines to follow and questions that each department could respond to.

B. Course Level: Associate of Arts; Associate of Science.

The faculty forms have changed as described above to address the problem of not utilizing data once collected, and collecting unhelpful data. As part of my agreement with the faculty, I have not reviewed the faculty forms yet, and some faculty has still to submit these documents. Our progress in this area, however, has been significant and faculty is in consensus about following these methods for student learning assessment at TMCC.

C. Degree level: Associate of Applied Science; Bachelor of Science: Elementary Education; Secondary Science Education

After several meetings with Dr. Virginia Allery, Ed. Dept. Chair, and Sheila Trottier, CTE Director, and making assumptions about TMCC's organizational chart, I agreed that both CTE and the Ed. Dept. should be also reporting to the Institutional Effectiveness Director since those degrees expect more than the Gen Ed. skills that we track campus-wide as faculty-driven ongoing assessment. Like all full-time TMCC faculty, instructors in these fields are responsible for attending assessment meetings, voting, completing the student learning outcomes forms, and holding a semi-annual departmental meeting that results in a brief report to the assessment committee. But they are also responsible to these departments (and their grants) that offer different degrees, which may or may not require faculty to maintain certain assessment data that is above and beyond what is expected by the Assessment Committee. This clarification is explicitly stated in the faculty assessment manual that faculty is given at their orientation.

4. Conform to NCA and TMCC standards

All of the policy and assessment changes made to the degree and courses in the past year have deliberately adhered to TMCC's mission statement. If faculty attends to our proposed plan and responsibilities, then we will be meeting NCA standards and those we established in the TMCC report on Institutional Effectiveness in 2005. We will still need to create an Academic Success Center that emphasizes reading, writing, and critical thinking. We still must improve the level of shared governance and devise a plan for promotion and tenure. We need to clarify where faculty assessment fits into institutional effectiveness, as TMCC further defines that plan and assessment structures. We will, however, possess consistent, reliable, and useful data to present to any agency to prove that our students are learning, or to prove a need that resources could rectify.

5. Gather Data

It was obvious from the limited information I received from last year's coordinator that faculty had not gathered assessment data in a consistent or reliable manner during the previous year (2005-6). The problem was insidious -- ineffective leadership, lack of shared governance, ill-designed assessment forms -- and all added up to the same result -- no assessment data stored in a centralized, accessible place. We have not entirely solved the problem, yet we have managed to produce and store information in both electronic and hard copies.

A. WebCT -- Last year, perhaps the most important thing that Dr. Penny did, was to assign Andy Johnson the job of maintaining an assessment website for faculty. Here is stored minutes to meetings from the last 2 years, reports going back to when Scott Hanson and Andy served as coordinator, faculty appeals, and other assessment tools and resources for faculty. They may also discuss issues pertaining to these tools in a virtual chat room. This report and other comments by faculty can be found here.

My Recommendation: More training of faculty on WebCT by Julie Desjarlais is required. Faculty were adamant about this need for technological and computer assistance.

B. Student Learning Outcomes

Faculty have sent either hard copies or electronic and these are stored in the assessment files. They will be integrated into the WebCT once we determine the level of confidentiality we want maintained. The data will be used in the semi-annual departmental meetings. These have not yet been reviewed.

C. College Assessment of Academic Proficiency

16 students completed all 5 general education modules. 8 students achieved at or above the national average in at least one area. Here are the reports as provided by ACT:

| Test | % of local students at or below Recommended cut scores | % of students nationally at or below scores |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Math: | 40 | 11 |
| Basic Algebra | 25 | 5 |
| College Algebra | 50 | 50 |
| Reading: | 67 | 26 |
| Arts/Literature | 44 | 19 |
| Social Studies/Sciences | 72 | 51 |
| Critical Thinking | 67 | 24 |
| Science | 18 | 14 |
| Writing Essay | 13 | 2 |
| Essay 1 | 13 | 2 |
| Essay 2 | 13 | 3 |

The complete report and data will be distributed to faculty at the semi-annual meeting in order to improve student learning.

My Recommendation: As I and others have reported elsewhere, we need to address reading across the curriculum. This means hiring a full-time Reading Faculty, preferably with experience in special education. We also need to implement the Zhaabwi Community Learning Center as a response to these indicators. While some of these scores look encouraging like science or essay, they may not be when compared to the % of students nationally at or below the score. But Faculty will also be offering several recommendations as a result of the departmental meeting in August when they review this data and discuss how to transform our learning environment and best serve our students' needs.

D. Graduate Cultural Assessment

16 students completed the GCA. The Assessment Coordinator and Social Science faculty have reviewed the exams, though no formal scores have been recorded. This information will be compiled sometime in June.

My recommendation: The need for a part-time employee to store and process statistical data electronically that coordinates between the national and local assessment is overwhelming. We need a better information storage and retrieval system, and that requires job duties above and beyond the assessment coordinator's duties or capacities.

6. Attend NCA Conference

Andy Johnson, Cynthia Jelleberg, Larry Henry, and Ron Carpenter all attended the Higher Learning Commission Conference in Chicago. My and their full comments can be found on the WebCT site.

7. Complete Faculty Manual

Last year, I was assigned the task of revising the faculty policy manual. As we changed our assessment process this year, I made the changes to update the faculty manual. A complete narrative of the changes discussed can be found in the minutes. This manual will be issued to standing and new faculty at an orientation in August.

8. Make TMCC an ETS Master Testing Center

Relying on my professional relationship with ETS, I was able to convince ETS to make TMCC a Master Testing Center, capable of offering a variety of ETS products to regional clients. The test we chose to start with, Praxis and Praxis 2, would greatly serve our local teachers who require certification in these areas as part of their professional development. After faxing information and discussing the matter with Karl Stumpf, of ETS Praxis division, I hired and trained staff to administer the test, which we did on April 28, 2007. We tested approximately 30 different people from the area. We have not heard how well people performed, but many were grateful for removing the test anxiety that usually accompanies this high-stakes test. Clients also saved money by not having to travel and stay in the large cities in which the tests are typically given. We will be administering the Praxis and Praxis 2 in November and April during the 2007-8 school year. This is one of the ways that TMCC has improved our students' abilities to be assessed.

9. Next Year's Agenda

The next year's agenda could fall into three broad categories: Improving our students ability to be assessed; increasing shared governance and faculty evaluation; codifying a strategic plan for assessment. This list is incomplete and will be added to by faculty during the next school year.

1. Determine Part-time and Adjunct Faculty compliance/training in assessment
2. Develop and implement a 5-year strategic plan
3. Seek funds for hiring a qualified assessment coordinator, psychometrician, and reading faculty
4. Seek funds and maintain the ZCLC
5. Develop a reliable and useful Graduate Cultural Assessment

6. Inform faculty regarding shared governance and Faculty Senate
7. Determine student and peer assessment of faculty and courses

III. BUDGET

There were four basic expenses this year:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Assessment Library | \$ 385.00 |
| NCA Conference: Hotel | \$ 3,718.20 |
| NCA Conference: Air Fair | \$ 1,310.43 |
| NCA Conference: Per Diem | \$ 1,888.65 |
| NCA Conference: Registration | \$ 720.00 |
| CAAP | \$ 1,323.00 |
| Assessment Coordinator Salary | \$ 7,500.00 |
| | |
| TOTAL | \$16,845.08 |

My recommendation: We went over budget and still have to print the manual. However, we made a lot of changes as a result and next year the budget will be under because we will not have the one-time expenses such as the books. I will not need to be in Chicago for as long to review assessment data. ACT should also listen to my calls to reduce the reporting fees to TMCC since we have fewer than 25 students participating.