

Report on Course-Level Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

For the Fall 2010 Semester

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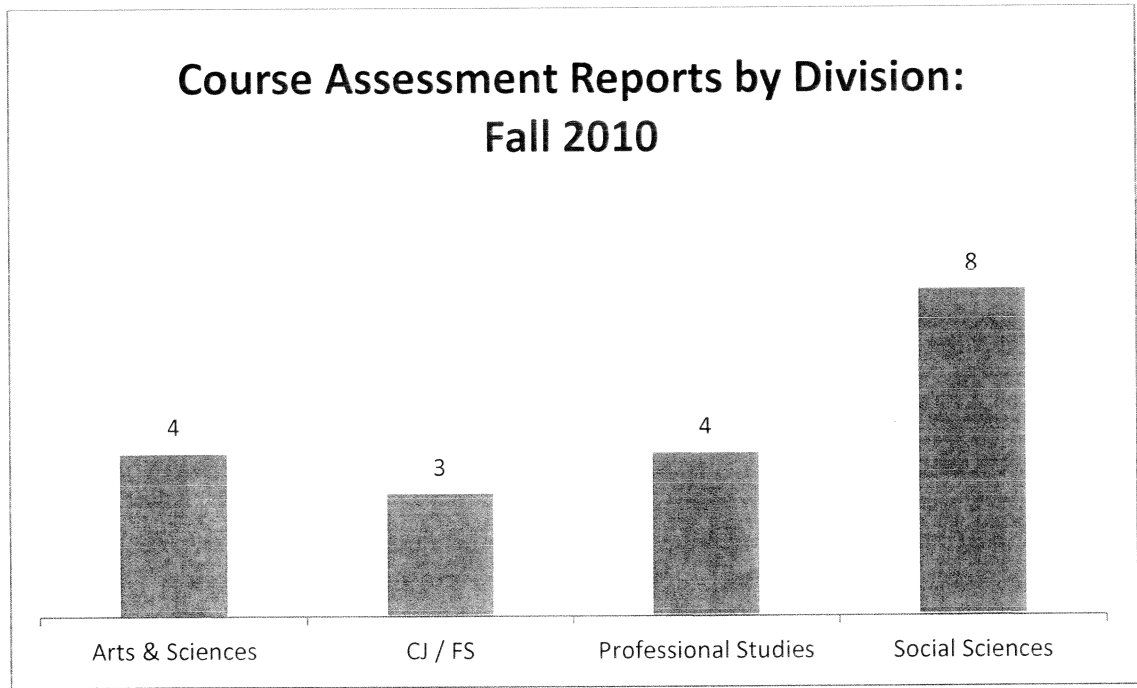
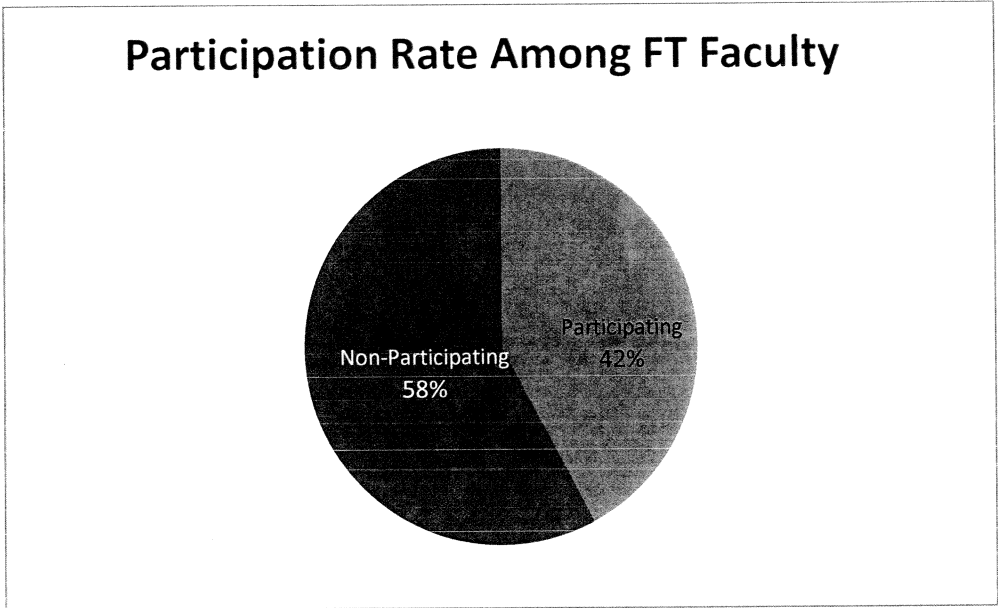
During the May 2010 Faculty Development Day, the Outcomes Assessment Committee presented a new course-level assessment plan to the Hilbert college faculty. This plan involved a two-step process whereby at the beginning of a semester faculty would submit a one-page form outlining a) one Student Learning Outcome corresponding to at least one outcomes listed on the course syllabus, b) a brief description of how this learning outcome is addressed in course materials to students (e.g., lecture, readings, field trip, etc.), c) a brief description of student work that will provide evidence of the learning outcome (e.g., exams, projects, presentations, etc.), and d) any benchmarks or standards to be used to indicate whether students have overall achieved this outcome. After the semester was ended, the faculty member would complete a second form indicating strengths and weaknesses in student achievement of the learning outcome, any planned actions to improve student learning, and any resources or support from the program or division that might be helpful. Paper versions of these forms are appended to this report.

Faculty agreed to pilot this course-level assessment plan during the coming fall, 2010 semester. The procedures were reviewed with faculty during the August 2010 Faculty Development Day and the forms were converted to an electronic format and made available to all faculty through the password protected Hilbert College Intranet. This format was intended not only to facilitate reporting but also to allow for relatively easy compilation of findings.

In March of 2011, the Director of Assessment reviewed the course-level assessment plans submitted for the Fall 2010 semester. This report provides summary information regarding the Fall 2010 pilot of this new assessment procedure.

Participation Rates:

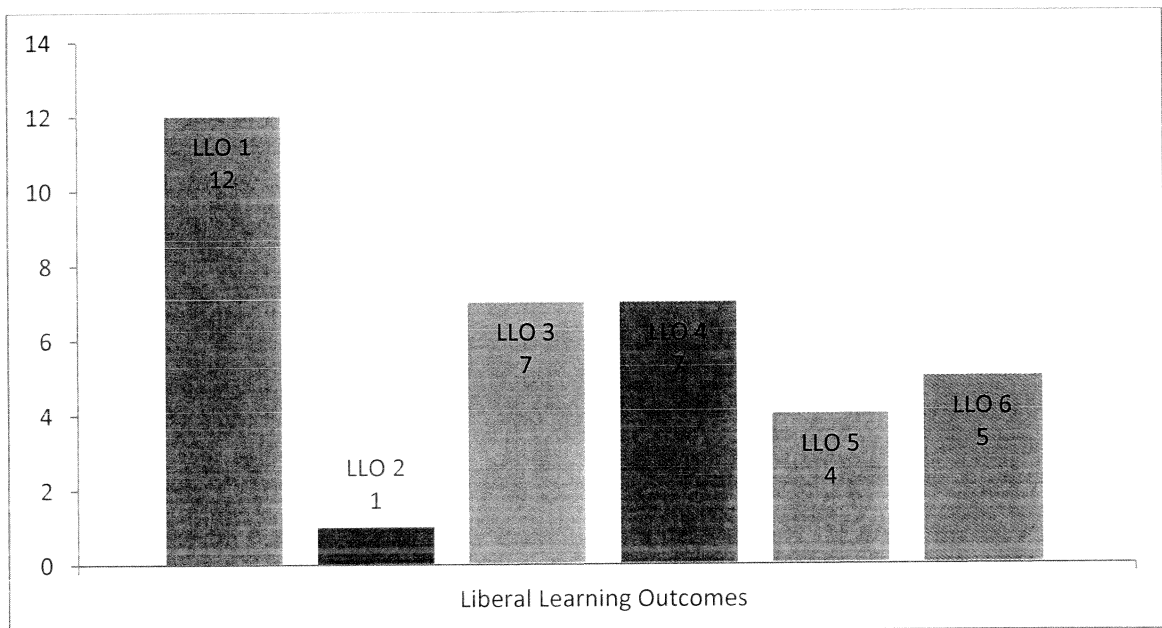
Nineteen assessment plans were electronically filed, representing 42% of the full-time faculty participating. Courses assessed were from all four academic divisions: Arts & Sciences (n=4; 21%); Criminal Justice/Forensic Sciences (n=3; 16%); Professional Studies (n=4; 21%); and, Social Sciences (n=8; 42%). No assessment reports were submitted by adjunct faculty.



Liberal Learning Outcomes:

In the electronic version of the reporting form, faculty are asked to check off which of Hilbert College's six Liberal Learning Outcomes (LLOs) are associated with the targeted course-level student learning outcome being assessed. The linkage between course objectives and Liberal Learning Outcomes is expected to be present in all course syllabi and is further reinforced by each degree program's curriculum map. It is expected that by aggregating LLOs across the course-level assessments it will eventually be possible to make some inferences about how well students within a given academic program, division and/or across the institution are achieving that outcome. However, at this preliminary point in the assessment procedure insufficient data exist to do so.

A majority of assessment reports indicated more than one Liberal Learning Outcome. Liberal learning Outcome #1 (Advanced Core Skills) was most frequently referenced in 63% of the reports. Outcomes #3 (Effective Reasoning & Problem-solving Skills) and #4 (Advanced Research Skills) each were referenced in 37% of the reports. Outcome #2 (Intercultural Awareness and Openness to Diversity) was the least frequently mentioned at only 5%.



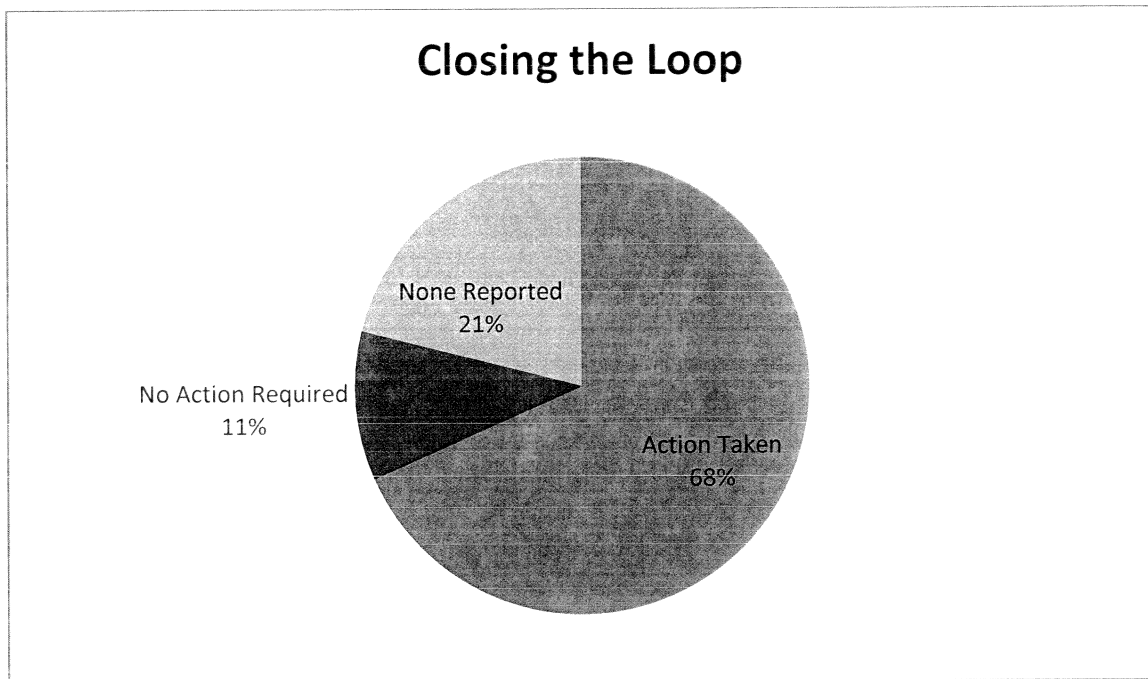
- LLO 1: Advanced Core Skills
- LLO 2: Intercultural Awareness & Openness to Diversity
- LLO 3: Effective Reasoning & Problem-Solving skills
- LLO 4: Advanced Research Skills
- LLO 5: Skills in Interactive Learning
- LLO 6: Lifelong Learning

Type of Evidence:

Ninety-five percent (95%) of the reports indicated using at least one method of direct evidence for assessing student learning. Most frequently these methods involved the use of some form of rubric. One report focused on student reflection papers as a type of indirect evidence of student learning.

Closing the Loop:

A majority of the reports (68%) described some action taken or to be taken aimed at improving student learning based on the findings of the assessment. Two reports indicated that the results were at satisfactory levels and no change was planned, and 4 reports were incomplete and had as yet not reported on findings or actions.



Actions indicated on the assessment report varied by instructor and course. The most common action cited involved some plan to revise a particular assignment and/or rubric to more closely align with the desired student learning outcome. Other examples of actions mentioned include: sharing the results with other program faculty, expanding coverage of a content area or examples used in classroom instruction, increasing the difficulty or rigor of an assignment, making assignment expectations more explicit and formal, increasing the instructor’s presence in students’ online discussions of material from classroom lessons.

The greater majority of action plans did not indicate a current need for additional support or resources at the degree program level. Rather actions were to be carried out at the course level. Where program/division support was mentioned, it was requested in the form of enforcing an enrollment cap to maintain small class size, funds to purchase additional instructional materials such as videos, and more generally, support from other faculty in the program in coordinating assignments to reinforce the ongoing development of discipline-specific skills.

Conclusions:

The pilot of Hilbert College's Course-level Assessment Plan indicates that this two stage process provides a relatively simple, low-demand procedure whereby faculty can regularly track and report on student achievement of course learning outcomes.

The electronic version of the forms, posted on the College's Intranet, provides a convenient mechanism for both reporting and aggregating the results. Some refinements may still be needed in order to maximize the accessibility of the information to others.

Somewhat less than one-half of full-time faculty participated in this pilot semester and none of the adjunct faculty. It is probably unrealistic to expect participation rates much above one-half of full-time faculty during any given semester. It may be more possible to aim for greater participation rates over the full academic year. Some faculty have suggested that regularly timed reminders and prompts, from the Director of Assessment and Outcomes Assessment Committee, around the time syllabi are being revised and toward the end of each semester would be helpful.

It will also be important to consider ways to get adjunct faculty involved in the assessment process. A presentation to adjunct faculty during a professional development and appreciation session in March of 2011 suggested that many adjunct faculty are supportive of the aims of student learning assessment and to taking some role in the process. Working out options for that involvement which are reasonable and meaningful should be on the agenda for future Outcomes Assessment Committee meetings.

As these procedures become more regularized it should be possible to aggregate reports in order to address learning outcomes at the degree program level. To facilitate that objective it may help to have specific programs coordinate the course-level student learning outcomes faculty select to monitor. For example, it would be possible for all faculty in the

Psychology program to select a course objective associated with written communication (e.g. using APA style in writing) and to examine students' mastery in this area across different course levels over an academic year. This program level assessment of learning outcomes may prove to be the most useful aspect of the process.