

EVIDENCE

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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Greetings from the New Director of the Institute for Faculty Development

Heather McGovern

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Greetings from the New Director of the Institute for Faculty Development

I am happy to serve my faculty colleagues as Director of the Institute for Faculty Development. I am **your** advocate—I am getting course releases to support teaching and assessment of student learning at Stockton. Like you, I am a teacher concerned with our students. Please use the Institute services, which include the items listed.

Support for Pedagogy

- Consult with individuals or programs about pedagogy
- Provide access to a library of book resources on pedagogy
- Observe your teaching
- Videotape your teaching
- Collect (distribute and/or summarize feedback) mid-semester feedback from your students about your teaching
- Consult about filling out the IDEA faculty form
- Consult (confidentially) about interpreting IDEA results
- Advise about responding to IDEA results
- Take pictures of your students
- Discuss teaching techniques/issues/successes

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The End to a Stockton (Urban) Legend: Results of the Pilot IDEA Group Report for First Year Seminars

Ever wonder how urban legends get started? Or even better, how they get ended? Well, it's time to end one of those popular Stockton Legends—namely, that instructors who teach Freshman Seminars get clobbered on student evaluations, so junior faculty had better steer clear of those courses. We now have actual data that we can use to disabuse ourselves of that notion.

For years, many teaching Freshman Seminars knew instinctively (and empirically, from their own SETs and, more recently, IDEAs) that their first-year students actually enjoyed Freshman Seminar classes—and said as much on evaluations. Now we have “real” data to prove what we've always known, thanks to a recent pilot IDEA Group Report.

Last fall (2008), eight Freshman Seminar classes participated in a pilot project with IDEA. The main purpose of this pilot was to “try out” the two objectives that we wanted to make “essential” for all Freshman Semi-

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Epsilen Web 2.0

I had the privilege of attending an excellent talk by Felice Neudleman of the *New York Times* at this year's Summer Faculty Workshop. She discussed a course tool, Epsilen Web 2.0, that has the potential to transform online course delivery in a profound way. The tool is a combination of a web based course tools similar to Blackboard and the New York Times Education Network's database that consists of all *New York Times* publications dating back to its inception.

As a current Blackboard user, I think this educational tool deserves a closer look for both live and distance courses. Epsilen has the appearance of many of the course tools we use, and it comes with the capability for assignments, discussions, and assessments as well as local, national and international collaboration. The major advantage Epsilen has over the other course tools is that it is embedded with a rich database that includes all *New York Times* publications covering a span of more than 100 years. It also has an interface that allows for the integration of portfolios, fosters collaboration between institutions worldwide, and allows for content sharing in ways that Blackboard and other tools are currently unable to offer. Additionally, Epsilen has the capability for professional and personal networking for faculty, staff and students while being considerably cheaper in upfront and maintenance costs.

Those interested in learning more about Epsilen can access the tool at www.epsilen.com. You can create your own account (free for anyone with an email address ending with .edu) and start playing around with the tool. Feel free to join a group called Stockton Soapbox where you will find other Stocktonians interested in exploring Epsilen.

Tait Chirenje, Associate Professor of Environmental Science and Geology

The End to a Stockton Myth, continued from page 1
nars; we have now adopted that 8, "Developing skill in expressing my-
"Learning to analyze and critically view." Students in the pilot sections jectives. For example, for objective 8, than the institution and IDEA system age ranking was 3.9, about the same as

Now, no Freshman Seminar courses "much higher" area, but 25% scored in "similar" area. There was a 20% rank-Freshman Seminar ended up in the were higher than the adjusted results. Group analysis which indicated that of Teacher" category: "results are skewed to the top of the curve. . . . Overall, first-year seminar instructors are highly rated at Stockton."

Freshman Seminars are a place for any faculty member who genuinely enjoys teaching and enjoys the unique nature of teaching first-year students...

plan. Those two objectives are Objective self orally or in writing," and Objective 11, evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of reported good progress in the selected ob-students' average ranking was 3.8, higher averages. For objective 11, students' aver-the institution and IDEA system averages.

were ranked overall by students in the the "higher" area, and 50% in the ing in the "lower" range. However, no "much lower" area. Also, the raw results Heather McGovern summarized the IDEA that there is good news in the "Excellence

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Heather's report summarizes what experienced Freshman Seminar instructors know: "Results here . . . demonstrate that people do not doom themselves by teaching first-year seminars." Junior faculty need not fear that they will get bad evaluations and ruin their chances for tenure or promotion by teaching Freshmen

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Greetings, continued from page 1

Help with Evaluation of Teaching for Promotion or Tenure

- Consult about presenting IDEA results in a file
- Consult about writing a teaching philosophy statement for a file
- Discuss other ways to present your teaching in your file
- Comment on a draft of your teaching philosophy statement/teaching portfolio/teaching section of your file

Support for Assessment

- Help individuals or programs identify assessment questions and/or strategies for answering those questions
- Consult with individuals/ programs about course, minor, major, or other program learning objectives
- Consult with individuals or programs about course, minor, major, or other program assessment
- Help develop questions for surveys related to pedagogy or assessment
- Help develop sampling and distribution strategies for surveys related to pedagogy or assessment
- Create surveys related to pedagogy or assessment for you in Zoomerang
- Help analyze the results of surveys related to pedagogy or assessment
- Help create a sampling plan for focus groups or interviews related to pedagogy or assessment
- Help carry out focus groups related to pedagogy or assessment
- Help analyze results of focus groups related to pedagogy or assessment
- Help identify test or other instruments related to assessment

- Help create tests or other instruments related to assessment
- Help analyze data from tests or other instruments related to assessment
- Help individuals or programs apply assessment results to make beneficial changes

You can find me in the Institute office, F227, (across from the faculty lounge), call 609-626-5575, or email (heather.mcgovern@stockton.edu).

I joke that I am the new Sonia, but Sonia is unique. She helped establish a culture of assessment and oriented some of our largest groups of new faculty, among other contributions. I offer my own strengths to help us continue to grow as individual faculty and as a community committed to reflective teaching and strong student learning.

Some background information might help you trust me. I grew up in rural Idaho, the oldest of three with a father retired from teaching high school math and economics and a mother who teaches middle school special ed. My high school had 200 students; the nearest McDonalds was 70 miles away. We were in high mountain desert—potato country with a nuclear plant as a major local employer.

I got a BA in Biology and English (with a minor in history) from The College of Idaho, a liberal arts school with fewer than 600 students. I got an MA in English at Clemson University in South Carolina and a PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric from Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas.

In the process, I became a relative rarity among professors in higher education outside of Education programs—I took multiple courses directly focusing on the assessment of college programs and teaching and multiple courses in pedagogy. I also took multiple courses in research methods (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed).

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Given this background, you'll guess I'm not the statistics guru that Sonia is. She earned supplemental income doing stats as a grad student; I earned supplemental income tutoring writing and editing Masters theses as a grad student. I can help with basic statistical calculations, interpret more complex statistics, and access resources for even more, but you should also tap into my primary skills.

I've spent much of my six years at Stockton leading the Writing Program's assessment efforts. I also served on the Task Force for the Evaluation of Teaching and as the Chair of the Technology and Media Committee. I've taught classes from BASK College Writing (W1) to GEN Professional Writing and Design (W1, Q2) to GIS Voices and Visions on the Environment (a course in environmental rhetoric in art, nonfiction, science, film, music, and fiction), to Perspectives on Women and more. I've served as Writing Program Coordinator for most of the last three years, so I know first-hand what it feels like to get a memo from your Dean asking for yet-one-more update on assessment that makes you want to sigh as you look from it to the pile of student papers on your desk to the in-progress research paper on your computer screen and leave them all to jot off to a 4:30 meeting of some-committee-or-other.

I report separately about the Writing Program's assessment of College Writing, now full circle from establishing goals to collecting and evaluating data to instituting curricular and pedagogical change. I hope I've persuaded you to trust me as a resource. I hope to see you soon!

Heather McGovern, Director of the Institute for Faculty Development and Associate Professor of Writing and BASK

Engaging Learners in Distributed Education: Practical Tools for Faculty at the 2009 Summer Faculty Workshop

This year's workshop resulted in an exciting and distinctive program thanks to the talent, creativity, and efforts of the planning committee as well as input from the faculty and staff at large. The workshop was hosted by the Faculty Assembly and the Provost's Office, and it focused on the use of technology to enhance pedagogy in a distributed education setting.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Peter Shea from the University at Albany-SUNY, presented an address about the "Four Centers of Effective Learning Environments: Learner, Community, Assessment & Knowledge." The break-out sessions were delivered or facilitated by our own faculty and staff as well as the executive director of education at *The New York Times* and an instructional designer from Rowan. In addition to the workshops, the program also included two different round-table discussions as well as a Q&A session with Dr. Shea during the lunch break. Several of the Power Point slide shows can be found at [http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=162&pageID=5#Technology%20\(General\)](http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=162&pageID=5#Technology%20(General))

Seventy two faculty and staff attended the workshop and the feedback was generally positive. The quantitative scores indicated that the majority of the sessions exceeded expectations and all sessions minimally met expectations. The general consensus about the keynote address is that it would have been more valuable if it had been a formal presentation that covered all aspects of the planned presentation. Although the dyadic interactions and discussions among participants were considered important by some, the majority would have preferred a more informative, comprehensive elucidation on best practices in distributed education pedagogy. Unfortunately, Dr. Shea could not elaborate on all aspects of his framework within the allotted time.

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Assessing BASK 1101 College Writing

BASK College Writing is one of the college's classes into which students are placed if their SAT Writing scores fall below a certain threshold. Students taking it receive college credit, and it counts for their first-year W1. College Writing also counts towards graduation, as at-some-distance credits. The College Writing learning objectives are almost identical to those for GEN Rhetoric and Composition.

Last year was the writing program's second time assessing college writing portfolios with a rubric. We read a sample of portfolios, four-five each (or a minimum of 25%), randomly selected from class sections in 2008-09.

Summary of results

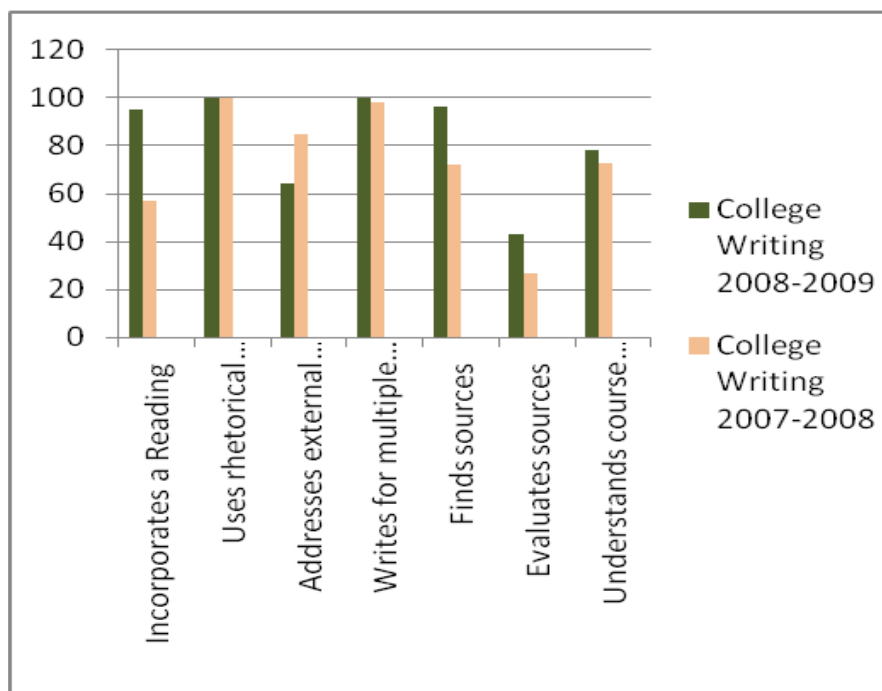
Over 80% of sampled portfolios show students meeting most course goals. More than 95% could write for at least two purposes and use at least two rhetorical strategies, find sources, write a conclusion other than summary, and organize at least one essay. The bad news is that only 43% of students (up from last year, but still too low) demonstrated that they can evaluate sources.

Complete results organized by our rubric

Rubric Section one: Variety of Writing. Also see Figure 1.

1. Incorporates at least one class reading: **95%**.
2. Uses two or more rhetorical strategies (in rhet and comp, this is three): **100%**.
3. Addresses at least one audience in addition to the instructor and classmates: **64%** *One instructor had students complete an assignment like this but not include it in the portfolio. If we added those students to the numbers, we'd be about where we were last year.
4. Writes for at least two purposes: **100%**.
5. Writing samples or other evidence indicates students can find electronic or traditional sources: **96%**.
6. Writing samples or other evidence indicate that students can evaluate the credibility of sources: **43%**.
7. Writing that reflects on how the student has met the goals of the course in a way that shows that the student understands most of the course goals: **78%**.

Figure 1. Percent of Sampled Portfolios Indicating Students Met Goals Related to Kinds of Writing for College Writing in 2008-2009 and 2007-2008.



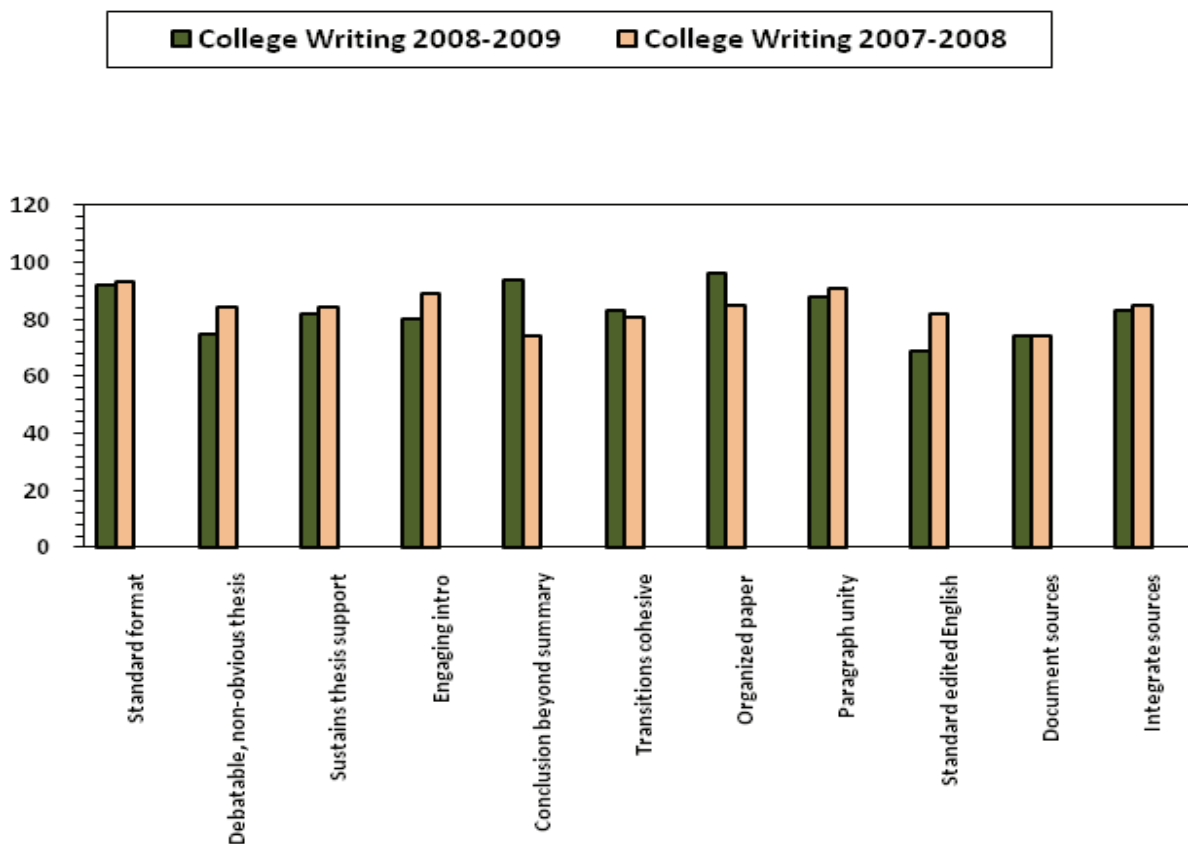
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Assessing BASK, continued from page 5

Rubric section two, quality of writing. Also see Figure 2.

1. In the second section of course goals, which reflect the quality of the writing that students do, results were as follows:
2. At least one essay in standard format (in rhet and comp, this is APA or MLA): **92%**
3. At least one essay with a debatable, non-obvious thesis: **75%**.
4. At least one essay sustains support for its thesis: **82%**.
5. At least one essay with an engaging, relevant intro: **80%**.
6. At least one essay with a conclusion that does more than summarize: **94%**.
7. Joins most paragraphs cohesively with logical transitions: **83%**.
8. Unifies most paragraphs: **88%**.
9. Follows standard edited English sufficiently to not distract a typical reader: **69%**.
10. Student can incorporate material with proper documentation: **74%**.
11. Student can use two of the following properly: quotation, paraphrase, summary: **83%**.

Figure 2. Percent of Sampled Portfolios Indicating Students Met Goals Related to Quality of Writing for College Writing in 2008-2009 and 2007-2008.



Lessons for Other Programs

How long did it take for the program to develop this process?

It took our program seven years to draft learning objectives, develop and implement a portfolio assessment plan, revise the process, get usable data, and take action to improve student learning. Be patient.

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Engaging Learning, continued from page 2

In general, the qualitative input about the individual sessions on best practices, virtual learning environments, copyright implications, portfolio assessment and Epsilon Web 2.0 was very positive. Participants conveyed that the sessions were informative, practical, dynamic, timely, inspirational, and beneficial (to faculty and students). The handouts, in particular, were welcomed and appreciated. The round-table sessions on translating face-to-face content to an online environment and communicating, writing, and reflection were especially well received. The afternoon session was standing room only. Participants communicated that the sessions were engaging, useful, well-structured, and very participatory. Participants also suggested that the format be replicated on campus (possibly during the academic year).

The afternoon round-table session was standing room only.

Recommendations for future workshop topics included revisiting General Studies relative to the 2020 vision, distance learning with a pedagogical focus (rather than the emphasis on techniques), and a more comprehensive approach to e-learning. In terms of format, participants also suggested smaller sessions with substantial demos/technology and more round-tables. Finally, it was recommended that querying faculty to assess interest in various pedagogical issues would provide a platform for future summer workshop topics.

• • • • • *Jennifer Barr, Associate Professor of Business Studies*

A Stockton Legend, continued from page 2

Seminars. Rather, Freshman Seminars are a place for any faculty member who genuinely enjoys teaching, and enjoys the unique nature of teaching first-year students, to design innovative “G” courses that introduce students to college-level study, intellectual curiosity, and the Stockton community.

Freshman Seminars give instructors a chance to stretch their instructional muscles, work in a supportive teaching community, and give our brand-new students their first experience in college-level reading, writing, speaking, and research. They also give instructors solid IDEA evaluations –so that the personal and intellectual rewards of teaching these classes can translate into professional and career rewards, too.

Freshmen seminars give instructor solid IDEA evaluations so that the personal and intellectual rewards of teaching these classes can translate into professional and career rewards, too.

A Stockton legend can finally be put away. Now, let’s work on that rumor about how W2 courses are “harder” than W1’s.

GT Lenard, Director of First Year Seminars and Associate Professor of BASK and Writing

Assessing BASK, cont. from page 6

How much time does this take?

It takes most program members about 3 hours a year to collect, read, and score portfolios, plus a day for one person to analyze the data. It takes time to reflect and make changes. We’ll lessen that by now rotating assessment first-year W1 courses on a 3 or 4 year schedule.

Was the time and money invested worthwhile?

Because we assessed student learning, we noted that some of us had forgotten to align our syllabi with the agreed upon learning objectives and people changed their syllabi. In addition, because we assessed student learning, we changed added more activities to help students write conclusions and evaluate sources, and we saw student performance improve in those areas. We also learned that assessing with a more detailed rubric rather than holistically allowed us to make changes, making us more willing to invest the time.

Heather McGovern, Writing Program Coordinator, Associate Professor of BASK and Writing