



## Assessment and Testing: Measuring Up to Expectations

Adapted from: *ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges*

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/ERIC/digests/DIG9603.HTML>

Historically, community colleges have not embraced research as a primary mission and function. Many institutions utilize assessment measures to ensure accurate student placement into courses and to self-monitor realization of educational goals. However, with increasing pressure from external and internal constituencies, community colleges have been called upon to "prove" their efficiency and effectiveness.

### TECHNIQUES AND METHODOLOGY

The fundamental purpose of assessment should be improvement of campus instructional and support programs, thereby increasing the prospects of individual student success. In selecting appropriate assessment methods, investigators may want to refer to research literature and examine models at other institutions. There are a wide range of options including competency-based models, self-reports and third-party reports. The relative advantages and disadvantages of each should be carefully evaluated.

The usefulness of techniques may vary depending on the issues being evaluated. Qualitative forms of assessment should be incorporated as a way to complement and sometimes challenge interpretations of quantitative data. Methods include focus groups, in-depth interviews, participant observations and case studies. Although the information can be difficult to generalize to populations, the goal is to listen and watch for factors that influence outcomes. This technique directly involves community college members in the process instead of relying solely on the "truthfulness" of numbers. It allows individuals to share in their own words how they perceive their environment and what areas they consider effective or ineffective

- **Oakton Community College (OCC)** in Des Plaines, Illinois utilizes exit interviews and alumni surveys as a form of assessment for programs and services. They recently asked their students, "Where do you go to find help?" Like most colleges, they spend significant amounts of time and money producing catalogs, brochures and other literature in the hope of answering students' questions and informing them about what they need to know to succeed. Their students indicated that they got college information not from the printed materials, but rather from friends, faculty, counselors and librarians. Basically, they receive most of their information from people. As a result, OCC placed a renewed emphasis on communicating with students by having academic advisers roam registration lines, increasing the availability of faculty advisers, and having identifiable staff available to answer student questions during the start of each quarter.

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## The TLC Newsletter

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Happy Holidays  
from the  
TLC Staff

### Fall Hours

*Monday - Wednesday:*

*8:30 - 5:00*

*Tuesday - Thursday:*

*8:30 - 6:00*

*Friday: Sporadic*

### TLC Workshops

*For a complete listing of upcoming events, visit the TLC Workshops page at:*

[tlccvc.org/workshop.htm](http://tlccvc.org/workshop.htm)

### Send us your Teaching Tips!

In addition to staying current with broad trends in education, the TLC also keeps a close eye on the individual innovations of its faculty and promotes the sharing of these to the larger college community.

Send your ideas to: [txeriland@dcccd.edu](mailto:txeriland@dcccd.edu) and we will post them to the TLC Web Site!

*The TLC Newsletter is a monthly publication of the Cedar Valley College Teaching and Learning Center (Room A 206A).  
Director.....Tim Xeriland  
Editor..... Kate Burkes*

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## DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

Assessment activities need to take into consideration the needs of culturally, ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse students. Not all students learn in the same manner. Not all students enter college with the same levels of preparation.

- **North Seattle Community College** conducted a campus-wide multicultural climate study and system-wide evaluation on the performance of its diverse students. The assessment not only focused on measurements of difference, but also on the changing environments, which influence outcomes. Data and anecdotal information were presented to the faculty, resulting in changes made at the course, department and institutional level. Specifically, the division of social sciences reviewed all curricula and hired a new faculty member specializing in multicultural issues. Training seminars and workshops on multiculturalism were also offered to assist with the redesign and integration of curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

Assessment activities engaged in by institutions have increased steadily to meet the needs and demands of constituencies. The best student outcomes assessment processes and methodologies are of little value unless the results are used to improve the curriculum and teaching process. Rather than searching for a single indicator to demonstrate success, institutions can foster climates that value the use of many different benchmarks as evidence of institutional effectiveness, thereby, assuring the public and themselves that students are being well-served by higher education.

*This ERIC digest is drawn from "Assessment and Testing: Myths and Realities," New Directions for Community Colleges, Number 88, edited by Trudy H. Bers and Mary L. Mittler.*

## Encourage Discussion

*From: The UT Austin Center for Teaching Effectiveness*

Do you want to invite students to **share** their knowledge and experience? Do you want to **encourage** class discussion? Consider **calling on students who might provide an interesting viewpoint**.

"I call on students whom I think might have a different perspective or set of experiences relevant to a given topic or issue," says a professor in political science. "I try to take advantage of the probability that outdoor types will have different experiences and attitudes about environmental issues, or that women and men students will view prostitution and childcare differently."

Several instructors stress that getting students to share experiences can **greatly increase the amount of knowledge that they take away from the course**.

For additional information on increasing interesting class conversations, see "**A Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence**," by Barbara Gross Davis, Lynn Wood, and Robert C. Wilson.

## PowerPointers

### Web Presentations

Placing a presentation on the Web can be accomplished in one of two ways:

**1. Place the presentation file itself (the .ppt file) on a web server.** Place a hyperlink on a web page, referencing the PowerPoint file, or simply tell your audience the address to access the presentation file. Depending on how your reader's computer is configured, the slides either open directly in PowerPoint or prompts the reader to save the file. *This option gives the reader full control over a copy of the presentation, exactly as you created it.*

**2. Use PowerPoint's HTML wizard** to prepare an HTML version of the presentation that you can then place on a web server.

- To save your presentation as HTML, choose **FILE : Save as Web Page**.
- Leave the type set to Web page (\*.htm, \*.html).
- Use **CHANGE TITLE** to change what displays in the colored band at the top of the browser window.
- To make additional choices for your web pages, click **Publish**.
- To test the web files, start your web browser, and choose **FILE : Open Page**. Browse for the folder where you stored the web presentation.
- **Remember** to move your Power Point/HTML files to a web server in order to make the presentation available for public use.