

**Educational Assessment Committee
Annual Report
2014-2015**

1. Introduction and Purpose of Report

In 2011 the Faculty Assembly made the Educational Assessment Committee a regular standing committee and charged it with ensuring the systematic and skillful assessment of student learning, the use of assessment results to strengthen educational programs, and compliance with the intent and technical requirements of Standard 14 of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.¹ As outlined in the Handbook, the Educational Assessment Committee's specific tasks include the proposal of assessment policies and guidelines, the review of assessment plans and practices, the evaluation of progress on the Institutional Learning Goals, and annual reporting on activities and outcomes to the college community. The following document summarizes the Educational Assessment Committee's activities during 2014-2015, highlights major accomplishments in the assessment of student learning outcomes, and draws on data submitted by academic and co-curricular departments to evaluate annual progress on the Institutional Learning Goals.

Before proceeding to the report, an overview of the Institutional Educational Philosophy and Learning Goals is in order. As stated on the college's website,

“Elizabethtown College engages students in a dynamic, integrated learning process that blends the liberal arts and professional studies. Challenged to take responsibility for their education, students at Elizabethtown embark on a journey of self-transformation that involves intellectual, social, and personal growth.

The College is committed to educating the whole person within a relationship-centered learning community where common goals are achieved through engagement in a rigorous academic curriculum and thoughtful co-curricular experiences. Students are encouraged to develop and challenge their own values, while seeking to understand and appreciate alternative perspectives. Embedded in an ever-changing global context, the College promotes the developmental, collaborative and complex nature of learning.

In seeking to ‘educate for service,’ Elizabethtown College believes that students can perform no greater service than they do when sharing knowledge and creativity with others. Opportunities to strengthen scholarship and leadership extend beyond the classroom, and students learn actively through practical experiences and civic engagement.

The impact of an Elizabethtown College education is long lasting and far-reaching because it is deeply transformative. Students acquire new habits of mind and heart—some in the course of the undergraduate experience, others as students grow beyond college.

At Elizabethtown College, students are inspired and challenged to:

1. Assume responsibility for their intellectual development, personal growth and well-being. Students will learn to sharpen their curiosity and become aware of the capabilities, strategies and resources needed to learn.
2. Reason, analyze and engage in critical thinking. Students will make, systematically evaluate, and, if necessary, refute arguments and claims—both their own and those of others.
3. Demonstrate thoughtful and articulate communication by applying knowledge in a variety of contexts, including writing, speaking, listening and interpretation.

¹Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points; the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

4. Understand the creative process and its role in human expression, and cultivate the ability to make informed aesthetic judgments.
5. Navigate diverse cultural worldviews and perspectives, with the realization that differing frames of reference influence analysis, communication and behavior.
6. Make reflective ethical decisions and act with integrity to seek just outcomes with relationships, communities and society.
7. Apply and integrate different strands of learning and comprehend interconnections in the process of gaining knowledge and experience.
8. Identify and cultivate a sense of purpose that inspires a commitment to meaningful work in service to society.”

The eight points above constitute the Institutional Learning Goals (ILGs) of Elizabethtown College. Keeping these goals in mind, the Educational Assessment Committee has sought to foster decentralized programs of assessment. In other words, those with greatest responsibility for the results engage in assessment activities designed to measure student learning and improve educational effectiveness of their programs and practices.

2. Activities of the Educational Assessment Committee (Fall 2014-Spring 2015)

Meetings. Last year the EAC convened twice in the fall semester and once in the spring semester. In addition, a subcommittee met with Dean Fletcher McClellan and others to discuss assessment of Signature Learning Experiences for the Real World Learning program. During the summer of 2014, Brian Newsome also worked with Katie Xanthopoulos, a SCARP research student, to draft the 2013-2014 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2014).

Activities and Actions. During 2014-2015, the EAC undertook the following:

- Wrote the 2013-2014 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2014).
- Collected and reviewed annual update plans, provided feedback, and met individually with departments indicating a need for support.
- Worked with Dr. Betty Rider to include assessment of Signature Learning Experiences in the Senior Survey.

Summary: EAC moved into the third year of utilizing its three-tiered reporting structure: (1) the comprehensive plan, to be revised in coordination with program review, (2) the annual update plan, noting any modifications to the comprehensive plan for the current academic year, and (3) the annual assessment report, presenting assessment findings for the academic year. The vast majority of departments submitted reports in a timely fashion. In June 2015, for example, all student life departments, all but three academic departments, and the Core Committee submitted annual assessment reports. The three academic departments that did not submit data were restructuring curricula and assessment programs; they thus had good reason to suspend assessment activities for 2014-2015. Data sets were also quite robust. In addition, departments that asked EAC for assistance were seeking to maximize the collection of meaningful data for the purposes of informing program enhancement. These trends indicate that the culture of assessment at the college is becoming increasingly well-grounded.

Future Direction: In 2015-2016, EAC wishes to further streamline reporting mechanisms so that it can continue shifting its efforts from establishment of practices and procedures and monitoring of compliance to use of assessment findings to gauge student progress toward ILGs. This will, however, necessitate ongoing dialogue with departments about the way in which findings and related actions are reported in order to ensure that reports are useful and meaningful. The committee will also continue to serve as a resource to academic and student life

departments and programs, with particular efforts directed toward supporting the Core Committee as it implements its comprehensive assessment plan.

3. The Year's Student Assessment Highlights

- The Core Committee used Humanities assessment data, collected in the spring of 2014, to inform redefinition of Humanities student learning outcomes. Reflection on Humanities recommendations and EAC's 2013-2014 annual report also led Core Committee to propose establishment of an Interdisciplinary Colloquium. Faculty Assembly provided feedback on this proposal in the spring of 2015. Based on this feedback, Academic Council sent the proposal back to Core Committee for further consideration. Those conversations are underway. In 2014-2015, the Core Committee also ran assessment programs for FYS, GWR, Math, Creative Expressions, and Social Sciences.
- The summer Scholarship, Creative Arts, and Research Program (SCARP) provided useful data, based on assessment of student research projects.
- Assessment results from across campus (academic departments and co-curricular offices) contributed evidence that, when aggregated, provide meaningful conclusions about the relative performance of students on all eight Institutional Learning Goals.

4. Student Learning Across Campus by Institutional Learning Goal

The following section includes summary results compiled from the year-end assessment reports of academic and co-curricular departments and assessment reports from the Core Committee. The data refer to assessments rather than students, per se, understanding that an individual student may have been assessed by more than one program or that, within individual programs, more than one SLO could map against a given ILG. For detailed charts, please see the accompanying spreadsheet entitled Appendix A: Summary of 2014-2015 Assessment Results.

ILG1 - Assume responsibility for their intellectual development, personal growth and well-being. Students will learn to sharpen their curiosity and become aware of the capabilities, strategies and resources needed to learn.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 4081 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 18 academic departments (N=2354), 4 co-curricular departments (N=300), the Core program (N= 1337), and SCARP (N=90). Of the 4081 assessments, 3522 (86%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 1116 (83%) of the 1337 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 2406 (88%) of the 2744 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG2 - Reason, analyze and engage in critical thinking. Students will make, systematically evaluate, and, if necessary, refute arguments and claims—both their own and those of others.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 7459 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 23 academic departments (N=4483), 4 co-curricular departments (N=270), the Core program (N=2676), and SCARP (N=30). Of the 7459 assessments, 6521 (87%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 2264 (85%) of the 2676 were**

rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 4257 (89%) of the 4783 assessments were rated as proficient.

ILG3 - Demonstrate thoughtful and articulate communication by applying knowledge in a variety of contexts, including writing, speaking, listening and interpretation.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 4715 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 22 academic departments (N=3186), 4 co-curricular departments (N=266), the Core program (N=1233), and SCARP (N=30). Of the 4715 assessments, 4172 (88%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 1087 (88%) of the 1233 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 3085 (89%) of the 3482 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG4 - Understand the creative process and its role in human expression, and cultivate the ability to make informed aesthetic judgments.

During the 2014-2013 academic year, 3639 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 12 academic departments (N=1496), 2 co-curricular departments (N=49), the Core program (N=2064), and SCARP (N=40). Of the 3639 assessments, 3344 (92%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 1873 (91%) of the 2064 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 1471 (93%) of the 1575 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG5 - Navigate diverse cultural worldviews and perspectives, with the realization that differing frames of reference influence analysis, communication and behavior.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 3024 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 19 academic departments (N=2312), 4 co-curricular departments (N=140), the Core program (N=572), and SCARP (N=0). Of the 3024 assessments, 2764 (91%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 495 (87%) of the 572 assessments were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 2269 (93%) of the 2452 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG6 - Make reflective ethical decisions and act with integrity to seek just outcomes with relationships, communities and society.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 1312 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 10 academic departments (N=804), 2 co-curricular departments (N=83), the Core program (N=425), and SCARP (N=0). Of the 1312 assessments, 1200 (91%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 385 (91%) of the 425 assessments were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 815 (92%) of the 887 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG7 - Apply and integrate different strands of learning and comprehend interconnections in the process of gaining knowledge and experience.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 6645 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 22 academic departments (N=4009), 4 co-curricular departments (N=240), the Core program (N=2336), and SCARP (N=60). Of the 6645 assessments, 5760 (87%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 1937 (83%) of the 2336 assessments were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 3823 (89%) of the 4309 assessments were rated as proficient.**

ILG8 - Identify and cultivate a sense of purpose that inspires a commitment to meaningful work in service to society.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 2475 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 13 academic departments (N=2123), 4 co-curricular departments (N=181), the Core program (N=171), and SCARP (N=0). Of the 2475 assessments, 2092 (85%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 113 (66%) of the 171 assessments were rated as proficient. When the Core data is removed from the overall picture, 1979 (86%) of the 2304 assessed were rated as proficient.**

5. Quality of Evidence

- Multiple sources of data were available and sample sizes were robust. These conditions facilitated triangulation of reliable data.
- More departments used the data submission template for the annual report, thus facilitating the processing of data.
- A couple of the departments were a year behind in data reporting, thus leaving those department with no data to report for 2014-2015 and submitting data too late for inclusion in the 2013-2014 report.
- As in past years, there is still some overlap and double counting of students, as the data refer to the number of assessments and not the number of students. Some students may complete more than one assessment, and more than one SLO may map against a given ILG. As a result, some of the numbers are high.

6. Utilization of Assessment Results

- Sixteen departments utilized assessment results directly to identify and/or confirm the usefulness of curricular and/or programmatic changes.
- A number of departments stated that assessment results confirmed current approaches to curricula and programs, while other departments indicated that they will be using 2014-2015 assessment results to inform curricular and/or programmatic changes. In an effort to capture the latter data, EAC has included a space to report on use of 2014-2015 findings in the on-line form used for submission of assessment plans for 2015-2016.

7. Comparison to Findings from 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 (percentages rated proficient or better).

	<u>ILG1</u>	<u>ILG 2</u>	<u>ILG3</u>	<u>ILG4</u>	<u>ILG5</u>	<u>ILG6</u>	<u>ILG7</u>	<u>ILG8</u>
2011-2012	93%	83%	85%	98%	84%	90%	84%	87%
2012-2013	81%	82%	88%	90%	82%	92%	79%	81%
2013-2014	92%	77%	85%	89%	89%	88%	75%	91%
2014-2015	86%	87%	88%	92%	91%	91%	87%	85%

For ILGs 1 and 8, the 2014-2015 findings appear to represent a decline in performance compared to 2013-2014. In all likelihood, the findings for these ILGs in 2014-2015 are more representative of student performance than the findings from the previous year, due to larger sample sizes. For ILGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, the 2014-2015 findings represent an apparent increase in performance compared to 2013-2014. The sample sizes for ILGs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are larger than the sample sizes from 2013-2014. There is the possibility that the findings for these ILGs in 2014-2015 are more representative than the findings from the previous year. For ILG 6, the 2014-2015 sample size is smaller than that of 2013-2014 but not significantly and so does not change the representative nature of the findings.

8. Recommendations to Improve Student Learning and the Assessment of Student Learning

- Closely monitor ILGs 1 and 8 to see how student performance compares during the 2015-2016 academic year.
- Monitor all ILG data sets over the next year or two to develop a better sense of current norms and trends, with a view to crafting appropriate benchmarks in the future (keeping in mind that benchmarks may vary from one ILG to another).
- Continue disaggregating Core data (which comes largely from first- and second-year students) from other assessments (which come largely from third- and fourth-year students) and tracking them over time to get a rough measure of student progress.
- Continue collecting data from departments to facilitate assessment of progress on the Institutional Learning Goals.
- Continue to strengthen the FY and SY experience programs as a means of addressing ILGs 1 and 8.