

# Outcomes Assessment Update

Montgomery College

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## Studio Art and General Education

Studio Art classes are participating in General Education Course Assessment for ARTS Distribution courses this year. In developing their Gen Ed course assessment plans, they had to concretely identify how studio art class are giving students opportunities to practice and master ARTS distribution competencies and proficiencies including Critical Analysis and Reasoning, Information Literacy, Technological Competency, and Arts and Aesthetic Awareness. The discipline developed “an assessment instrument that “wraps around” the creative process that is at the core of the studio art class experience.” The following is excerpted from Michael Farrell’s article about the experience of developing an assessment tool that is instructionally meaningful and allows for consistent assessment of student performance:

“Faculty across the three campuses worked together to find common threads running through all of the courses that could be used to develop assessment tools that would allow an instructor to gauge the level of student development in the key competencies and proficiencies, regardless of media or pedagogical approach.

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### What’s New?

*Course Assessment has changed. Check out the new **General Education Course Assessment** process!*

*See page 2*

*“The approach that was adopted incorporates an assessment instrument that **“wraps around”** the creative process that is at the core of the studio art class experience.”*

## Benchmarking General Education Competencies

The General Education Competencies are at the core of the General Education Program; they are skills that are hallmarks of an educated person, regardless of area of study. The challenge for us, at MC, is to identify how participating in our General Education program gives students the opportunity to improve their competency skills regardless of which General Education courses they take. The College has approached clarifying the connection between General Education Competency skills and General Education courses in several ways, including using Gen Ed Distributions with assigned competencies, college defined rubrics, progressive performance descriptions and benchmarking.

### Distributions

Using the General Education distributions as a basis, the College identified four General Education competencies for each General Education Course to assess in order to ensure that students have repeated opportunities to practice and improve mastery of these through transfer and application of skills in a variety of settings.

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## Want to get involved?

We are looking for faculty to represent their disciplines by reviewing General Education Course Assessment Plans and participating in Reliability Studies. For more information, please contact us at: [outcomes@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:outcomes@montgomerycollege.edu).

## What is happening in Outcomes Assessment?

### Upcoming Professional Development

**Writing Great Learning Outcomes-** Dec 3, and Jan Professional Week

**Assessment and Learning Marketplace-** Jan Professional Week

And more to come

In the past year, we have shifted the focus of our required assessment activities to focus on **General Education Course Assessment** and **Program Assessment**. While our focus has shifted, our core principle of using faculty driven assessment to improve curriculum and instruction remains the same.

**General Education course assessment** is a key opportunity for disciplines to enhance the student learning experience by consciously planning ways to incorporate our key General Education competencies into instruction and to use assessment to improve student learning.

**Program assessment** creates an opportunity for program faculty to consider and enhance the impact of their programs on student learning and to ensure that students are achieving the stated outcomes of the program. Program assessment can be used to look at ways to enhance program curriculum, which will in turn enhance learning and completion.

### Making a Difference for our students- Program Assessment

In 2008, during our Middle States visit, the College was encouraged to begin moving toward stronger focus on program assessment. To that end, we established a three phase process to implement program assessment. The three phases include:

- definition of program outcomes (begun in 2009-2010)
- articulation of program course and curriculum to program outcomes (begun in 2010-2011)
- assessment of program outcomes (begun in 2011-2012).

Program assessment is an opportunity for programs to look at the essential learning outcomes that students should get to as a result of a program and to consider ways of improving the program. It is the opportunity to ensure that these outcomes, including student performance, are aligned with national norms, transfer institutions, and employer expectations. It is an opportunity to brag about how well a program is doing or to concretely identify areas for improvement.

In the assessment phase of the program assessment process, program representatives, in collaboration with program faculty, determine how and when to assess each program outcome. Then working with the Collegewide Outcomes Assessment Team, the program collects data from courses, capstone activities, surveys, evaluations, or whatever means the program representatives determine will best allow them to measure student performance for each outcome. The primary expectations for program assessment are that the assessments result in meaningful data related to each outcome and that the data is used in meaningful ways.

Program assessment cycles begin the semester after the College Area Review is completed. In that five year cycle, programs are expected to assess each program outcome.

### Defining a Culture of Assessment

One of the Collegewide Outcomes Assessment Team's 2012-2013 goals is to develop a Montgomery College framework and definition of a culture of assessment. This framework will allow the College community to examine and understand our current practices and identify ways in which we can improve at every level. As part of our process, we have been exploring what others say about a culture of assessment.

*Continued on page 3...*

*"Perhaps the most compelling indicator of an assessment culture is what occurs when any new initiative or proposal is advanced. Automatically, the questions asked will be: What are the goals and objectives? How will we assess the effort? These questions will be followed by lively discussions at meetings around the college..." Establishing a Culture of Assessment by Wendy F. Weiner*

## Defining a Culture of Assessment

One influential document is the AAUP Academe Online article, “Establishing A Culture of Assessment.” (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2009/JA/Feat/wein.htm0>) This article by Wendy F. Weiner identifies fifteen characteristics of a culture of assessment including, among others: “clear general education goals, common use of assessment-related terms, faculty ownership of assessment programs, ongoing professional development, administrative encouragement of assessment, practical assessment plans, systematic assessment, the setting of student learning outcomes for all courses and programs, comprehensive program review, assessment of co-curricular activities, assessment of overall institutional effectiveness, informational forums about assessment, inclusion of assessment in plans and budgets, celebration of successes, and, finally, responsiveness to proposals for new endeavors related to assessment.”

## Assessment and Learning Marketplace

In January, the College will be offering an opportunity for faculty and staff to share ideas about assessment and learning and how we are using assessment to improve our practices and services. This innovative showcase will be an opportunity for faculty and staff to get information about what is happening at the Montgomery College and how our assessment practices are informing what we do in meaningful ways.

## We are looking for you!

Will you share your ideas and expertise in an energetic, collegial atmosphere as part of our Assessment and Learning Marketplace? Be on the lookout for the proposal process.

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## Studio Art and General Education (cont.)

“As an assessment tool, these assignments work together with the “creating” practice that is at the center of the studio art class experience. Students will continue to have the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of key competencies and proficiencies through the creation of a body of work across a range of media, but will now also develop concurrent written and visual examinations of artwork and ideas that help them place their work within a larger cultural and aesthetic context. The assessment instrument is designed to enable students to see, examine, and understand these connections, as they develop their capacity for creative problem solving, and should reinforce the valuable learning experience that studio art classes provide within the General Education program.”

*Michael Farrell is the Art Department Chair at Rockville. To read his full article, go to: <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/edu/departments.aspx?id=5534>*

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## Benchmarking General Education (cont.)

### MC Rubrics

The College has defined the skills and performance levels consistently through College assessment rubrics so that we can establish shared understanding and consistent assessment of those Gen Ed competency skills.

### Progressive Performance Descriptions

In the College rubrics, student performance has been defined on a progressive scale of Not Evident, Novice, Proficient and Advanced to reflect the expectation that students will continuously develop their skills as they move through their General Education Requirements.

### Benchmarking

The next step to consider in this process is for faculty course groups to consider what level of performance, on the progressive scale, would be expected and appropriate for their course given the assessment levels, outcomes for the course, and enrollment patterns. For example, a course with an EN 101/A assessment level that students often take early in their careers, before taking EN 101/A and EN 102, might reasonably expect that most students would be scored at the Novice level for several of the Information Literacy standards. On the other hand, a course that is writing intensive and integrates frequent writing opportunities and instruction into the course would most likely set a benchmark for most students to be scored at the Proficient level for Writing and Information Literacy standards. As a College, we would expect to see that students with fewer General Education credits would be more likely to score at the novice level, while students with more General Education credits would be more likely to score at the proficient or the advanced level.

## General Education Rubrics

To see the Montgomery College General Education Rubrics, please visit <http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/outcomes/gened/#Rubrics>



## Examples of Effective Student Learning Outcomes

**PY 102-** Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to apply concepts of learning theory, such as classical and operant conditioning, and social learning theory, to human behavior.

**CJ 110-** Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to analyze the process of the American legal system and its impact on controlling crime and the administration

## Collegewide Outcomes Assessment Team

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## What makes a good Student Learning Outcome (SLO)?

All courses at Montgomery College should have a set of discipline developed, common core student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes should embody the core expectations of what students should know, value or be able to do if they have successfully completed a course. Effective student learning outcomes are:

**Measurable**- use an active verb that indicates how the student will be measured on achievement of that outcome

**Meaningful**- be relevant to the course, reflect the core expectations for what a successful student must achieve in a course, and aligned with program goals and college goals.

**Student Friendly**- use language that avoids discipline specific terminology, when possible, and enables students or others outside the discipline to understand what they will be expected to know, do or value at the end of the course

**Student Focused**- focused on what the student will be able to do, not what the teacher does

**Appropriate to the level of the class**-reflect the level and challenge of the course in terms of higher order thinking skills.

**Broad**- reflect a broad category or grouping of skills, knowledge, or attitudes, not discrete tasks or single points of knowledge

*If you want more information about writing good student learning outcomes, The CTL will be offering Writing Great Student Learning Outcomes on Dec 3, 2013 and on January 24-2013. Please contact [carol.moore@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:carol.moore@montgomerycollege.edu).*