Core Competency Assessment: Communication and Comprehension

Summary and Overview

Communication and Comprehension: Students effectively communicate in written, spoken or signed, and artistic forms to diverse audiences. Students comprehend and respectfully respond to the ideas of others.

Assessment Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Instruments / Data</th>
<th>Samples</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>- Short survey designed by Assessment of Learning Committee (ALC) asking students to rate their own competence in six communication-related skills</td>
<td>- Sections of courses where the “Communication and Comprehension” competency rated a “4=very important.”</td>
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<td>- Holistic faculty rating of the same students in their communication skills</td>
<td>- Random sample (8 sections—1=CEC; 7=ECC) &amp; “volunteers” (8 sections—3=CEC; 5=ECC).</td>
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<td>- GPA of same students in communication-related courses</td>
<td>- Random sections got both student and faculty survey; volunteer sections got student survey only; for both samples, student grades were pulled.</td>
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<td>- A follow up survey of students at the beginning of their education at ECC (or at least in lower level courses) was administered in Fall 2010. The main survey took place in Spring 2010.</td>
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Data Reflection

- Torrance and Compton faculty participation
- 60+ participants
- Included presentations of program-level and course-level assessments

Data and Implications

- Student self-assessment (Table 2) and faculty self assessment (Table 3) differ by over .5 on average.
- The difference in these averages points to the fact that faculty need to be more clear about the standards they are applying to judge student work. Students need more exposure to examples of work of varying quality, especially high quality work.
The course grades add another layer of complexity and inconsistency.

The average course GPA is a robust 3.20 and 2.83 at ECC and CEC, respectively. This contrasts with the holistic faculty rating of students’ communication skills at 3.52 (which would be a C-).

Students take an average of 8.6 and 5.6 communication courses at ECC and CEC, respectively. This is a large number of courses that emphasize this competency.

This shows that the faculty has ample opportunity to develop their students’ communication skills. Student exposure to specific standards and good quality examples are key. It would be useful for faculty from a variety of disciplines to come together to discuss common standards to judge student work.

Asian students gave the lowest ratings in four of the six skills; African-American students gave themselves the highest ratings in four of the six skills.

This points to an opportunity and a need for more faculty training in teaching culturally diverse students.

This table shows the different self-ratings between beginning (pre-survey) and more advanced (post-survey) students. Indeed there is significant growth in most areas, with the possible exception of “communicating a message through art.”

The strongest gain is in “writing a paper,” which indicates that this skill is emphasized college-wide. The program- and course-level assessment presentations at the summit mostly emphasized this skill.
This table shows the uneven representation of certain divisions (and campuses) in the sample.

The next time a core competency assessment takes place, steps should be taken to ensure more even representation by using such methods as stratified random sampling.

Note: The comments and observations in this report come largely from the participants in the Core Competency Assessment Summits on Oct. 14 & 15, 2010.