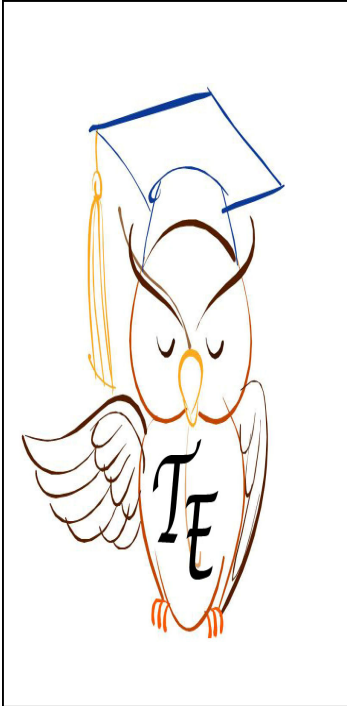


October 2008

# Teaching Excellence @HCC



## A Faculty Coffeehouse Comes to HCC!!!!

We are excited to announce the creation of a Coffeehouse forum that will be open to all HCC full-time and adjunct faculty. These meetings, which will be held once a month, will allow faculty members to participate in discussion of issues related to the classroom. The topics will be varied and the discussion will be driven by those who attend. The goal is to give the faculty the opportunity

to share their ideas, discuss classroom strategies, or seek assistance from their peers in an informal and fun atmosphere. Do you have a persistent problem with students who send text messages in the classroom, but don't know what to do about it? Do you have a teaching strategy that you believe others could benefit from? Do you wonder how you can improve your on-line course to pro-

mote student interest and involvement? Come to the Coffeehouse and share your experiences and dilemmas with others who want to do the same! The first Coffeehouse will be held on December 11. Light refreshments and snacks will be available. Watch for an email announcement!



## Common Outcomes Assessment

The title of this article probably brings forth images of students, sweat pouring from their brows, chewing pencils, taking standardized exams, hoping to achieve in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile. While it is true that every learning outcome must be assessed or tested, the instrument used to gather the data does not have to be the same for everyone.

There are many different ways to see if your course outcomes are being met. The most frequently used method is a common

exam. Not everyone likes the idea of a common exam because of being 'boxed' into certain concepts, questions, or answers.

Another idea is to create an exam that contains critical thinking questions. This type of question requires the student to apply what they have learned in a course rather than repeat memorized answers. Many professors do not like this style of exam because it is difficult to grade.

Standardized evaluation of critical thinking questions is easy when you use a rubric. According to an online source, "A rubric is a scoring tool for subjective assessments. It is a set of criteria and standards linked to learning objectives that is used to assess a student's performance on papers, projects, essays, and other assignments." Check out RubiStar.com and find out just how easy it is to create a rubric for any subject. This is a virus-free site that is open to all. Enjoy!



## Who Liked the Brownies?

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Leadership Team conducted a workshop on August 21<sup>st</sup> for new faculty and other interested faculty members. The committee members linked the concept of outcomes, objectives and assessment to the process of making brownies. The use of the brownie making analogy was well received. This simple, practical

lesson provided attendees with a hands-on example of this process. The fifteen participants agreed that they now have a better understanding of outcomes and assessments.

What are the future plans for the Leadership Team? There will be more group sessions focused on assisting faculty in writing outcomes and objectives, assessing the outcomes, and evaluating the data collected for

course improvement. The Team is striving to make the important process of outcomes assessment less painful for faculty. All faculty are welcome and encouraged to attend these sessions.

Next Session: TBA, maybe something better than brownies.

## CAAP & MAAP—Alphabet Soup?

General education is one broad program that HCC is working to evaluate in order to document student achievement. Currently, we use two different instruments to do this. One is the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) test and the other is the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) exam.

At HCC, we use these exams in two different manners. CAAP exams are available in several different modules which include essay composition, mathematics, reading, critical thinking, science and writing skills. In the past, individual modules have been administered to certain student groups. For example, the essay composition module was given to a sample of sections of English 101 and the critical thinking module was given to a sample of students from sociology and history. We are using the CAAP to attempt to measure specific goals of general education. However, the MAPP exam incorporates reading, writing, mathematics and critical thinking in the context of the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. It is administered to student volunteers who are preparing

to graduate with a degree. We are using the MAPP to document the overall general education experience of the student.

At the end of the spring semester in 2008, eighty-two students completed the MAPP exam. Their mean overall score was 445.37 out of a possible 500 points, which was greater than the national average of 441.53. When compared to the other sixty-eight colleges in our group, our students' average was higher than 74% of the other schools that administered the exam.

In the spring semester of 2008, HCC also administered the CAAP exam in critical thinking (107 students), and essay composition (63 students). On the critical thinking module, our students scored  $62.7 \pm 5.2$  (out of a possible 80 points) compared to the national average of  $60.9 \pm 5.4$  ( $n=22,061$ ). The average score on the essay composition module for HCC students was  $3.3 \pm 0.5$ , which was greater than the national average of  $3.0 \pm 0.6$  ( $n=7,070$ ).

Overall, our students at HCC are performing above the national averages

on the MAPP and CAAP exams. We would like as many graduating students as



possible to take the MAPP exam in the spring. We would appreciate your help in encouraging students to take the exam. If you are interested in participating in the CAAP, please contact one of the Leadership Team members.

## Outcomes Assessment Leadership Team

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