Freshman Writing Core Competency Assessment

All 184 sets of WPE and Final ENG 100 papers of the AY 2008-2009 cohort have been read and profiles developed for each student. We have also disaggregated the data into three groups depending upon their exit high school: Big Island, Non-Big Island State of Hawai‘i, and non-Resident. (ESL and foreign students were not included in this assessment). The results are as follows:

Note from the attached scatter plots that the bulk of in-coming students are not up to speed—the scatter plots for all three groups show that many are entering with severely deficient skills in written communication. And while they make some gain in that area upon exit, their ability to find, analyze, and synthesize appropriate information for the final ENG 100 paper drops because unlike the WPE (which provides contexts and citable text), ENG 100 final papers are incumbent upon the individual’s ability and willingness to conduct his/her own research. Thus many are still leaving ENG 100 below competent.

- WPE Scatter Plot Big Island Students
- ENG 100 Scatter Plot Big Island Students
- WPE Scatter Plot Non-BI Hawai‘i Students
- ENG 100 Scatter Plot Non-BI Hawai‘i Students
- WPE Scatter Plot Non-Resident Students
- ENG 100 Scatter Plot Non-Resident Students

Additional findings indicate that for the Big Island students, 20.2% have gone totally inactive (split equally between public and private school graduates), 35.3% have graduated from UHH, 26.2% are still with us (with quite a number graduating soon), 8% have regressed back to a CC, and 10% have transferred to another 4-year school. The bad news is that the ratio of the kids going inactive is 4:1 (those with a drop in skills from the WPE to the final as opposed to those who show at least some if not minimal increases in skill). The bigger problems: 41.4% of the total group has gone on academic warning and/or probation.
Regarding Non-Big Island Hawai‘i resident students: 21.2% have gone inactive, the same number graduated from us, approximately the same number are still with us, and around 27.6% have transferred to another college. This group fared even worse in terms of academic warnings: 53%.

Mainland students: only 7.8% went inactive. 34.2% have graduated from us, 26.3% are still with us, 31.5% have gone on to another school on the mainland. 28.9% went on academic probation while they were with us.

To answer a subsidiary question posed by some on Congress: Are we also losing the better students? Not necessarily. Per the attached excel spreadsheets:

- Core Competency by Region (Anonymized)

Red marks the students who have transferred to a mainland school while orange and purple marks those who have transferred and graduated from Mānoa respectively. Some of the students who transferred are better students, but many also exhibit the marginal skills possessed by their peers who either stay behind or drop out.

- WPE Scatter Plot for Transfers to Mainland Colleges
- ENG 100 Scatter Plot for Transfers to Mainland Colleges

The majority from this batch were first time freshmen. So our graduation rates per this set aren’t too bad. But there are other problems to be discussed. Namely, ENG 100 was and is not designed to instruct students at this level. Just as practicing quadratic equations will not help someone who doesn’t know basic arithmetic, simply getting underprepared and underperforming students into another writing class will not solve the problem.

Per our last report, readers wish to keep the following observations on the radar:

1. The writing samples represent the inability of students to recognize the difference between “opinion” and “evidence,” in that even if someone says something in public that it doesn’t qualify as “fact.”
2. Language issues remain a main problem for many of these artifacts. WPE shows trouble in syntax, grammar, and sentence-level construction of logic, and the final ENG 100 paper also exhibits these problems, with the added burden of unskillful synthesis of information, the lack of information literacy (inability to read and understand the texts being cited), and ineffective communication (lack of a coherent train of thought).

Accreditation Update (“finalized” dates)

WASC required templates on Retention and Graduation (which is a new requirement for Institutional Review) are due on April 1. A special committee to review our data will be convened and will schedule a conference call to the campus sometime between April 22 through the 30th. The committee will complete their assessment of our data and report back to us by May 6.

Our financial statement is due on April 30. This is routinely handled by the Business Office. Another WASC committee will review this and issue a statement sometime in June.

The off-site call/review (aka OSR) is being planned for around Nov. 19-21 (more than likely the 21st), with the on-site October 15-17, 2014. This means our Institutional Report will be due sometime in September.

A full meeting of the Accreditation Planning Committee (which includes the Chair of Congress, the Chair of GE, and the Chair of Academic Policy) is being planned for April 4. Updates on the various components of the Institutional Report will be made at that time.