

# LEARNING CURVE UPDATE

## Assessment Task Force

November, 2004

Volume 7



### The Road Ahead

Over the past decade assessment has become a requirement for colleges and universities as a component for accreditation. Therefore, assessment planning and reporting have become more rigorous. Today, we are expected to have developed an assessment culture in which the assessment of student learning has permeated the entire institution's philosophy and nature. In order for an assessment culture to exist, all parts of the college must be aware of the assessment that is occurring on campus. The newsletters, the web site, and the institutional report all summarize the assessment initiative. We hope that you will take the time to review these documents and stay abreast. **Together we assess and achieve measurable outcomes—a win for us all!**



### Student Drivers

Student involvement in the assessment process is vital to its success. Seven members of the Student Education Association (SEA) under the direction of Mary O'Boyle have volunteered to join the Assessment Task Force. These students will be briefed by the co-chairs prior to their first meeting. They include Patricia Buss, Yuri Rowley, Jodi Hellbusch, Jill Herley, Melinda Schneider, Amy Dvorak, and Trudi Cadenbach.

Additionally, Lin Behmer met with the Student Government Association (SGA) with Rick Goben on October 28. The SGA members agreed to help the student population understand assessment activities. After a presentation centered on defining assessment and its importance to student learning, the students responded to the question, "What makes learning easier for you?" The responses included:

- Labs, instructor using quiz questions again on tests.
- Instructor repeating the data more than once, pictures and handouts with brief summaries of key points, and open discussions.
- Teachers that know tremendous amounts of facts about their subjects and don't recite from the textbook.
- Teachers who are enthusiastic about their courses displaying a joy for the subject and their career, making student learning easier.
- Students working together in hands-on applications or open discussions.
- Instructors exploring creative ways to teach a concept such as interesting facts or stories about new material.
- Class discussions, visual aids, and hands on.

For a complete summary of the student meeting, contact Lin Behmer.



### Road Map

The Educational Services Committee approved the final drafts of the General Education Mission, Philosophy, and FACS sheets on November 9, 2004. These documents will be published in the 2005/2006 college catalog and outline general education at Northeast. They also meet the NCA mandate to clarify the role of general education assessment. The version of the FACS as accepted by Educational Services committee is as follows:

<p><b>Communication Skills-</b> The student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Write with a sense of purpose, organization, and mechanical correctness.</li> <li>➤ Deliver a purposeful message with appropriate physical presence and vocal variety.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Problem Solving Skills-</b> The student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recognize the problem.</li> <li>➤ Review information about the problem.</li> <li>➤ Develop plausible solutions.</li> <li>➤ Evaluate results.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Math Skills -</b>The student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Demonstrate the ability to convert and calculate physical quantities.</li> <li>➤ Analyze and solve word problems.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social Skills -</b> The student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Demonstrate interactive behaviors.</li> <li>➤ Demonstrate knowledge of individual, national, and international diversity.</li> </ul>

## Travel Log

The 2003-2004 Institutional Assessment Report will be printed soon. Copies of this report will be in the Library for checkout as well as in the administrative offices. This report reflects the initiatives implemented last year as well as student learning outcomes in the areas of general education and program assessment.



### Under Construction

In the near future, there will be an NECC assessment web page. Special thanks are due to Dave Heckert for helping us to develop the site. The site will include assessment tools and documents pertaining to our institutional plan. Completion date: December 2004.

**Remember:** Assessment taskforce meeting minutes are already available on the secured web site.

### Driver's Education: A Classroom Technique

**Application Cards** is another classroom technique outlined in the Classroom Assessment Techniques handbook distributed at the August In-service. After students have heard or read about an important principle, generalization, theory, or procedure, the instructor hands out an index card and asks them to write down at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned. These cards let faculty know in a flash how well students understand the possible applications and, as a consequence, to connect newly-learned concepts with prior knowledge. As they respond to the technique, students see more clearly the possible relevance of what they are learning. Please refer to pp. 236-239 for examples of these cards use in many disciplines as well as the pros and cons of this technique.



**Note:** As you incorporate classroom assessment techniques (CAT) into your teaching, please keep records. The Assessment Taskforce can make use of any document that provides evidence of assessment at the course level.



### Rest Stop

If you have any comments, questions or concerns regarding assessment, we invite you to stop by during Lin and Corinne's planning meetings on Monday and Wednesday mornings at 10:00 in AC 109. The coffee is on and the door is open.



### The Evolution of Assessment

In terms of evolution, *Natural Selection* is defined as "*the mechanism by which organisms with favorable variations live, reproduce, and pass on their favorable traits.*" (Oxford Word Finder)

If we were to metaphorically apply the concept of *natural selection* to the future of assessment at Northeast, how long would it take for the majority of faculty and staff to exhibit favorable traits in regard to assessment? Which of the following four responses best describes the possibility for natural selection of assessment at Northeast?



It all depends on employee turnover, but it still takes at least hundreds of years

It always takes millions of years

Some changes can be seen in a single generation if the habitat changes.

Even if the environment changes, the species will not

The ideal response would be the third one. As we all know, an assessment culture is evolving at Northeast Community College. At the present time, we exhibit some primitive and some favorable characteristics of viable assessment. Hopefully, in the future, assessment will be a natural selection for all of us.