

UAC CTW Report for 2008-09

Overview:

The Undergraduate Assessment Committee reviewed 52 reports from undergraduate degree programs across the university. Within the reports several patterns emerge. The following is a compilation of the reviews of these reports/patterns as observed from the Content Management System developed by the CTW Program.

Piloting Courses: 36 programs piloted at least one course (69%); 16 degree programs did not pilot course(s) during 2008-09 (31%). (Programs that did not pilot include: Anthropology, Art-Studio, BIS – Community Studies, Communications – Journalism, French, Physics and Astronomy, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish, Public Management and Policy, Middle Childhood Education, Managerial Sciences – Bogner, Managerial Sciences – Whalen, Real Estate)

Faculty Workshops and Preparation for teaching CTW courses: (a few report more than one type of training, but the types of preparation mentioned in reports across the university tend to fall in these 4 categories.)

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| • Workshops/faculty meetings 08-09 | 20 | 38% |
| • One-on-one meetings/training | 14 | 27% |
| ○ 2 of these mention larger group preparation in Fall, 2009 | | |
| • Ambassador only teaching/ no group prep | 6 | 6% |
| • No mention of faculty prep | 12 | 23% |
| ○ 7 offer plans for Summer/Fall , 2009; 5 offer no plan for preparation (see spreadsheet on Training) | | |

Typical issues reported in this category regarding faculty meetings, workshops and discussions include: rubrics (13), assignments (8); assessment (3); the overall CTW plan (2); online writing environment (2); time constraints (1); student resistance (1)

Assessment: (A few Ambassadors included responses about their program, but most focused on student learning. Those who discussed rubrics focused on the worth of the rubric instead of the results of learning based on the rubric. Many depts. are revising their rubrics)

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| • Discussed use of rubrics for CT | 25 | 48% |
| ○ Only 3 of these reported results of student learning as seen through the rubrics | | |
| • Unknown assessment criteria | 8 | 15% |
| • Used grades combined with rubric | 3 | 6% |
| • No results/no pilots | 16 | 31% |

Assignments: (Patterns in this area were clearer than in others. Assignments either needed to be revised, the Ambassador was happy with the assignments and will continue to use them as they are, or

assignments had not piloted yet. Themes for revisions focus on shorter assignments and fewer opportunities for student revision of assignments.)

• Revisions/changes to assignments	25	48%
• Continue with no changes for 2009-10	16	31%
• Assignments related to CT Definition	6	12%
• Assignments Encouraged Students	6	12%
• Assignment affected course revisions	3	6%
• No comments on Assignments	15	29%

Achievements: (Achievements were defined by faculty in various ways. Many times their responses seem to be areas in which they are pleased with the program in their department so far. In addition, some programs report multiple achievements/others do not report in this area – see spreadsheet.)

• Student Improvement	10	19%
• Positive Effect on Faculty	9	17%
• Successful Pilots	8	15%
• Successful Assignments	7	13%
• Successful Revisions	6	12%
• Successful Rubrics	4	8%
• Student Feedback	4	8%
• Consultants	2	4%
• Successful Assessment	1	2%
• No Report of Achievements	18	35%

Action Plans: (Action Plans were very specific to programs; however a few patterns emerge. Many reports included an action plan that was not specified in the Action Plan section of the report. The following information was gathered by looking throughout the report.)

• Faculty Training	26	50%
• Revise Assignments	21	40%
• Revise Rubrics	17	33%
• Address Student Concerns	8	15%
• Revise Assessment Criteria	7	13%
• Consultant Training	4	8%
• Revise/Review course offering	3	6%
• Revise definition of critical thinking	3	6%
• Create website	2	4%
• Add online Assessment	2	4%
• Add Course	2	4%
• No Action Plan reported	4	8%

Attached are 5 spreadsheets that reflect the information above by degree program

Summary:

The Undergraduate Assessment Committee commends programs for their hard work during this pilot year for CTW. Many of the programs report interesting and insightful gains as they put into action the concepts and the plan for their department/program. The primary successes seem to lie in the development and implementation of assignments, faculty workshops, and building of CTW rubrics that reflect each discipline. At the same time, these are the areas most often mentioned for revision and continuation as the Program unfolds, which in the minds of the committee are appropriate and to be commended.

The major concerns of the committee include preparation for departments/programs where pilots were not done, relating the definition of critical thinking to the assignments and assessments (rubrics or other criteria), and reporting assessment results. We believe that the way we phrased questions for the report content management system will need to be revised so that Ambassadors will be more clearly guided toward assessment of specific CTW results of their students' learning. We also hope that in the coming academic year programs will revisit their definitions of critical thinking to assure that the assignments and the measures get as close to critical thinking skills (through the writing) as we can. We also recognize that CTW is an evolving program at Georgia State, and that it will improve each year as long as the Ambassadors and faculty continue developing and working through ideas, obstacles, and successes.

While many programs produced insightful reports that will move their departments forward, we wish to recognize the following programs for excellence in various aspects of this year's report that we hope others will consider as they prepare for next year. This is not intended to be an exclusive list, as other programs clearly contribute to the efforts of the QEP initiative at Georgia State and to their respective departments. Rather, this group serves as samples of reports well done in particular ways.

Reports to consider for recognition:

For assessment report of rubric results of CT

- Chemistry (Doyle Barrow)
- Geosciences (Katherine Hankins)

For insightful reflections of courses, pilots, definitions of CT

- Communications – Speech (Jeffrey Bennett)
- German (Robin Huff)

For analysis of assignments, faculty training and website to come

- English (Audrey Goodman)

For analysis of progress of plan, clarity of report, and openness to change/improvement

- Criminal Justice (Brenda Blackwell)

- Nursing (Kathy Plitnick)

Finally, the Undergraduate Committee lists specifically the following comments and concerns:

- Over 30% of programs chose not to pilot (or couldn't as a result of cancelled classes). Although piloting a course or courses was presented as a suggestion for 2008-09, the committee believes that doing so was imperative for early success and seeing opportunities for change in assessment (rubrics), assignments, training, etc. We will be interested to learn the effects of piloting as we review results and reports next year.
- We found that 23% of programs do not mention faculty preparation or training for CTW during the 2009-2010 academic year. To make CTW a campus-wide academic initiative, faculty must be aware of not only what is expected from them, but also the underlying purpose for enhancing students' critical thinking in their disciplines. However, faculty training was mentioned in 26% of Action Plans for the coming year.
- We are pleased to see that nearly half of the programs (48%) have identified and are using a rubric to measure students' critical thinking, but also dismayed to find only 3 departments reported results from the rubrics. The committee acknowledges that the questions asked for the report did not specify reporting detailed results; therefore, we will do so for the next reporting cycle.
- In both the Assignments section of the Content Management System and the Action Plan section, the most commonly reported issues are revisions of assignments and rubrics for the coming year. The committee believes that these comments and revisions are essential for progress of the initiative and for ensuring student learning where critical thinking is concerned.
- The committee regrets not asking directly for information regarding a discipline's definition of critical thinking and how this definition may have been revised as a result of the pilot year, how the definition is reflected in assignments and assessments, etc. (However, 6 programs did discuss these issues concerning the definition of critical thinking in their discipline on their own.) We will add questions to the system for next year's report.

As a university-wide initiative, Critical Thinking through Writing is a powerful and vast endeavor. We look forward to watching it grow and develop over the years.