MEMO

DATE: September 15, 2008

TO: Director of Assessment

RE: 2008 Annual Update

Overview

As the relatively new General Education program has matured (the first class graduated under the new program last spring), so have the program objectives. The original assessment focus was on student experience as monitored through a series of cohort surveys. We have concluded the data collection for this project and the essays have been prepared for final review by the GE Committee.

Westmont is currently in the midst of rewriting its mission statement. When this process is concluded, the six Learning Standards will be revisited with the objective of making them more cleanly connect the mission statement to the academic program and most specifically to the General Education components of the academic program. Meanwhile, assessment is being focused on the Common Contexts and Competent and Compassionate Action sections of General Education since these components are most foundational to our mission and most summative in their scope. In addition, the six Learning Standards are being used as an interpretive source when setting objectives for the various General Education areas rather than as areas of assessment in their own right.

Two years ago, we began a second phase by initiating a process of identifying learning objectives for the individual GE categories. This project is proceeding, but we have modified the schedule to prioritize the components found under Competent and Compassionate Action. Meanwhile, we will continue to completion work already begun in individual Common Inquiries areas. In particular, an initial round of data has been collected for several areas. This initial data will be used to refine the objectives and our assessment methods.

In addition to the more locally focused assessments outlined above, the cross-sectional version of the CLA is administered in alternate years. This provides external validation of Westmont’s general effectiveness as an academic institution as previous results have been exceptionally encouraging. We are giving the CLA for the second time this academic year.
CLA Assessment

Goal: Students are versatile thinkers, able to use appropriately the tools provided by different disciplinary methodologies and to understand that each discipline implies a particular epistemological orientation. Critical interdisciplinary thinking requires students to combine a variety of discipline-specific reasoning abilities in attempts to solve problems or answer questions. It also requires them to have the ability to frame appropriate questions; to think abstractly; to test definitions of key terms and categories of analysis, and to examine one’s own assumptions. (Learning Standards)

Data: The CLA was administered to a group of 100 incoming, first-year students on August 30, 2008. We plan on having 100 graduating seniors take the exam in March 2009.

Interpretation: The 2008-2009 results are not yet available for review. The 2006-2007 results were very encouraging. A synopsis of these results, their discussion, and their dissemination can be found in the 2007 annual update.

Using the Results: The previous CLA results do not indicate any need for change. Rather, they indicate the college is successful in teaching reasoning skills and very successful in teaching interdisciplinary, problem-solving skills. We expect the same to hold for this year’s data.

Next Steps: The second (senior) half of the CLA will be administered in March 2009. This is in keeping with our plan to use the instrument in alternate years to monitor our work and verify that students continue to achieve at the same level. When seniors are selected for the next round of CLA administration in 2010-2011, the group of students who took the exam at entrance in 2006 will be asked to form the core of the sample. This will allow for at least some before/after comparisons at the individual level.

Ongoing Cohort Study

Goal: Students can identify ways in which the GE goals of GE courses are communicated and can point to ways in which the goals have been achieved.

Data: The data consists of the responses of the cohort participants over the course of the past eight semesters to the prompt:

For each new course above, please comment on:
a. How effective has the course been in communicating the goals of the GE area(s) for which you are taking it? How, specifically, was this accomplished?
b. How effective was the course in accomplishing these goals?

As the members of the cohort have moved through the GE program, they have generated 10 – 20 short essays for each of the 19 GE areas. Coverage is best for the *Common Contexts* and *Common Inquires* components. Electronic copies of the collated essays are stored on the academic_dean server. Copies can be requested from the administrative assistant.

**Interpretation:**
Data collection was completed last spring and has been organized by area to facilitate assessment. The GE Committee will review and discuss the results this coming semester. Intermediate analysis of the data indicated a distinct unevenness in communicating GE goals to the students. It will be of particular interest to see 1) if this unevenness persists and 2) what effect, if any, the development of the students has on these perceptions. For example, are the responses from first and third year students fulfilling an area requirement materially different?

**Using the Results:**
The best use of the results will be determined after the data have been reviewed.

**Next Steps:**
At this point the cohort study has run its course. A new study should be conducted after area learning objectives assessment systems have been established and we have completed at least one cycle of review in each area. Until that time, the energy spent working with a cohort would be energy misspent.

### Area Assessments

**Goal:** Each General Education category has area-specific objectives and a plan for ongoing assessment of the objectives.

**Criterion for Success:** By spring 2014, each area will have a set of objectives under which at least one data has been gathered and reviewed. Until this has been achieved, objectives will be established and data gathered for at least three additional areas per year.

**Data:** A timeline for (1) developing assessable objectives, (2) conducting a pilot study, and (3) conducting a full review was developed in the 2006-2007. A copy of the schedule can be found in the 2007 annual update. More detailed descriptions of the results of the work related to the 2007 Next Steps is provided below.
The original schedule has been modified to get early data on the more summative portions of the GE program. Specifically, our current focus has been shifted from the *Common Inquiries* components to *Competent and Compassionate Action*. The modified schedule can be found in Appendix I.

Following are more detailed descriptions of the current states of assessment for the areas in which work has begun.

**Next Steps:**

In addition to the agenda set out by the schedule in Appendix I, the objectives developed in each of the GE areas need to be vetteed by the broader community. To this end, when the objectives in an area are maturely developed they will be presented to the Academic Senate for discussion and affirmation.

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**Philosophical Reflections on Truth and Value**

Since the GE document explicitly gives primary responsibility for this GE area to the Philosophy department, the work of assessment has been located there as well. A set of objectives has been developed and a first round of data collected.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. [Philosophy] Students will be able to recognize and articulate foundational questions of philosophy--especially foundational questions of particular interest to Christians--though the emphasis among knowing, being, and value will vary by course.
2. [Liberal Arts] Students will be able to articulate some of the main components of a Christian liberal arts education and the interrelation of philosophy and other areas of academic study in the liberal arts, both in terms of *content* and the development and application of *transferable skills*.
3. [Worldview] Students will be able to articulate the relationship between philosophical commitments /academic life and their beliefs, feelings, commitments, and practices as components of an integral life, considered as a whole.

**Interpretation and use of results:**

The primary interpretation and use of results will take place in the Philosophy Department. These reflections will be reviewed by the General Education Committee to

**Next Steps:**

While the Philosophy Department will have its own program of next steps, from the point of view of the General Education Committee, the next steps are:

1. Review the objectives in the Academic Senate this fall.
2. Review and reflect on the GE sections of the Philosophy Department’s annual update.
World History in Christian Perspective

*World History in Christian Perspective* is another area for which primary responsibility has been delegated to a particular department – in this case the History Department.

Exploring the Physical Sciences

**Objectives:**

1. Students can identify the basic properties and principles of matter.
2. Students can convey the creative and systematic aspects of scientific method.
3. Students can give examples of the power of theory and prediction within the framework of empirical/experimental modes of inquiry.
4. Students can articulate a model of the relationship between faith and science both historically and in the current culture.
5. Students demonstrate sufficient comprehension of science to intelligently read about, understand, and express informed opinions on science-related issues that affect individuals and society.

**Data:**
An instrument that addresses objectives 1, 4, and 5 was developed in the spring and was administered to three of the four sections of classes that fulfill *Exploring the Physical Sciences* during the last week of class. The raw results (including the essays) are currently stored in the office of the Associate Dean for Curriculum. The results will be scanned for long-term storage later this fall. A graphical presentation of the results for true/false and multi-choice question can be found in Appendix II.

**Interpretation:**
Instructors of *Exploring the Physical Sciences* will meet fall 2008 to discuss the results. A first look at the results shows that students have a good command of most of the material. One of the tasks of the fall meetings will be to investigate the questions that produced anomalous results.

**Next Steps:**
1. Investigate the nature of the questions with higher error rates to determine whether the question is flawed, the concept is unusually difficult, or the concept was not well presented.
2. Develop rubrics for the essay questions and evaluate the essay responses using the rubrics.
3. Conduct a before/after study to determine whether what we are seeing is the result of prior learning or a consequence of the course.
4. Revisit the objectives to make sure that these are the ones to which we wish to commit.
5. Present the objective to the Academic Senate for more general buy in.

Exploring the Life Sciences

Objectives:
At this point, the faculty who teach Life Science courses have identified a set of desired outcomes (see Appendix V). At present, the list reflects all the desires of the participants. As such it includes outcomes for which there is only modest enthusiasm and sparse coverage in some courses. In addition, the list is too bloated to be used effectively.

Next Steps:
The conversation about which proposed objectives are, in fact, core will continue. Once the core objectives have been identified, we will need to develop instruments and rubrics for assessing them. However, we will not spend a great deal of energy pushing the process forward until we have completed work on the Common Contexts and Common Inquiries sections.

Reasoning Abstractly

Objectives:
A tentative set of objectives has been developed.

1. Recognition: Students can identify instances of abstract deductive reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving) and can distinguish premises from conclusions (or their analogues).
2. Construction: Students can construct an instance of valid deductive reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving).
3. Evaluation: Students can distinguish valid forms of deductive reasoning about abstract objects or concepts (in the form of arguments, explanations, proofs, analyses, modeling, or processes of problem solving) from invalid and/or fallacious forms of reasoning.

Data:
Selected questions on an existing calculus exam were vetted for appropriateness in assessing the area objectives.

Next Steps:
The collected data needs to be reviewed with an eye toward the extent to which it provides evidence that the objectives have been met and to the ways that the questions can be generalized to other contexts.

**Performing and Interpreting the Arts**

**Objectives:**

**Core Outcomes**
In thinking, speaking, and writing students will display improvement in the following areas:

1. Language and terminology for varying artistic types, forms, movements
2. Methods and processes for analyzing, interpreting, and enjoying artistic production

In their making and performing students will demonstrate improvement in the following areas:

1. Creative / interpretive methods for artistic production and expressiveness
2. Physical processes and manifestations necessary for artistic realization and production

**Desired Outcomes:**

1. Ability to articulate standards of judgment related to artistic quality and value
2. Imaginative handling of subject matter and medium toward a desired end
3. Necessary techniques and appropriate conventions for effective transmission and communication
4. Openness to an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of aesthetic enjoyment and judgment
5. Mastery of proper technical language

It is not our intention to assess the desired outcomes. For one, they are not relevant to all Performing and Interpreting the Arts courses. They are retained to provide faculty teaching in the area with additional direction and suggestion for more localized assessment.

**Data:**
In the spring of 2008 an appropriate version of the assessment test in Appendix III was administered to each course offered to fulfill Performing and Interpreting the Arts. The results currently are stored in the office of the Associate Dean for Curriculum. After the responses have been discussed, the papers will be scanned to CD for long-term storage.

**Next Steps:**
Faculty teaching courses satisfying Performing and Interpreting the Arts will meet this fall to discuss the results. One of the pressing questions will be the appropriateness of
the assessment instrument. Some faculty have expressed doubts as to its usefulness in certain contexts. Modifications or alternatives may be needed. In addition, the area objectives should be reviewed by the Academic Senate.

Thinking Globally

The assessment process is most developed for the Thinking Globally requirement. Over the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years, a prompt and rubric were developed and refined. The assessment instrument was administered in all courses offered in the 2007-2008 academic year that fulfill Thinking Globally. Almost all of the approved courses were included in this project.

Objectives:
1. Students can describe differences between at least two cultures (one of which is non-western) and can offer explanations or historical contexts for those differences.
2. Students recognize the value and significance of other cultural without romanticizing.
3. Students can identify ways in which cultures influence formulations of knowledge. They will identify ways in which they personally are affected.
4. Students recognize global inequities, injustices, and/or inter-religious issues and commit themselves to thoughtful, concrete responses as part of their Christian commitment.

Data:
Responses to the prompt (found in Appendix IV) are currently stored in the office of the Associate Dean for Curriculum. After the data has been reviewed, the responses will be scanned to CD for long-term storage.

Next Steps:
All instructors offering courses fulfilling Thinking Globally will meet this fall to review a random sample of the results. As noted in the previous report, responses to the previous were unacceptably low prompt for some courses. It was conjectured that much of the variation was due to the unevenness of administration and seriousness with which students took the task. As a result, the prompt was modified and clearer expectations were set for administration. In addition, previous discussions have resulted in pedagogical changes in some courses. In particular, some instructors have become more explicit in identifying for students topics that are connected to the area outcomes. In particular, instances of cultural influence on the formulation of knowledge are identified as such when they appear in lectures. We look forward to seeing the results of these changes. In addition, the area outcomes will be presented to the Academic Senate for discussion and affirmation.
### Appendix I: Updated Review Schedule

**GE Area Assessment Plan**

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<td>Understanding Society</td>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
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<td>Quantitative and Analytical Reasoning</td>
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<td>2011-2012</td>
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<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
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<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
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<td>Productions and Presentations</td>
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<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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<td>Research</td>
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<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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<td>Serving Society; Enacting Justice</td>
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<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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<td>Communicating Cross-Culturally</td>
<td>Spring 2009 (4)</td>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
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**Notes**

1. The History department has a departmental rubric that can be adapted
2. The English Department has a rubric that might be adapted more broadly
3. Pilot assessment in the China Social Entrepreneurship program
4. We have IDI data for WIM students
Appendix II: Exploring the Physical Sciences Summary Data

Percentage of Incorrect Answers

Questions 3, 8, 20 – 22, and 28 – 32 are multi-choice.
Appendix III: Instrument to Assess in *Performing and Interpreting the Arts*

**Test Template**

**TEST TO MEASURE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES**

II. Common Inquiries, 3. Performing and Interpreting the Arts”

(To be administered once at beginning of semester and again near end of semester using same example)

**A. Given the work of a student or unknown master:**

1. Circle the six most relevant terms for describing this work.

2. Make an interpretive guess as to the original context and intended effect of this piece

3. Does it succeed or not? Why?

    *at beginning of semester*

**B. Describe a creative work you fashioned prior to this course.**

    *near end of semester*

**B. Describe a creative work you fashioned during this course.**
A Sample Instantiation

TEST TO MEASURE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OF OUTCOMES

II. Common Inquiries, 3. Performing and Interpreting the Arts

A. Given the work of a student or unknown master:

1. Circle the six most relevant terms for describing this work.

- Schubert
- Handel
- Stravinsky
- Mozart
- Chopin
- piano
- harpsichord
- organ
- klavichord
- symphonic poem
- nocturne
- étude
- cantata
- concerto
- art song
- minuet
- recitative
- aria
- presto
- andante
- allegro
- moderato
- largo
- French mélodie
- German lied
- Italian opera aria
- English ballad
- Medieval
- Renaissance
- Baroque
- Classical
- Romantic
- 20th century
- soprano
- mezzo-soprano
- tenor
- baritone
- bass
- tonal
- bitonal
- atonal
- 12-tone (Serialism)

2. Make an interpretive guess as to the original context and intended effect of this piece

3. Does it succeed or not? Why?

B. Describe a creative work you fashioned during this course.
Appendix IV: Thinking Globally Assessment

Prompt

The General Education Committee is reviewing courses that have been approved to fulfill the Thinking Globally requirement. We want to know if these courses are achieving the desired result of helping students grow in their ability to think globally. Our concern is not your impressions of the instructor but your growth.

Write a two to three page essay on the ways in which this course has better equipped you to think globally. Focus on the changes that have occurred in your understanding and thinking. Your essay should be informed by preparatory reflection on the following themes:

- How has your knowledge of global issues expanded?
- How has your appreciation of other cultures’ ways of thinking and/or worldviews changed?
- In what ways are you better equipped to examine your own assumptions and predispositions?
- How will what you have learned in this course affect your future choices and actions?
# Thinking Globally-Diversity Standard Scoring Rubric

Class ____________

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<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Global knowledge &amp; skill</strong>&lt;br&gt;Not addressed&lt;br&gt;Describes differences between groups. Preferably, should extend beyond western differences.</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Skills of the heart</strong>&lt;br&gt;Not addressed&lt;br&gt;Recognizes and accepts differences between self and others without feeling that differences are automatically wrong.</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contingency of “Knowledge”</strong>&lt;br&gt;Not addressed&lt;br&gt;Understands that people from other cultures have a different worldview and see things differently because of their cultural origins.</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship to Christian Action</strong>&lt;br&gt;Not addressed&lt;br&gt;Recognizes global issues of distributive justice and/or the opportunities and challenges of inter-religious dialogue.</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
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**Notes and observations**
Appendix V: Exploring the Life Sciences

Initial Learning Objectives for Exploring the Life Sciences

Students should know:
1. The scientific method as it relates to the life sciences
2. The strengths, limits, and relevance of science.
3. The mechanisms of heredity: Mendelian and molecular
4. The concept of homeostasis: metabolism, regulation, behavior
5. The interplay of structure and function.
6. Evolutionary theory.
7. The diversity of life.
8. Human nature.

Students should be able to:
1. Apply their knowledge to a contemporary issue.
2. Apply the scientific method to a scientific question.
3. Articulate the various positions on the origins of life.

Students should value/commit to:
1. The breadth of creation.
2. Stewardship of resources.
3. Differences.
4. Bioethics broadly defined.