Past Assessment Mini-Grant Recipients and Project Abstracts

Grantees

Jack Barbera, Associate Professor, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Project Title: Evaluating the Diagnostic of Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge Exam
The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry uses exam materials developed by the American Chemical Society (ACS) to evaluate student performance at a variety of levels. Results from these exams support the Department’s learning outcomes both internally and for accreditation with the ACS. At the end of their 4-year degree plan, Chemistry majors take the Diagnostic of Undergraduate Chemistry Knowledge (DUCK). This ACS exam has been administered as a low-stakes assessment to graduating Chemistry majors since 2011. This project evaluated results from 57 UNC students. Data were used to investigate item functioning and overall student performance compared to national norms.

Evgeniya Borisova, Instructor, Heidi Holycross-Lui, Instructor, and Elaine Steneck, Director, Intensive English Program
Project Title: Building a Better IEP Placement and Exit Exam
The Intensive English Program is designing two separate assessment tools. The first is an assessment that will be used as both an entrance and exit exam in order to provide a consistent way to measure change in our students’ English skills and to gain a better understanding of how students move through the program. In addition to the placement and exit exam, we are creating the second tool, a flexible rubric used in each of the language domains to standardize the assessment practices within our individual classes. Throughout this presentation, we will report on the status of our assessment designs.

Corina Brown, Lecturer, and Richard Hyslop, Professor, Chemistry and Biochemistry
Project Title: Development and Implementation of an Assessment of Students’ Abilities to Transfer Knowledge of Organic Chemistry to Biochemistry
A prerequisite course is prescribed with the assumption that it will improve the performance of the students in the course that required the prerequisite. Organic chemistry is a prerequisite for biochemistry. Students in Principles of Biochemistry (a one-semester survey course for dietetics/nutrition and some biology majors) and General Biochemistry (a two-semester comprehensive course for biochemistry, chemistry, and some biology majors) are presented with several tasks pertinent to organic chemistry and their equivalent in biochemistry. The research involved the development of the survey, the statistical analysis of students’ ability to transfer knowledge between the two types of chemistry courses, discussion, and implications of the results.

William Cuthbertson, Assistant Professor, University Libraries
Project Title: Student Perceptions of Active Learning
The investigators sought to determine whether student perceptions of active-learning activities affect their achievement of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Students were divided into a lecture-based control group, and a group that received conceptually identical material via an in-class active learning technique. In focus groups held before and after each lesson, participating students discussed their preferences for how research skills and concepts are taught, and how they perceive and respond to active-learning techniques like those used in LIB 150. The results will inform curriculum planning and SLO development of future courses focusing on undergraduate research skills.

Kathleen Dunenn, Associate Professor, Nursing
Project Title: Design of a Program-Level Assessment Plan for a New Master’s of Science in Nursing Program
A Program Assessment Plan did not exist for a new UNC Master’s of Science in Nursing Program. The goals of this project were: to design a comprehensive assessment plan that included the development of course- and program-level assessment methods; field and test the methods; and to analyze and use the initial assessment results as formative information to further develop and improve the program. This presentation will discuss the new comprehensive assessment plan, assessment methods developed and fielded as a part of this project and introduce the use of the LiveText ePortfolio platform for student competency assessment and formative program evaluation.

Joe Elkins, Associate Professor, Graham Baird, Associate Professor, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
Project Title: Developing Student Learning Outcomes for LAC Area 6 Science Courses
It is the aim of this work to develop measurable Student Learning Outcomes that can be applied to any LAC science course taught at UNC. It is the goal that these Student Learning Outcomes are crafted with the input of all units that teach Area 6 courses such that they can be universally applied to all Area 6 courses. This approach will consider the diversity of the courses in Area 6 and be inclusive to the practices of instructors of such courses at present. The final product of these efforts will allow easy assessment of student knowledge, which is increasingly being demanded by university administration and governing bodies.

Annie Epperson, Associate Professor, University Libraries, James Henderson, Director, Student Athlete Academic Success, Evan Welch, Assistant Dean, Student Engagement
Project Title: Designed and furnished for success: Fostering an “academically social” campus space!
Use of the library as a place on campus as a factor in student success was explored using mixed methods research. Focus groups, a furniture sweep, and video booth confessional, combined with institutional data, motivation, and co-curricular activities, to explore the effects of using the library on GPA and time to degree completion. Results indicate that participants have slightly higher GPAs and are on track to complete degrees within five years.

Coni Francis, Lecturer, Alena Clark, Associate Professor, and Jamie Erskine, Professor Dietetics and Nutrition
Project Title: The Effect of Proctoring on the Outcome of Online Exam
The purpose of this project was to pilot an online proctoring service for the program assessment exam in the Distance Dietetic Program. Three groups of exam takers were compared: on-campus students using the Testing Center, distance students taking the exam without a proctor with a set timer and instructions not to use outside materials, and distance students using an online proctoring service. Exam scores, grade point averages, and student outcomes were compared to determine the effect of proctoring on exam results. Whether online proctoring is of benefit for this use and for other distance-based programs and classes will be discussed.

Julie Hanks, Associate Professor, Tina Stoody, Associate Professor, and Kim Murza, Assistant Professor, Audiology and Speech Language Sciences
Project Title: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Audiology & Speech-Language Sciences Undergraduate Program Curriculum
ASLS is considered a pre-professional degree. Students typically prepare for graduate education and subsequent careers in audiology or speech-language pathology. Some students will enter related fields such as special education, deaf education, gerontology, or rehabilitation counseling. The purpose of this presentation is to share preliminary results of a comprehensive review of the undergraduate ASLS program. The review involved various sources of information including curriculum mapping, faculty interviews and student focus groups. Participants included current graduate students, alumni, and faculty both inside and outside the discipline. Information gleaned will help us to make recommendations related to preparation of undergraduate ASLS majors.

Susan Keenan, Director, School of Biological Sciences
Project Title: Assessing Education Outcomes in the Biological Sciences
The School of Biological Sciences has embarked upon an assessment of our undergraduate program. Our broad intentions include (1) defining program level goals for student learning; (2) identifying clear educational objectives for each goal; and (3) confirming that core courses within the curriculum provide opportunities for the demonstration and assessment of each learning objective. To date, the faculty has identified eight goals which they believe should be exhibited by students graduating with a B.S. in Biological Sciences and developed specific assessable objectives for each goal. We are currently developing a course alignment matrix for core courses within the curriculum.

Heng-Yu Ku, Professor, Teacher Education, Nancy Sileo, Associate Dean, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Kay Ferrell, Professor, Special Education
Project Title: Validation and Results of Professional Disposition Qualities Rubric for Teacher Candidates
The Professional Disposition Qualities (PDQ) Rubric was developed by the UNC Professional Disposition Qualities Task Force in Spring 2014 which addresses five Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards. The purpose of this assessment project is to conduct a factor analysis of the newly developed PDQ Rubric that was used and implemented in Fall 2014 by the School of Teacher Education for teacher candidates at UNC. In addition, teacher candidates’ ratings from the PDQ Rubric are also being analyzed.

Jennifer Larson, Associate Director, Dining Services, Michelle Golden, Undergraduate Honors Student, Exercise Science
Project Title: Education, Research, & Measurement of Composting, Recycling & Sustainable Activities Related to Student Learning Outcomes
Dining Services is leading a multi-faceted research project that includes: (1) Studying behaviors of why, or why not, students, faculty, and staff compost and/or recycle; (2) Providing campus constituents with education and resources to encourage composting and/or recycling activities into their daily lives; and (3) Recycling and composting at major sporting and outdoor events. The program mission is achieved by student interns, named 'The Green Team' who are creating, conducting, and compiling surveys, presenting and publishing results, creating marketing calendars and educational events, and developing the marketing message and mode of delivery. 'The Green Team' is a shining example of transformative education at UNC.

Nancy Matchett, Associate Professor, Philosophy
Project Title: Adjunct Teaching in the LAC
What is the adjunct experience of teaching and learning in LAC courses at UNC? In particular, does core (as opposed to disciplinary) teaching and learning matter to them? This presentation provides tentative answers those questions based on survey and focus-group data collected from adjunct faculty teaching LAC courses in the fall of 2014. Challenges encountered while collecting and interpreting the data will also be discussed. Though the results are unsurprising, informal benefits to the researchers and the adjunct participants made the project worthwhile.
**Sara O’Donnell**, Assistant Professor, **Kendra Spahr**, Assistant Professor, University Libraries  
**Project Title: Evaluating the Freshman User Experience of University Libraries**  
The purpose of this study, funded by an Assessment Mini-Grant, was to evaluate how easy it is for freshman to use library resources and services. Participants in the study, first-semester freshman at UNC, were asked to perform basic library-related tasks, such as checking out a book on reserve, finding an article, and checking out a study room. While completing the tasks, participants were asked explain their expectations and why they took a particular approach to completing a task. The findings of the study will be used to improve the efficiency and usability of library resources and services for freshmen.

**Sonja Rizzolo**, Admissions/Research Analyst, **Aubreena Deforest**, Graduate Student Engagement and International Admissions, Graduate School and International Admissions  
**Project Title: Graduate Students’ Experiences and Perceptions of Professional Development Activities**  
The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of graduate students’ experiences and their perceptions with professional development workshops. We were interested in graduate student’s overall experiences, their motivation to attend professional development activities, the barriers that prevented them from attending, and other activities they may be interested in. Focus group and survey data were included in the analyses. Results of the study will inform program development and refinement, which will improve the professional opportunities for current students and will in turn enrich graduate student’s involvement with the institution and program.

**Lia Softas-Nall**, Professor, Counseling Psychology, **Caroline Hicks**, Doctoral Student, Counseling Psychology  
**Project Title: Program-Level Assessment Plan for Counseling Psychology Doctoral Program Accreditation Process**  
The Department of Counseling Psychology uses proximal (current students) and distal (PhD graduates) data to reflect our ability to meet the competency standards of the APA. Data aggregation is a consistent and continuous process, which is put forth for an Annual Review Online (ARO) and the compilation of this for a comprehensive Self-Study. This presentation will discuss how we are currently attempting to streamline data aggregation, and our future hopes for the transition into an electronic system.

**Kendra Spahr**, Assistant Professor, **William Cuthbertson**, Assistant Professor, **Lyda Ellis**, Associate Professor, University Libraries  
**Project Title: Creating a Culture of Assessment of Student Learning at the University Libraries**  
This research project, funded by an Assessment Mini-Grant, examines the creation of a culture of assessment of student learning in the UNC Libraries. The project aims to discover if University Libraries faculty undergo a change in attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to student learning assessment during and after the University Libraries’ participation in the Assessment Leadership Institute. Each year library faculty teach over 200 one-time instruction sessions across an array of disciplines, and the focus of this project is assessment of student learning in these course-integrated sessions.

**Christine Talbot**, Assistant Professor, Gender Studies, **Harmony Newman**, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Gender Studies  
**Project Title: Assessing Assessment in Gender Studies**  
This poster examines and evaluates the assessment strategies the Gender Studies program has used over the past three years. We outline the processes and results of three course-embedded strategies that assessed three distinct student learning objectives. Regarding one strategy the program has used in different sections of the same course, we note areas of improvement in assessment, making the strategy more effective at measuring the learning we really care about. The poster also details the results of two other strategies we have used once, suggesting both successes and areas of improvement in instruction.

**Anna Ursyn**, Professor, Art and Design  
**Project Title: Interactive Assessment of Electronic Visuals**  
Nowadays, electronic visuals are the means of visual communication and became present in everyday life. The goal of this project is to look at the ways we respond to electronic visuals, to offer a model for assessment of new media graphics, and to support the analysis, planning, and methods of assessment. Analysis and evaluation of works created by professional artists and students within the Computer Graphics program were conducted. This project engaged faculty members and students in working on a new model for assessment and played an important part in assessment improvement of digitally created visuals in academic environment.

**Angela Vaughan**, Director, **Kyle Lucas**, Graduate Assistant, First Year Curriculum and Instruction  
**Project Title: An Evolving First Year Seminar Course: Student Perspectives and Achievement**  
First Year Seminar courses at UNC have evolved over the past four years. Beginning as a 1-credit FYE course, the seminar is now a 3-credit LAC elective course with a rigorous academic focus. Therefore, the purpose of this mixed-methods study was to collect student perspectives based on their participation in the different program types (QUAL) and compare their achievement in terms of first-semester GPA and persistence to the spring semester (QUAN). This study is ongoing and during this fair, initial focus group information will be shared as well as student achievement outcomes.