

**Educational Assessment Committee  
Annual Report  
2012-2013**

**1. Introduction and Purpose of Report**

In 2011 the Faculty Assembly made the Educational Assessment Committee a regular standing committee and charged it with ensuring the systematic and skillful assessment of student learning, the use of assessment results to strengthen educational programs, and compliance with the intent and technical requirements of Standard 14 of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the Handbook, the Educational Assessment Committee's specific tasks include the proposal of assessment policies and guidelines, the review of assessment plans and practices, the evaluation of progress on the Institutional Learning Goals, and annual reporting on activities and outcomes to the college community. The following document summarizes the Educational Assessment Committee's activities during 2012-2013, highlights major accomplishments in the assessment of student learning outcomes, and draws on data submitted by academic and co-curricular departments (as well as broader measures like the Collegiate Learning Assessment) to evaluate annual progress on the Institutional Learning Goals.

Before proceeding to the report, an overview of the Institutional Educational Philosophy and Learning Goals is in order. As stated on the college's website,

“Elizabethtown College engages students in a dynamic, integrated learning process that blends the liberal arts and professional studies. Challenged to take responsibility for their education, students at Elizabethtown embark on a journey of self-transformation that involves intellectual, social, and personal growth.

The College is committed to educating the whole person within a relationship-centered learning community where common goals are achieved through engagement in a rigorous academic curriculum and thoughtful co-curricular experiences. Students are encouraged to develop and challenge their own values, while seeking to understand and appreciate alternative perspectives. Embedded in an ever-changing global context, the College promotes the developmental, collaborative and complex nature of learning.

In seeking to ‘educate for service,’ Elizabethtown College believes that students can perform no greater service than they do when sharing knowledge and creativity with others. Opportunities to strengthen scholarship and leadership extend beyond the classroom, and students learn actively through practical experiences and civic engagement.

The impact of an Elizabethtown College education is long lasting and far-reaching because it is deeply transformative. Students acquire new habits of mind and heart—some in the course of the undergraduate experience, others as students grow beyond college.

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<sup>1</sup>Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points; the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

At Elizabethtown College, students are inspired and challenged to:

1. Assume responsibility for their intellectual development, personal growth and well-being. Students will learn to sharpen their curiosity and become aware of the capabilities, strategies and resources needed to learn.
2. Reason, analyze and engage in critical thinking. Students will make, systematically evaluate, and, if necessary, refute arguments and claims—both their own and those of others.
3. Demonstrate thoughtful and articulate communication by applying knowledge in a variety of contexts, including writing, speaking, listening and interpretation.
4. Understand the creative process and its role in human expression, and cultivate the ability to make informed aesthetic judgments.
5. Navigate diverse cultural worldviews and perspectives, with the realization that differing frames of reference influence analysis, communication and behavior.
6. Make reflective ethical decisions and act with integrity to seek just outcomes with relationships, communities and society.
7. Apply and integrate different strands of learning and comprehend interconnections in the process of gaining knowledge and experience.
8. Identify and cultivate a sense of purpose that inspires a commitment to meaningful work in service to society.”

The eight points above constitute the Institutional Learning Goals (ILGs) of Elizabethtown College. Keeping these goals in mind, the Educational Assessment Committee has sought to foster decentralized programs of assessment. In other words, those with greatest responsibility for the results engage in assessment activities designed to measure student learning and improve educational effectiveness of their programs and practices.

## **2. Activities of the Educational Assessment Committee (Fall 2012-Spring 2013)**

**Meetings.** Last year the EAC convened three times each semester. In addition, a subcommittee met during the summer of 2012 to draft the 2011-2012 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2012).

**Activities and Actions.** During 2012-2013, the EAC undertook the following:

- Wrote the 2011-2012 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2012).
- Delivered presentations on the college’s assessment program at the Assessment Workshop of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (August 2012) and the Annual Meeting of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (December 2012).
- Developed a template for annual update (fall) reports.
- Collected and reviewed annual update reports, provided feedback, and met individually with departments indicating a need for support.
- Developed a new template for year-end (June) reports.

- Organized a January Workshop on (1) defining proficiency, creativity, and purposeful life work, (2) keeping assessment programs simple, and (3) the new template for year-end assessment reports.
- Developed a SharePoint site for the committee.

**Summary:** Significant gains were made during 2012-2013 in the areas of institutionalizing assessment efforts—that is, establishing routine planning and reporting expectations—with the adoption of a three-tiered reporting structure: (1) the comprehensive plan, to be revised in coordination with program review, (2) the annual update plan, noting any modifications to the comprehensive plan for the current academic year, and (3) the annual assessment report, presenting assessment findings for the academic year. Use of standardized templates facilitated the process of data collection and aggregation, allowing EAC to focus on interpretation of data.

In addition, the feedback and level of support provided by EAC to academic department chairs, student life directors, and assessment liaisons has led to (1) an increased awareness of both the need for and value of assessment activities designed to measure student learning and improve programs and (2) an increase in the level of engagement in such activities. In June 2013, all student life departments and eighteen of nineteen academic departments submitted annual assessment reports. Data samples were also far more robust than in 2011-2012 (4.5 times or more larger, depending on the Institutional Learning Goal under consideration).

**Future Direction:** In 2013-2014, EAC wishes to further streamline reporting mechanisms so that it can continue shifting its efforts from establishment of practices and procedures and monitoring of compliance to use of assessment findings to gauge student progress toward ILGs. This will, however, necessitate ongoing dialogue with departments about the way in which findings and related actions are reported in order to ensure that reports are useful and meaningful. The committee will also continue to serve as a resource to academic and student life departments and programs, with particular efforts directed toward supporting the Core Committee as it implements its comprehensive assessment plan.

### 3. The Year's Student Assessment Highlights

- The Core Committee completed a pilot assessment program for the Natural and Physical Sciences Area of Understanding (based on data collected in the spring of 2011), refined the assessment methodology, assessed the Non-Western Cultural Heritage Area of Understanding in the spring of 2012, and developed Power of Language English and Western Cultural Heritage assessment programs to be conducted in the fall of 2013.
- The summer Scholarship, Creative Arts, and Research Program (SCARP) provided useful data, based on assessment of student research projects.
- The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) provided college-wide data on first-year students. Please see Appendix A for more information on the CLA.
- Assessment results from across campus (academic departments and co-curricular offices) contributed evidence that, when aggregated, provide meaningful conclusions about the relative performance of students on all eight Institutional Learning Goals. In 2011-2012

sample sizes for ILGs 1, 4, 6, and 8 were rather small. In 2012-2013 they were much more robust. This change is attributable to more effective forms of reporting and broader interpretations of creativity and purposeful life work.

#### **4. Student Learning Across Campus by Institutional Learning Goal**

The following section includes summary results compiled from the year-end assessment reports of academic and co-curricular departments, assessment reports from the Core Committee, and assessment data provided by additional instruments (such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment). The data refer to assessments rather than students, per se, understanding that an individual student may have been assessed by more than one program or that, within individual programs, more than one SLO could map against a given ILG. For detailed charts, please see the accompanying spreadsheet entitled Appendix B: Summary of 2012-13 Assessment Results.

**ILG1 - Assume responsibility for their intellectual development, personal growth and well-being. Students will learn to sharpen their curiosity and become aware of the capabilities, strategies and resources needed to learn.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 1296 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 10 academic departments (N=936), 6 co-curricular departments (N=294), and SCARP (N=66). Of the 1296 assessments, 1051 (81%) were rated as proficient or better.

**ILG2 - Reason, analyze and engage in critical thinking. Students will make, systematically evaluate, and, if necessary, refute arguments and claims—both their own and those of others.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 2596 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 14 academic departments (N=1536), 4 co-curricular departments (N=68), the Core program (N=853), SCARP (N=22), and the CLA (N=117). Of the 2596 assessments, 2141 (82%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 624 (73%) of the 853 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 1517 (87%) of the 1743 assessments were rated as proficient.**

**ILG3 - Demonstrate thoughtful and articulate communication by applying knowledge in a variety of contexts, including writing, speaking, listening and interpretation.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 2092 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 15 academic departments (N=1864), 4 co-curricular departments (N=89), SCARP (N=22), and the CLA (N=117). Of the 2092 assessments, 1831 (88%) were rated as proficient or better.

**ILG4 - Understand the creative process and its role in human expression, and cultivate the ability to make informed aesthetic judgments.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 824 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 8 academic departments (N=732), 3 co-curricular departments (N=70), and SCARP (N=22). Of the 824 assessments, 743 (90%) were rated as proficient or better.

**ILG5 - Navigate diverse cultural worldviews and perspectives, with the realization that differing frames of reference influence analysis, communication and behavior.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 1986 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 12 academic departments (N=1192), 4 co-curricular departments (N=131), and the Core program (N=663). Of the 1986 assessments, 1619 (82%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 476 (72%) of the 663 assessments were rated as proficient. Separating the Core data from the overall assessments found that of the 1323 assessments, 1143 (86%) were rated as proficient.**

**ILG6 - Make reflective ethical decisions and act with integrity to seek just outcomes with relationships, communities and society.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 986 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 7 academic departments (N=951) and 3 co-curricular departments (N=35). Of the 986 assessments, 907 (92%) were rated as proficient or better.

**ILG7 - Apply and integrate different strands of learning and comprehend interconnections in the process of gaining knowledge and experience.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 2656 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 16 academic departments (N=1478), 5 co-curricular departments (N=191), the Core program (N=884), SCARP (N=44), and the CLA (N=59). Of the 2656 assessments, 2106 (79%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 631 (71%) of the 884 assessments were rated as proficient. When the Core data is removed from the overall picture, 1475 (83%) of the 1772 assessed were rated as proficient.**

**ILG8 - Identify and cultivate a sense of purpose that inspires a commitment to meaningful work in service to society.**

During the 2012-2013 academic year, 894 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 9 academic departments (N=739) and 5 co-curricular departments (N=155). Of the 894 assessments, 721 (81%) were rated as proficient or better.

**5. Quality of Evidence**

- Multiple sources of data were available and sample sizes were robust. These conditions facilitated triangulation of reliable data.
- Though far less frequently than in 2011-2012, some department reports still described assessment results in terms of percentages without providing the actual number of students involved. Better reporting would have allowed for even larger, more representative data sets.

**6. Utilization of Assessment Results**

- 15 departments utilized assessment results directly to identify and/or confirm the usefulness of curricular and/or programmatic changes.
- Many departments mentioned specific plans to use the summer and/or fall to review assessment results and consider curricular and/or programmatic changes. In an effort to capture this data, EAC has included a space to report on use of 2012-2013 findings in the on-line form used for submission of assessment plans for 2013-2014.

**7. Comparison to Findings from 2011-2012 (percentages rated proficient or better)**

	<u>ILG1</u>	<u>ILG 2</u>	<u>ILG3</u>	<u>ILG4</u>	<u>ILG5</u>	<u>ILG6</u>	<u>ILG7</u>	<u>ILG8</u>
2011-2012	93%	83%	85%	98%	84%	90%	84%	87%
2012-2013	81%	82%	88%	90%	82%	92%	79%	81%

For ILGs 1, 4, and 8, the 2012-2013 findings appear to represent a decline in performance compared to 2011-2013. However, the sample sizes for ILGs 1, 4, and 8 were rather small in 2011-2013. In all likelihood, the findings for these ILGs in 2012-2013 are more representative of student performance than the findings from the previous year.

**8. Recommendations to Improve Student Learning and the Assessment of Student Learning**

- Closely monitor ILGs 1, 4, and 8 to see how student performance compares during the 2013-2014 academic year.
- Monitor all ILG data sets over the next year or two to develop a better sense of current norms, with a view to crafting appropriate benchmarks in the future (keeping in mind that benchmarks may vary from one ILG to another).
- Continue disaggregating Core data (which comes largely from first- and second-year students) from other assessments (which come largely from third- and fourth-year students) and tracking them over time to get a rough measure of student progress.

- Continue collecting data from departments and using broad measures, such as the CLA, to facilitate assessment of progress on the Institutional Learning Goals.

