

**Educational Assessment Committee
Annual Report¹
2016-2017**

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.² 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 2016-2017, highlights major accomplishments in the assessment of student learning outcomes, and draws on data submitted by academic and co-curricular departments 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.

"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.

¹Prepared in collaboration with SCARP researcher Alyssa Vielee.

²Assessment 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.

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 2016-Spring 2017)

Meetings. Last year the EAC convened once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester. During the summer of 2016, Brian Newsome also worked with Alyssa Vielee, a SCARP research student, to draft the 2015-2016 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2016).

Activities and Actions. During 2016-2017, the EAC undertook the following:

- Wrote the 2015-2016 college-wide assessment report (based on department data submitted in June 2016).
- Collected and reviewed annual update plans, provided feedback, and met individually with departments indicating a need for support.

Summary: EAC moved into the fifth year of utilizing its 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. The vast majority of departments submitted reports in a timely fashion. In July 2017, for example, all student life departments, all but four academic departments, and the Core Committee submitted annual assessment reports. The academic departments that did not submit data were restructuring curricula and assessment programs; they thus had good reason to suspend assessment activities for 2016-2017. Data sets were also quite robust. In addition, departments that asked EAC for assistance were seeking to maximize the collection of meaningful data for the purposes of informing program enhancement. These trends indicate that the culture of assessment at the college is becoming increasingly well-grounded.

Future Direction: In 2017-2018, 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

- In 2016-2017, the Core Committee ran assessment programs for HUM, NCH, PLO, and WCH.
- The Core Committee also ran assessment programs for IC core courses. These assessments provided more data for the Core assessments as well as further data points regarding ILG2 and ILG7.
- The summer Scholarship, Creative Arts, and Research Program (SCARP) provided useful data, based on assessment of student research projects.
- 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.

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 and assessment reports from the Core Committee. 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 A: Summary of 2016-2017 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 2016-2017 academic year, 1392 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 14 academic departments (N=996), 4 co-curricular departments (N=279), the Core program (N=24), and SCARP (N=93). Of the 1392 assessments, 1264 (91%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core data, all 24 were assessments from the IC program Core AUs; 21 (87.5%) of the 24 were rated as proficient. Thus excluding the IC data from the overall data of 1368 assessments, 1243 (91%) were rated as proficient.**

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 2016-2017 academic year, 4413 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 15 academic departments (N=2127), 5 co-curricular departments (N=314), the Core program (N=1941), Interdisciplinary Colloquium (N=50) and SCARP (N=31). Of the 4413 assessments, 3772 (85%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 1651 (85%) of the 1941 assessments were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 2121 (86%) of the 2472 assessments were rated as proficient.**

Of the 1941 Core assessments, 334 were from the IC program; 284 (85%) were rated as proficient. Within the IC program, 284 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs; 243 (86%) of the 284 were rated as proficient. For the IC SLO related directly to ILG2, 41 (82%) of 50 assessments were rated as proficient. Excluding all of the IC data from the Core data, 1367 (85%) Core assessments were rated

proficient out of 1607. Excluding all of the IC data from the overall data for ILG2, 3444 (85%) of the 4032 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 2016-2017 academic year, 2959 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 16 academic departments (N=2097), 4 co-curricular departments (N=231), the Core program (N=600), and SCARP (N=31). Of the 2959 assessments, 2508 (85%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 469 (78%) of the 600 were rated as proficient. Within the Core data 48 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs; 43 (90%) of the 48 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core and IC Core program assessments from the overall data, 2039 (86%) of the 2359 assessments were rated as proficient.**

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

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 1058 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 10 academic departments (N=740), 1 co-curricular department (N=104), the Core program (N=183), and SCARP (N=31). Of the 1058 assessments, 972 (92%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 165 (90%) of the 183 were rated as proficient. Within the Core data 128 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs; 119 (93%) of the 128 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 807 (92%) of the 875 assessments were rated as proficient.**

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

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 2052 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 11 academic departments (N=985), 3 co-curricular departments (N=79), and the Core program (N=988). Of the 2052 assessments, 1854 (90%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 852 (86%) of the 988 assessments were rated as proficient. Within the Core data 86 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs; 81 (94%) of the 86 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 1002 (94%) of the 1064 assessments were rated as proficient.**

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

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 902 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 7 academic departments (N=616), 3 co-curricular departments (N=73), and the Core program (N=213). Of the 902 assessments, 814 (90%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 181 (85%) of the 213 assessments were rated as proficient. Within the Core data 48 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs; 42 (87.5%) of the 48 were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 633 (92%) of the 689 assessments were rated as proficient.**

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

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 3057 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 13 academic departments (N=1721), 4 co-curricular departments (N=201), the Core program (N=1073), Interdisciplinary Colloquium (N=50) and SCARP (N=62). Of the 3057 assessments, 2560 (84%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program, 927 (86%) of the 1073 assessments were rated as proficient. Thus, excluding the Core program assessments from the overall data, 1633 (82%) of the 1984 assessments were rated as proficient.**

Of the 1073 Core assessments, 223 were from the IC program; 200 (89%) were rated as proficient. Within the IC program, 173 were from the IC program Core AUs; 155 (86%) of the 176 were rated as proficient. For the IC SLO related directly to ILG7, 45 (90%) of the 50 assessments were rated as proficient. Excluding all of the IC data from the core data 727 (86%) assessments were rated proficient out of 847. Excluding all of the IC data from the overall data 2278 (83%) of the 2749 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 2016-2017 academic year, 833 assessments were completed on student learning outcomes related to this Institutional Learning Goal. Evidence originated from 10 academic departments (N=604), 3 co-curricular departments (N=166), and the Core program (N=63). Of the 833 assessments, 788 (95%) were rated as proficient or better. **Within the Core program itself, 56 (88%) of the 63 assessments were rated as proficient. Within the Core data 8 assessments were from the IC program Core AUs, 7 (87.5%) of the 8 were rated as proficient. Thus excluding the Core from the overall data, 732 (95%) of the 770 assessed were rated as proficient.**

5. Quality of Evidence

- Multiple sources of data were available. These conditions facilitated triangulation of reliable data.
- Most departments used the data submission template for the annual report, thus facilitating the processing of data.
- Academic departments used a wide variety of assessments to rate/assess students from tests, essays, quizzes, oral exams and presentations.
- Some departments restructured their SLOs to be more concise and remove any overlapping of SLOs
- As in past years, there is still some overlap and double counting of students, as the data refer to the number of assessments and not the number of students. Some students may complete more than one assessment, and more than one SLO may map against a given ILG. As a result, some of the numbers are high.

6. Utilization of Assessment Results

- Seventeen departments utilized assessment results directly to identify and/or confirm the usefulness of curricular and/or programmatic changes.
- A number of departments stated that assessment results confirmed current approaches to curricula and programs, while other departments indicated that they will be using 2016-2017 assessment results to

inform curricular and/or programmatic changes. EAC has included a space to report on use of 2016-2017 results to make course and/or programmatic changes.

7. Comparison to Findings from previous four academic years (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>
2012-2016	87%	82%	86%	91%	88%	89%	81%	86%
2016-2017	91%	85%	85%	92%	90%	90%	84%	95%

The only appreciable difference (+/- 5 percentage points) is for ILG 8. Performance on the latter is showing improvement from previous years.

In the past, the committee was concerned with ILG2 and ILG7 since they were the lowest. While ILG2 and ILG7 do remain the two lowest, ILG 2 improved compared to previous years. This year’s findings show no difference in the outcomes for ILG2 and ILG7 when the IC and IC Core data are excluded, as student performance for these two ILGs rose across the board. However, assessment results indicate that IC courses are facilitating student learning in regards to ILGs 2 and 7.

IC SLO 1 maps directly to ILG2 and SLO 2 maps directly to ILG7. IC assessment results for these two SLOs are 82% and 90%, respectively. In addition to the IC SLOs corresponding directly to ILGs 2 and 7, some of the SLOs for the WCH, NPS, HUM, and CE components of the colloquia map indirectly with ILG2 and ILG7. When the data from these AUs are amalgamated with the assessment results for IC SLOs 1 and 2, the assessment results for SLOs corresponding to ILG 2 rises to 85% proficient, placing the IC assessment results relating to ILG 2 on par with the 2016-2017 college-wide average. The assessment results for SLOs corresponding to ILG 7 falls to 88% proficient, a rating that is significantly better than the 2016-2017 college-wide average as indicated in the most recent EAC report.

One can conclude from these assessment results that students enrolled in Interdisciplinary Colloquia are performing well in terms of critical thinking (ILG 2) and reflective/integrative learning (ILG 7). The particularly notable gains in regard to the latter most likely relate to the team-taught, interdisciplinary nature of Interdisciplinary Colloquia.

The committee will thus continue monitoring ILGs 2 and 7 in the coming years, especially ILG 2 and 7 and the impact of the Interdisciplinary Colloquium Pilot Program.

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

- Continue to assess the Interdisciplinary Colloquium Pilot Program to determine what impact it has on ILGs 2 and 7.
- Continue to strengthen the FY and SY experience programs as a means of addressing ILGs 1 and 8.
- 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 to facilitate assessment of progress on the Institutional Learning Goals.