

Gen Ed Assessment Report Spring 2018

Introduction

- First Year Writing, Speech, the Red Hawk Math Learning Center and the New Student Seminar all conduct assessments that are compatible with, and measure components integral to the Program and its aims, but the other courses & categories in the Gen Ed are much more diverse and decentralized.
- The Collegiate Learning Assessment Plus (“CLA+”) conducted by OIR on a sampling of first-year and graduating seniors is a more universal assessment of student development, but focuses primarily on a single Gen Ed Learning Goal (Critical Thinking) instead of all five.
- Our comprehensive assessment aims to directly assess every student, in every Gen Ed course, on their current achievement in a single Learning Goal. (Please visit http://gened-review.referata.com/wiki/The_Learning_Goals to see our Program Learning Goals, and other related information.)
- Assessment is gradually penetrating all Gen Ed courses as they are recertified; recertification has recently been completed but many courses will only begin assessment starting fall 2018.
- Please find our principles here: http://gened-review.referata.com/wiki/Principles_of_Gen_Ed_Assessment

The Measures: AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubric rows

- We are using the AAC&U LEAP VALUE rubrics¹, as they have been tested and refined in thousands of institutions, in many scenarios. We identified 10 rubrics that mapped well to our Goals, and created an additional rubric based on the AAC&U’s Global Learning rubric to serve as a National Learning rubric.
- We ask each course to pick 2-5 individual rows from this collection (perhaps from different rubrics aligned with the same Goal) that best fit the assessment point identified by instructors/coordinators of each course.²
- A small minority of courses have opted for a more customized assessment regime that integrates better with other existing assessments; generally, the tactic in these cases is to establish a sensible ‘mapping’ from existing assessment tools to Gen Ed rubric-row measures so that their data can still be aggregated.

Table 1: Program Learning Goals and associated rubrics

| MSU Gen Ed Learning Goal | Associated AAC&U VALUE rubrics³ |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Communication | Oral Communication Written Communication |
| Critical Thinking | Critical Thinking Inquiry and Analysis Problem Solving |
| Application and Integration | Integrative and Applied Learning |
| National and Global Issues | Global Learning Intercultural Knowledge and Competence National Learning ⁴ |
| University Success | Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning Information Literacy |

¹ AAC&U (American Association of Colleges & Universities) LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics - see <http://www.aacu.org/value>

² All rubrics, and their component rows, are viewable on the Gen Ed Committee’s curriculum management website, http://gened-review.referata.com/wiki/Assessment_Resources

³ From http://gened-review.referata.com/wiki/Assessment_Resources

⁴ Adapted from the ‘Global Learning’ VALUE rubric

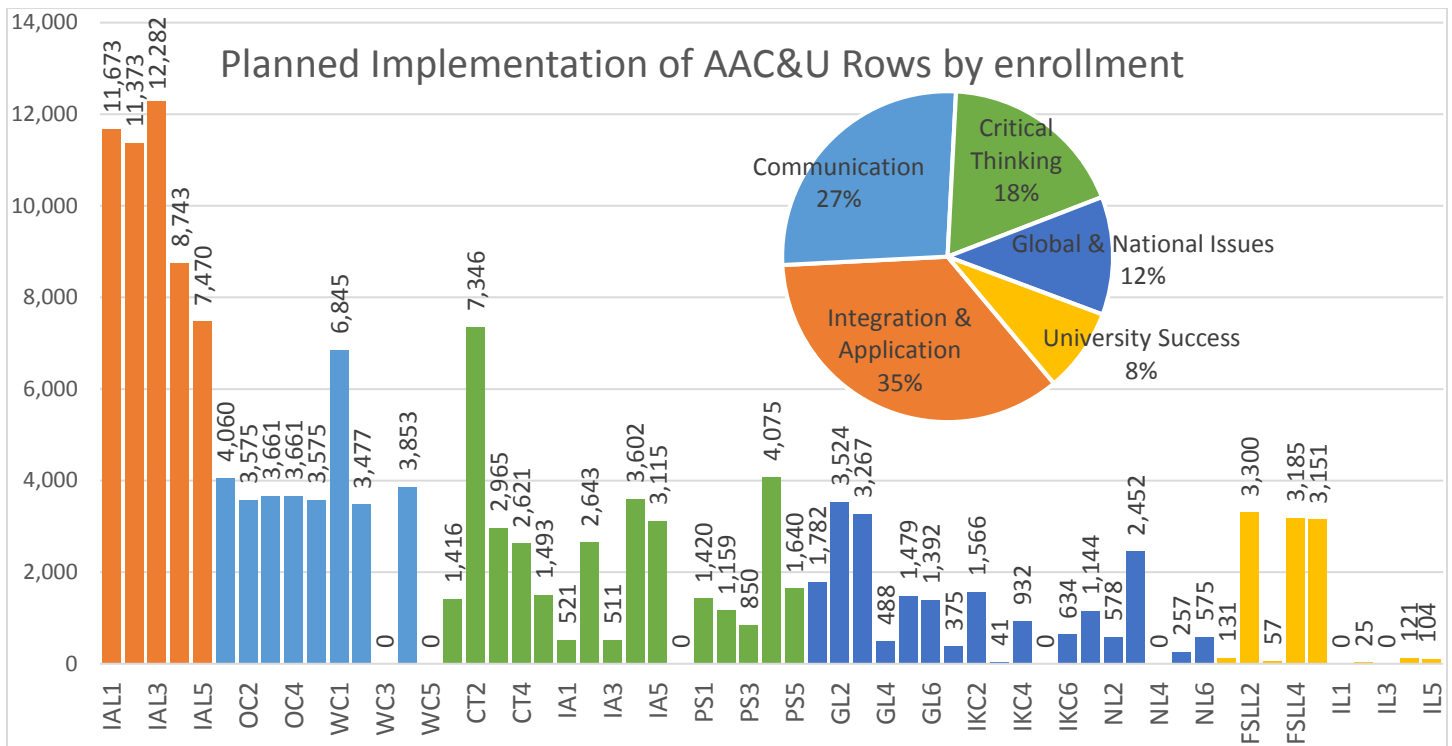


Figure 1: Fall 2018's planned use of AAC&U rubric rows

The Management and Collection of Data: Canvas Outcomes (and offline tally sheets)

- The scale of data collection is daunting: over 40 departments, around 200 courses, tens of thousands of students in courses.
- Instructure's Canvas LMS has a promising tool to facilitate direct assessment. OIT's instructional designers can 'install' all of the rubric-rows in Canvas as "outcomes" available to instructors when they build their own grading rubrics within courses. As instructors use Canvas' "Speedgrader" feature to efficiently grade student assignments using their own rubrics, the chosen assessment rubric-rows are also displayed to them, so they assess as they grade. (The assessment rows are distinct from the grading rows, and they are not used as part of the student's grade calculation.) Even if instructors do not use Speedgrader for coursework grading, they can use it for assessment purposes.
- OIT can 'pull' that data and aggregate results for analysis, without requiring individual instructors to report their data. Data is anonymized and reported to the Committee after the end of term.
- The bulk of the work is in preparation: OIT's instructional designers need only work with participating departments to set up a "course shell" (a template in Canvas) that defines the activity that will be assessed, and set up the assessment rows. Instructors complete this "proto-assignment" with details appropriate for their course (including, if desired, rubric-rows to use for grading within the course.) Apart from this initial setup, the assessment and data collection itself happens in the course of instructor grading, or automatically without further effort on the part of faculty.
- Assessment is still possible outside of Canvas (using the rubrics as offline tally sheets, for example) for those instructors who aren't grading within Canvas. Those results would then have to be manually added to the Canvas report's data to produce a full set of assessment results.

Overview of data collection/compliance

- For fall 2017, we had 47 courses with assessment plans effective for the term. 46 of those courses ran sections in fall; only 10 were in good compliance with assessment and 17 more with some degree of reporting. For spring 2018, compliance is even worse – 90 courses with assessment plans, 77 with enrolled sections, but only 3

reporting. (We did not send out reminders or have support aggressively pushed; we were distracted by the University College proposal as well.) Clearly, we have more support and outreach to provide to increase participation and establish assessment as a typical and integrated aspect of Gen Ed courses. Even with the underwhelming compliance, in 6 ‘main’ terms (falls and springs) we have collected over 25,000 datapoints. (Ideally, we should be collecting more than that volume of data every term. Half of that number represents the well-organized and pre-existing CMST101 assessment data – they have been using the Oral Communication rubric for internal assessment prior to the Gen Ed’s adoption. We need to focus on fostering similar adoption by ‘smaller’ courses.)

- Courses running ‘custom’ assessments (offline, or assessments ‘merged’ with other assessments or mapped from other assessment tools) have not reliably reported, though that data is being collected. We have work to do, to ensure that data is reported for aggregation. (E.g., CMST’s data, though also using AAC&U rubrics, was ‘installed’ in Canvas under CMST ‘ownership’ and does not get automatically drawn when we ask for Gen Ed outcomes – in this case, an easy fix, but we need to ensure such measures are taking place every term.)
- Currently, OIT preloads all sections of a course with a proto-assignment containing the assessment measures, with brief instructions for instructors on integrating it with their coursework. It is unclear how many instructors simply aren’t yet using Canvas for assignments to use the online reporting process. More active preparatory outreach is happening for fall 2018, to publicize assessment and support instructors especially in Canvas-based modes.
- We should share this report widely to promote feedback and discussion, and to raise awareness and promote participation in assessment activities – faculty need to know that their data is being seen and used to make decisions on curriculum and instructional support.

Upcoming Terms: FA18 and SP19

- ‘Recertification’ is complete, so all courses (177) are now expected to initiate assessment plans – 153 in Canvas, 18 using offline tally sheets, and 6 using custom plans (typically, scores mapped from existing assessment tools.)
- New courses are expected to assess as they are added to the Program.
- We are planning to run additional assessments in fall 2018 on New Student Seminars to help guide their evolution and reform as we transition to the new University College and College/School-based advising.

Assessment Results: Frequency Charts for fall 2015-spring 2018

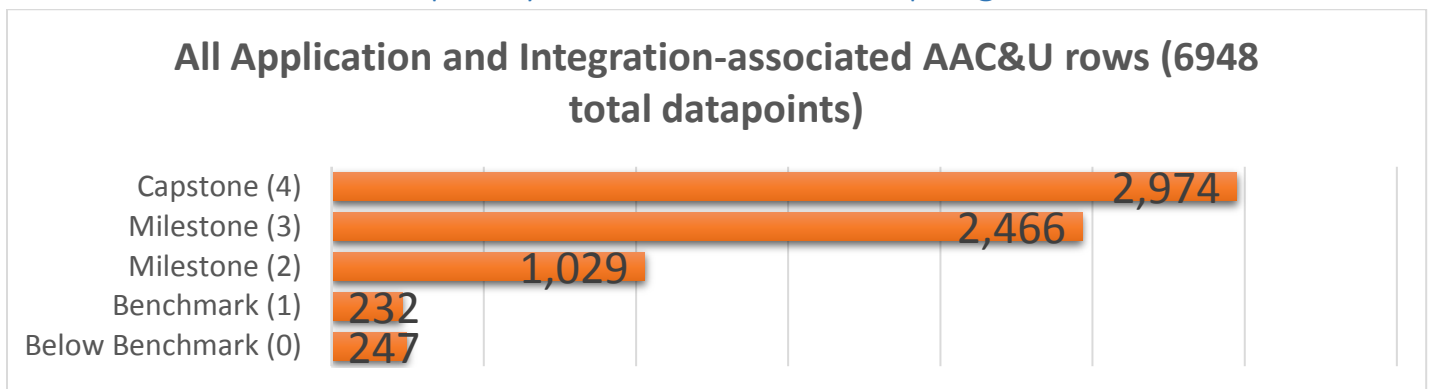


Figure 2

All Critical Thinking-associated AAC&U rows (1976 total datapoints)

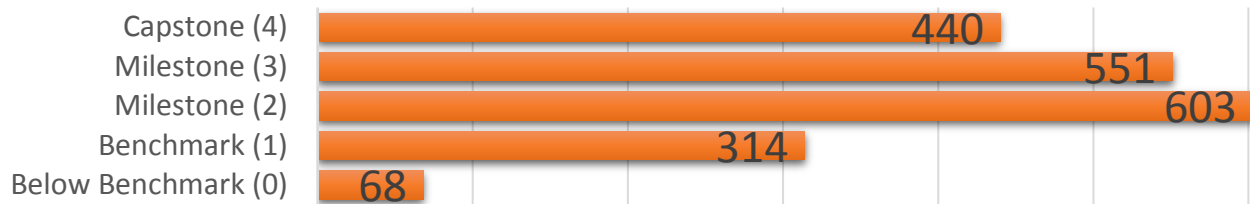


Figure 3

All National and Global Issues-associated AAC&U rows (1552 total datapoints)

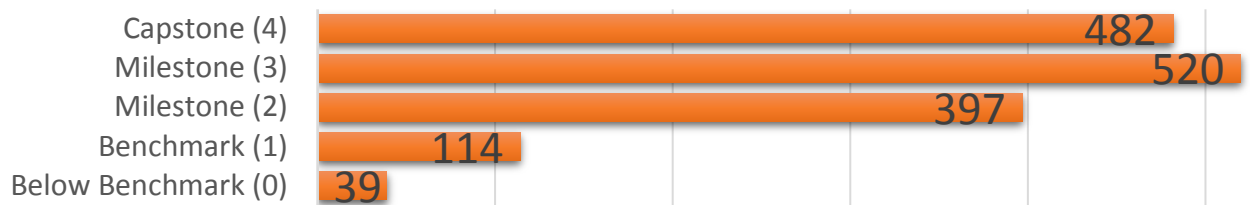


Figure 4

All University Success-associated AAC&U rows (2767 total datapoints)

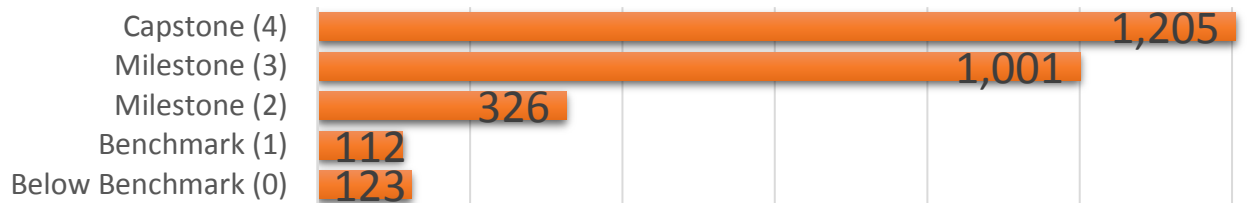


Figure 5

All Communication-associated AAC&U rows (11495 total datapoints)

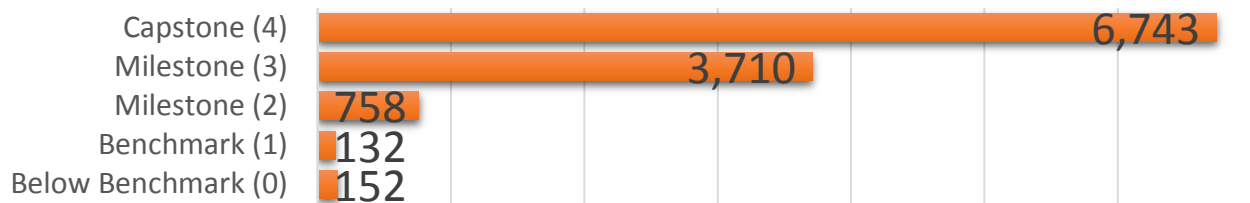


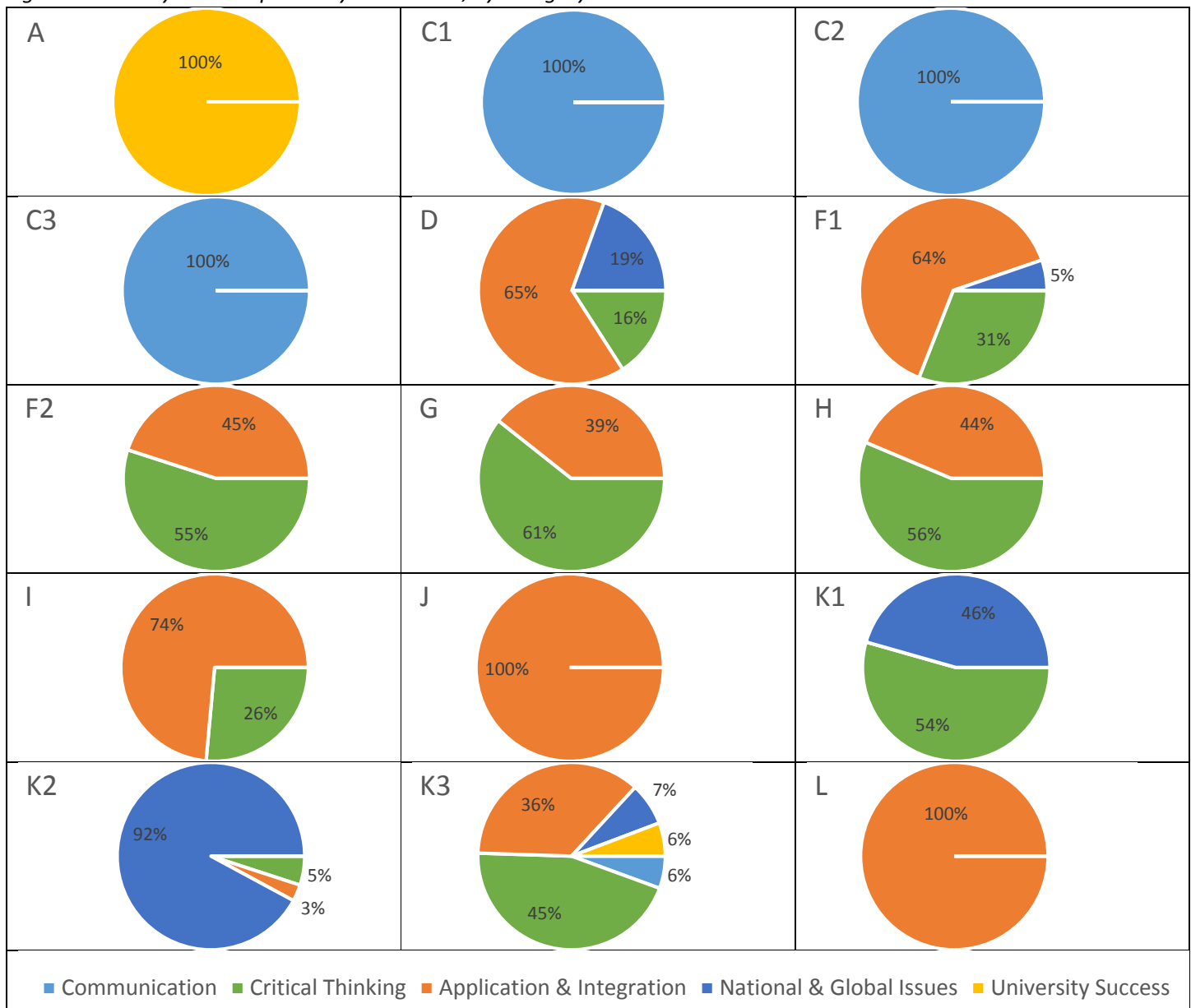
Figure 6

Reflecting on the Data: Two Salient Issues to Start Discussions

Goal Focus

Courses' planned assessments focus heavily on two goals: Integration and Assessment (35%), and Communication (27%). The intended Primary Goal focus of Gen Ed courses gives us a sense of faculty's priorities and felt student needs; it also may reveal our ideas of which parts of the Gen Ed Program are seen as primarily responsible for particular aspects of student learning, e.g., the lack of focus on University Success outside of the New Student Seminar category. Overall, the program appears a bit unbalanced in emphasis (see pie chart embedded in Figure 1's chart) with Communication and Application & Integration approximately double the representation of the other 3 Goals. The pie charts below show Primary Goal emphasis by Category – we should think about whether this is appropriate, and/or how to communicate this to all instructors to help them better understand their roles in cultivating all five Goals, program-wide. Secondary goals are relatively more evenly distributed, though University Success is still the least popular.

Figure 6: Primary Goal emphasis by enrollment, by category



Reflective of Students, or Assessors' Expectations?

The data, summarized above in Figs 2-5, show fairly unambiguously “good” results: faculty are reporting students’ performances on the upper end of the rubric scales. Is this indicative of overall faculty satisfaction of student performance, or inappropriately lax/unambitious expectations for students? (Anecdotal reports suggest that faculty are not so impressed with student abilities, so this data somewhat conflicts with that.)

We should think about conducting assessment to help us understand how faculty are interpreting the assessment tools, and whether we need to make efforts to ensure a shared idea of their interpretation and use, so that our data are truly aggregatable and meaningful. (In particular, we need to control for biases caused by faculty perceiving this assessment as directed at their teaching, rather than student performance.) We should also ask for feedback on ease of use and possible tweaks or changes to rubric language, and look at eliminating underused rubric rows or other tweaks to further develop our use of individual rubric-rows as assessment tools.

Feedback Required and Desired

The Gen Ed Committee needs good data, both direct and indirect, anecdotal and statistical, to inform its decisions on curriculum. If you, the reader, have suggestions for additional data we ought to be collecting and analyzing please forward those to the Chair; if you have interpretations or explanations for the data presented, please share them with your representatives or the Chair. (If you have expertise in analysis, please consider volunteering to improve this report’s contents – the current Chair is not a social scientist!)

We intend for Gen Ed assessment to be an active and helpful instrument to manage and improve the Program, not an exercise in petty or superficial oversight. Help us make this happen, for faculty and students.