



Rio Salado College
Assessment of Student Learning
Executive Summary: Annual Report
2010-2011

Introduction

Rio Salado College's first assessment plan was implemented in 1991. In the two decades since then, ongoing assessment initiatives aimed at increasing student learning have continued to demonstrate evidence of the College's central focus on this work. College- level student learning outcomes and program-level outcomes (as part of Program Review) provide the foundation for assessment and increasing student learning. Over the years, the College's assessment plan has progressed from a static document that was reaffirmed on a periodic basis to a dynamic, ongoing, and evolving series of activities that are integrated across the teaching and learning spectrum.

The Learning Assessment Team (previously known as SLOT: Student Learning Outcomes Team) includes representation from Faculty Chairs, Senior Administration, Institutional Research, Student Services and other Co-Curricular Services, and Instructional Design, and has responsibility for coordinating all aspects of assessment of student learning. In 2010, members of the team revisited its purpose and functions, and decided that the name "Learning Assessment Team" was a better fit for the broad spectrum of activities related to student learning that the team oversees.

Critical Thinking: College-Wide Assessment Report Summary
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The 2011 college-wide critical thinking assessment was completed by 162 students. Overall, students had an average total score of 2.76, out of 4.00, on this assessment. Over two-fifths of respondents (44.44%, N=72) scored at or above college level (a score of 70% or higher).

The Critical Thinking assessment is a normed test that allows for comparisons with national group of students. Overall, Rio Salado College students scored higher than three-fifths of the comparison group of students. As a whole, Rio students were in the 62nd percentile, answering an average of 24 of the 35 questions correctly. Rio students scored in the 68th percentile on the Inductive Reasoning and Deductive Reasoning sections. Rio students scored in the 97th percentile on the Evaluation section.

In general, scores are higher on the Critical Thinking assessment than in the previous two assessment years. The average total score decreased from 2007 (Avg = 2.60) to 2009 (Avg = 2.45) seeing a substantial increase in 2011 (Avg = 2.76).

**Critical Thinking: Course-level data
Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle Updates**

Faculty Chairs continued their focus on the Critical Thinking learning outcome in a series of continuous PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycles at the department level. All cycle progress is recorded on Rio Salado's Student Learning Outcomes SharePoint Site.

A total of 11 programs had improvement cycles during the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Sixteen PDCA cycles were completed. Seventeen PDCA cycles are currently in process, carrying over in to the 2011-2012 fiscal year. The cycle progress updates, including the number of students impacted, are shown in the table below. Successful interventions implemented during the 2010-2011 fiscal year including links to critical thinking resources online, Flash learning tutorials instructing students on critical thinking strategies, improvements in assignment wording and instructions, and adjunct faculty training in providing appropriate feedback and support to students.

Critical Thinking Cycle Progress for FY10-11	
Cycle Progress Update	N
Programs that have improvement cycles*	11
PDCA cycles completed	16
PDCA cycles ended (as baseline students met college level)	11
PDCA cycles ended (for other reasons)	0
PDCA cycles in progress	17
Courses involved	30
Students impacted during PDCA cycle**	2024
Students immediately impacted by "Act" step	2056

**Note: The General Education program has six departments each running Critical Thinking cycles.*

***Note: Number of students involved in "CHECK" phase*

Writing: College-Wide Assessment Report Summary

The 2011 college-wide writing assessment was completed by 184 students. The majority of students (91.41%, N=181) were distance students, with the remaining 17 students (8.59%) enrolled in Dual Enrollment courses. Overall, students had an average total score of 3.02, out of 4.00, on the Writing assessment, while over three-fifths of respondents (69.02%, N = 127) scored at or above college level (a score of 70% or higher).

Students received the highest average (3.36) for the Vocabulary Choices skill set. The raters were asked to indicate which areas of the students' essays needed improvement. A total of 350 responses were recorded and nearly two-fifths (38.29%, N = 134) indicated that Organization was an area that needed improvement. Over three-fifths of respondents (69.02%, N = 127) scored at or above college level.

The writing assessment scores were also examined longitudinally. The same writing assessment that was administered in Spring 2011 was also administered in 2009 and 2007. More students completed the writing assessment in previous years. Students in Spring 2011 had a lower overall average score (Avg = 3.02) when compared to Spring 2009 (Avg = 3.19) and Spring 2007 (Avg = 3.10).

**Writing: Course-level data
Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle Updates**

Faculty chairs continued their focus on the college-level writing learning outcome in a series of continuous Plan-Do-Check-Act cycles at the department level. All cycle progress is recorded on Rio Salado's Student Learning Outcomes SharePoint Site.

Writing Cycle Progress for FY10-11	
Cycle Progress Update	N
Programs that have improvement cycles*	10
PDCA cycles completed	4
PDCA cycles ended (as baseline students met college level)	4
PDCA cycles ended (for other reasons)	1
PDCA cycles in progress	15
Courses involved	21
Students impacted during PDCA cycle**	726
Students immediately impacted by "Act" step	631

**Note: The General Education program has seven departments each running Writing cycles.*

***Note: Number of students involved in "CHECK" phase*

Information Literacy: College Wide Assessment Report Summary

In general, Rio Salado students have scored high on previous instruments used to evaluate Information Literacy skills. In spring 2010, because our students' research is now conducted almost exclusively online and because of the ongoing growth of resources offered to our students through the online library, a new instrument was used that is specifically designed to measure "electronic information competencies" and which also measures the gap between students' perceived online research skills and their actual skills. The Research Readiness Self-Assessment (RRSA) is an online assessment tool that was developed by Central Michigan University. The RRSA was administered online during the Spring 2010 semester to dual and distance students, and again to a cohort of dual enrollment students in fall 2010 (N=308: Distance students:149; Dual students:159).

The following findings were deemed significant:

- Overall, the students' perceived *Research Skill Level* was 74.01% (college-level=70%). Their actual research skill level was 67.87% (below college-level).
- Although the students' self-reported perceived *Research Skill Level* was 74.01% (college-level), their self-reported *Research and Library Experience* was positively correlated with a better understanding of *Plagiarism*. By inference, an increased requirement for students to use library resources might also lead to increased skill in *Obtaining Information* and *Evaluating Information*. This hypothesis is being tested in spring 2011. The RRSA was administered as a pre-test to a cohort of Dual Enrollment students at the beginning of ENG 101. It will be administered again as a post-test at the conclusion of ENG 102 to assess whether the library research requirements in these courses resulted in improved Information Literacy skills.
- It is notable that Rio Salado students have an extremely high understanding of Plagiarism, well above college-level and far above their scores on the other two skill sets measured by the instrument. This is ascribed to the college's emphasis on plagiarism awareness and detection efforts.

<p style="text-align: center;">Information Literacy: Course-level data Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycles established</p>
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Based on the 2010 survey data reported above, the following interventions were recommended to the faculty chairs and adopted in spring 2011:

- Include a paragraph across all syllabi in all courses, explaining the availability of library services and providing contact information.
 - Implemented spring 2011
- When library resources are linked in courses, add verbiage indicating that the resource is being retrieved from the Rio library. Because of the seamless nature of persistent linking to library resources, students have no awareness that these articles or films are coming from the library rather than the open Web.
 - Implemented spring 2011
- Include at least one assignment in a course within each discipline area that requires students to perform research using resources from the Rio Salado library rather than the general Web.
 - Individual meetings were held with 17 Chairs during spring 2011 to develop course-level PDCA plans and implement this step. Interventions were designed for 31 courses and inserted during spring and summer 2011, impacting approximately 1,000 students.

The effectiveness of these strategies will be measured by administering the RRSA at the College level again in spring 2012, after these interventions have been in place for one year, to allow for comparison with the 2010 baseline data. Any specific courses which have incorporated a research assignment requiring library use will be included in the 2012 survey administration. The intervention cohort will be compared against the non-intervention cohort as part of the data analysis.

Reading: College Wide Assessment Report Summary

The Reading Competency Assessment was completed by 411 students in 2011. Distance learning students accounted for a majority (82.73%, N = 340) of the students who participated on this assessment, with the remaining 17.27% (N=71) enrolled in dual enrollment courses.

Overall, students had a total score of 3.03 on this assessment. A large majority of students (89.05%, N = 366) scored at or above college level (70% or higher) on the Reading assessment. Students had the highest average score on the Analysis Skills section (3.44, 86.00%) and the lowest score on the Independent Reading Skills section (2.38, 59.50%).

In general, scores on the Reading assessment declined slightly during the most recent assessment year (2009 Avg = 3.04, 76.00%; 2011 Avg = 3.03, 75.75%).

Reading: Course-level data Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle Updates

The reading PDCA process began in the spring of 2011. The initial focus was to assess the areas of need in relation to reading skills. Based on the past college-wide assessments, it was determined that the focus would be on reading comprehension skills for the initial PDCA process. At the end of the second cycles, the team will meet, assess the process to date, and make recommendations for improvement.

To date, seven cycles have ended because the initial (baseline) data showed that students were already performing at or above the college level. In these cases, faculty within the discipline have started new cycles, either with different assignments or different classes. The initial progress on the reading cycles is displayed below.

Reading Cycle Progress for FY10-11	
Cycle Progress Update	N
Programs that have improvement cycles	2
PDCA cycles completed	0
PDCA cycles ended (as baseline students met college level)	7
PDCA cycles ended (for other reasons)	0
PDCA cycles in progress	9
Courses involved	16
Students impacted during PDCA cycle*	N/A
Students immediately impacted by "Act" step	N/A

**Note: Number of students involved in "CHECK" phase*

Program Review

Rio Salado College is a member of the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. The College's primary goal for joining the Assessment Academy was to develop and implement a more formal Program Review process. Over the past five years, the College has developed, piloted, and improved upon this process.

Program Review at Rio Salado College is a systematic and comprehensive process, which is both sustainable and formal. At Rio Salado, a program is defined as *a set of college-level courses resulting in a certificate or degree*, and includes both occupational and academic programs. Formal program reviews are conducted on a three or five year cycle.

Rio Salado's Program Review process contains a multi-level view of the program, which includes a comprehensive assessment of the College-level, program-level and course-level student learning outcomes. Data on the outcomes of both curricular and co-curricular services, such as the Library, Advising, Counseling, Tutoring, the Helpdesks, etc., are included in each program review. In addition, every Program Review contains the same foundational components, i.e., program goals, learning outcomes, and program resources, which are addressed by utilizing a 36 foundational questions template and the data sets.

Once the review is complete and the final report is written, members of the College's Learning Assessment Team examine the Program Review and provide feedback on best practices (Quality Assurance) and areas of improvement (Relentless Improvement).

Full Reviews:

During 2010-2011, program reviews were conducted on the College's General Education program and the Organizational Management program, which includes an Associate in Applied Science in Organizational Management and a Certificate of Completion in Organizational Leadership. Both of these programs will be examined for best practices and areas of improvement by the Learning Assessment Team during the fall 2011 term.

Mini Reviews:

The College also conducts "mini" program reviews through an initiative implemented in 2007. At the center of this initiative, known as *Transparency by Design*, is the quality and accountability of online institutions. Rio Salado College has been an active member of the initiative since its inception and continues to be the only community college participating. During 2010-11, the following programs were reviewed:

Certificates of Completion:

- Accounting
- Chemical Dependency Level I
- Chemical Dependency Level II
- Child and Family Organization Management and Administration
- Clinical Dental Assisting
- Early Childhood Education
- General Business

- Military Leadership
- Organizational Leadership
- Public Administration
- Quality Customer Service
- Retail Management
- Teacher Education Programs - Post-Baccalaureate
- eLearning Design Specialist

Associate Degrees:

- Accounting
- Chemical Dependency
- Dental Hygiene
- Early Learning and Development
- General Business
- Military Leadership
- Organizational Management
- Public Administration
- Quality Customer Service

RioLogs

Three RioLog Assessment Grants were funded during 2010-2011.

Reading: Developing and implementing a college-wide, course-level assessment of reading **Abstract:** The purpose of this grant is to develop and coordinate two cycles of assessment at the course level in order to determine the efficacy of college-wide reading outcomes. According to the 2009 Reading assessment report, the overall reading scores declined, with the lowest competency areas falling under the headings of skill selection and independent reading skills. While the average score for all tested cohorts (3.04) is above college level, it falls below an acceptable threshold, especially since it indicates a decline from the 2007 score (3.11). As reading is a skill essential to other assessment areas (critical thinking, writing, and information literacy), it is essential to research and build solutions for interventions across the curriculum.

Languages—Critical Thinking

Abstract: Documenting student learning outcomes aligns with Rio Salado College’s mission and vision. Critical Thinking is one of several learning outcomes that are assessed at the department, program and college level via the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT model. As part of the Departmental Assessment Plan for Languages, baseline data for critical thinking has already been collected and interventions have already been implemented and integrated in the online version of SPH245(Hispanics in the Southwest).

Baseline data has been collected from our SPH245 courses offered in the dual enrollment modality. This project will provide funding for our dual enrollment instructors to undergo training on the college-wide grading rubric to see if that has an effect on student performance. Instructors will be required to complete AFD225, apply their learning in the classroom, use the critical thinking rubric to assess student work, and report data to the college for analysis.

Languages—Writing

Abstract: Documenting student learning outcomes aligns with Rio Salado College’s mission and vision. College-level writing is one of several learning outcomes that are assessed at the department, program and college level via the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT model. As part of the Departmental Assessment Plan for Languages, baseline data for college-level writing has already been collected and interventions have already been implemented and integrated in the online version of SLG102 (American Sign Language II). Baseline data has been collected from our SLG courses offered in the dual enrollment modality. This project will provide funding for our dual enrollment instructors to undergo training on the college-wide grading rubric to see if that has an effect on student performance. Instructors will be required to complete AFD230, apply their learning in the classroom, use the writing rubric to assess student work, and report data to the college for analysis.

Significant Accomplishments in Assessment of Student Learning, 2010-2011

- Evolution of the Student Learning Outcomes Team (SLOT) to Learning Assessment Team, reflecting broader responsibility for all work related to assessment of student learning.
- Completion of the internal Learning Assessment SharePoint site, incorporating all student learning assessment initiatives.
- Completion of the Assessment of Student Learning public website page, incorporating student learning outcomes, program review, and Transparency by Design activities.
- Program Review was completed for the following:
 - General Education
 - Organizational Management
- Mini-program reviews (as part of the Transparency by Design initiative) are updated annually for 14 Certificate Degrees and 9 Associate Degrees.
- Funding was provided for three RioLog assessment grants
- Dr. Karen Solomon, Rio’s Higher Learning Commission liaison, visited the College in January and conducted sessions on assessment of student learning and self-study writing.
- A team of 20 College employees (including the President, members of senior administration, faculty members, and institutional research staff) attended the annual HLC Conference in Chicago in April 2011.
- Three College teams presented at the HLC conference and the related Academy for Assessment of Student Learning Poster Fair
 - Establishing Effective Program Review Practices and Shared Learning
 - “Oh, the Places You’ll Go”: Dr. Seuss and Assessment Work
 - Informing Adult Learners with Program Learning Outcomes (Panel Discussion)
 - Poster Fair—poster on formal, sustainable Program Review implementation process
- The 12th Annual Fall Assessment and Learning Experience was held on August 28th, 2010, with 470 adjunct faculty members attending.
- Five Outstanding Adjunct Faculty were recognized for Contributions to Assessment of Student Learning for the 2009-10 academic year. The Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Reception was held on September 15th, 2010.

- All Faculty Chairs have continued working on deploying the course-level Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) matrix for the College-wide student learning outcomes of Critical Thinking and Writing. Deployment of these plans began with the Critical Thinking outcome during 2007-08 and the Writing Outcome during 2008-09.
- Information Literacy and Reading were added to the slate of College-wide student learning outcomes being measured at the course level via the PDCA cycle at the course level during the 2010-2011 year.
- The comprehensive Rio Salado College 2010-2011 Learning Assessment Report was compiled and posted to the Learning Assessment SharePoint and Adjunct Faculty SharePoint sites for access by residential faculty, adjunct faculty, and College employees.
- An Executive Summary of the comprehensive Learning Assessment Report will be distributed to all adjunct faculty during the September 2011 Fall All Faculty Assessment and Learning Experience, and posted to the College's Public Website.
- The College was immersed in a process of Self-Study in preparation for a site visit from an HLC team in March, 2012 for reaffirmation of accreditation status. This process included multiple assessment activities at the institutional level.

<p>Learning Assessment Team Members 2010-2011</p>

Dr. Vernon C. Smith, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Hazel Davis, Faculty Chair, Assessment Co-Coordinator, Information Literacy Outcome Coordinator

Jennifer Shantz, Faculty Chair, Assessment Co-Coordinator, Program Review Coordinator

Dr. Jennifer Freed, Faculty Chair, Critical Thinking Outcome Coordinator

Dr. Kathleen Dunley, Faculty Chair, Writing Outcome Coordinator, Reading Outcome Coordinator

John Jensen, Faculty Chair, Faculty President

Dr. Angela Felix, Faculty Chair, Faculty President-Elect

Kishia Brock, Vice President, Student Affairs

Dr. Jo Jorgensen, Dean of Instruction

Dana Reid, Dean of Instruction

Nicole Albo, Associate Dean of Instruction

Dr. Michael Cottam, Associate Dean of Instruction

Earnestine Harrison, Associate Dean of Instruction

Genevieve Winters, Director, Institutional Research

Note: The full version of this report is available on the Adjunct Faculty SharePoint site at:

<http://ep2.riosalado.edu/Dept/AF/default.aspx>