General Education Assessment
Challenges for the 21st Century
University in the High School program
2014-15

The University at Albany, SUNY

Assessment Report

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Institutional Research, Planning & Effectiveness

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General Education Assessment  
2014-15

Categories Assessed: Mathematics, Challenges for the 21st Century

Background

In Spring 2015 the University at Albany assessed the degree to which students were achieving student learning objectives in Mathematics, and the brand-new Challenges for the 21st Century category. Historically, we have generally selected a sample of sections based on the principles of stratified random sampling – in other words, while selecting sections in random order from the list, we also ensured that each department was represented roughly evenly and that no instructor was asked to participate for more than one section. In this particular case, there were only seven sections, representing two different course numbers, on the entire UHS roster for this General Education category. Complications in assessment were compounded by the fact that all seven sections were team taught by the same two instructors. Thus, the decision was made to select one of each of the sections for assessment, rather than unduly burden the instructors with the task of assessing a 3rd or even 4th section to retain historical sampling percentages. The two courses selected had a combined student N=41. As with previous assessments, the assessment of General Education courses offered at the University at Albany campuses were conducted at the same time. The UHS office provided materials electronically, and IRPE redacted instructor information.

Given the very small N of the UHS course offerings and enrollments, the analysis contained in this report is quite limited, and will not contain the traditional comparison of performance between the UA and UHS populations.

Course Embedded Assessment

As shown in the composite graph below, large majorities of students were reported to have either met or exceeded each of the four learning objectives, with the combined “Exceeded” and “Met” values being 88-93% for each of the four objectives.

![Composite graph showing student performance across four objectives for the Challenges for the 21st Century General Education results.](image-url)

Figure 1: Summary of Challenges for the 21st Century General Education results.
The Learning Objectives for the category are as follows:

Courses meeting Challenges for the 21st Century enable students to demonstrate

1. Knowledge and understanding of the historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and potential future courses of important challenges students may encounter as they move into the world beyond the university.
2. Familiarity with these challenges in areas such as cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics, global citizenship, and/or others.
3. An integrated understanding of how challenges often affect individuals and societies simultaneously in many of these areas.
4. An appreciation for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding contemporary and future challenges.

**Comparison to prior results:**

Historically, a comparison is made between the current administration of the General Education assessment and previous iterations. Given that Challenges for the 21st Century is a new General Education category, there are no historical data available to compare against. The longitudinal comparison across cohorts of General Education students will be made the next time assessment for this category is conducted—currently scheduled for the 2019-2020 academic year.

It is important to note that the majority of students who enroll in University in the High School courses tend to be highly motivated and high performing. In fact, only juniors and seniors with an overall average of B or better are allowed to enroll in UHS classes. One could reasonably expect students who have a high average overall to perform well in these classes. Additionally, on-campus students taking courses meeting this General Education requirement may be doing so only to fulfill the General Education requirement, and that is a potential explanation of differences in performance that often appear to exist when the UHS population is compared to the University at Albany population.

We also recognize that the UHS courses cover the same material as the on-campus offerings, but do so in a year-long format rather than the standard semester format. Additionally, the typical UHS course meets every day, not a few times a week. Both of these could be contributing factors to explain the high performance of UHS students relative to their on-campus counterparts.

**Recommendations:**

1) While not directly applicable to this particular assessment, (due to the low number of courses offered by UHS instructors in this category) IRPE needs to continue to work closely with UHS to improve the response rate and quality of the data submitted by instructors. Sample videos and an online FAQ document that outline the General Education Assessment process and the use of the assessment forms were available to UHS instructors, but there is no evidence that any of the respondents actually used these resources to improve the quality of their submission. We strongly urge UHS
administrators to continue to encourage UHS instructors to avail themselves of these resources.

2) UHS instructors are expected to grade students at the college level. Additionally, we need to continually remind UHS instructors that performance on individual learning objectives is different than the final grade in the course. As we have done in past years, IRPE continues to recommend that the UHS office issue a memo explaining the process and directing instructors to the IRPE produced videos and FAQ for more information.

Time required to complete assessment

The respondents noted that it took approximately 1 hour at each the start and end of the semester to prepare the forms and assemble the requested documentation. This is slightly below average relative to historical reports, but not surprising, given the smaller size of their courses.

Process notes

- The UHS office collected all the requested materials and scanned the sample documents into .PDF format before sending them to IRPE electronically. The names of the instructors and other identifying information was redacted from the forms by IRPE, and were then coded. While this was a labor intensive endeavor for the IRPE office, it saved a substantial amount of paper, as well as additional copying time and paper when the material is be made available to the General Education Assessment Committee. IRPE has developed forms in PDF format that traditional UAAlbany instructors are using to submit through our website, and we will be encouraging the UHS instructors to use this method in the future.
Appendix A: Student Learning Objectives – Challenges for the 21st Century

Courses meeting Challenges for the 21st Century enable students to demonstrate:
1. Knowledge and understanding of the historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and potential future courses of important challenges students may encounter as they move into the world beyond the university;
2. Familiarity with these challenges in areas such as cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics, global citizenship, and/or others;
3. An integrated understanding of how challenges often affect individuals and societies simultaneously in many of these areas;
4. An appreciation for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding contemporary and future challenges.
## Appendix B: End of Semester Reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent #</th>
<th>Learning Objective #</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Based on these results, and thinking about your teaching strategies or curriculum, briefly describe: (1) what strategies helped your students achieve these learning objectives and (2) what changes you would make if you taught this course again, if any.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Most of our students demonstrated sophisticated understanding of issues of cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics and global citizenship at various times and in various ways throughout the semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students were keenly aware of the dual roles of the individual and broader society. Discussion often focused on individual case studies and then broadened out to understand connections and implications for society as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>This is a team taught course. With a History and English professor both involved in organization and implementation, interdisciplinary is the order of the day. Students engage with many different types of texts and they demonstrate the ability to make cross disciplinary connections consistently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>This course is a seminar and as such, the strategies that worked best for us were extensive class discussions on various texts that we engaged with. Students read books and articles, screened films, and remained current with current issues through various forms of mainstream media. We used all of these texts as jumping off points for various historical and current issues we examined throughout the semester. There are several more texts that we would add moving forward. Especially recent texts addressing more contemporary issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Most of our students demonstrated sophisticated understanding of issues of cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics and global citizenship at various times and in various ways throughout the semester. We would like to spend more time on the issue of linguicism as our student population increasingly reflects the growing Latino population of students we serve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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### Appendix C: Time to Completion and Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent #</th>
<th>Start of Semester (in minutes)</th>
<th>End of Semester (in minutes)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
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