



From Data to Action: Using Data to Improve Student Learning

CIHE Assessment Forum/NEASC Annual Meeting 2008

Michael Reder, Director,
Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning : : reder@conncoll.edu

Connecticut College's Use of Data

1. NSSE Benchmark "Student-Faculty Interaction" => First-Year Seminars
2. Wabash Study
3. Administration Championed
4. Results Talked About
5. Data "Rolled" Out to Different Constituencies
6. Center for Teaching & Learning Follow-up (examples)
7. Continue to Engage with Information: Student Focus Groups, Teaching Practices

Selected Connecticut College Faculty Events that Directly Incorporate Data on Student Learning



You are invited to **Camp Teach & Learn 2008**



The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning is offering a variety of opportunities for faculty to discuss teaching and to learn with your colleagues.

[selected events]

Special Workshop on First-Year Seminars: Learning from Experience

Friday, May 23rd, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Breakfast served at 8:30 AM; Lunch served from Noon to 1 PM.

Faculty have numerous stated and implied goals for their First-Year Seminars (FYSs): reading carefully & critically; synthesizing information & developing arguments; improving writing; engaging in classroom discussions; using library resources; honing oral presentation skills; addressing issues related to pluralism & diversity; and helping students successfully transition to their academic lives here at the college. Some faculty advise their seminars; others teach their courses in the residence halls; while others incorporate the use of more advanced students to help their first-year students learn.

This annual workshop brings together both experienced and new FYS faculty and will address a variety of topics, including: what makes these courses distinctive, the three years of feedback and data gathered from previous FYSs, and the effective design of seminars and assignments. Faculty will share ideas regarding the teaching of their FYSs, using writing and discussion, and helping students develop essential critical thinking skills. We will also discuss what it is like to teach in the residence halls and advise your FYS.

Discussants include Theresa Ammirati, Melissa Behney, Gene Gallagher, Ashley Hanson, Larry LaPointe, Kathy McKeon, John Nugent, Michael Reder, Maureen Ronau, Andrea Rossi-Reder, Steve Shoemaker, Stuart Vyse, Marc Zimmer and other FYS faculty.

Intellectual Climate & Challenge: What the Wabash Study Tells Us about Teaching & Learning at Connecticut College

Thursday, June 5th, 9:00 AM to Noon. Lunch served at Noon.

What does the first year of Connecticut College's data from the Wabash National Study (WNS) tell us about how we teach and what our students learn? What insights can be gained by closely examining the evidence regarding student learning, and how do we, as a faculty, want to respond to this information? What have our students said in focus groups about their classroom experiences and about what keeps them engaged in their learning?

Facilitators include WNS Director Charles Blaich, Associate Director Kathy Wise, Roger Brooks, John Nugent, Michael Reder, and Julie Rivkin.

Raising the Bar: Asking More of Our Students

Thursday, June 5th. Lunch served at Noon. Workshop from 1 PM to 3 PM.

What does the Wabash National Study and the student interviews tell us about designing our courses so that our students will be more engaged in their learning? How can we design intellectual experiences that challenge our students? What are some of the common features of “successful” courses? What is the relationship between these issues in individual introductory courses and the other courses in the major? In this workshop we will share ideas and approaches to designing successful introductory courses intended to intellectually challenge our students. Faculty will bring a syllabus to consider.

Facilitators include Gene Gallagher, Michael Reder, Julie Rivkin, WNS Director Charles Blaich, Associate Director Kathy Wise, and will feature a variety of additional faculty.

Sample Email Inviting Faculty to Participate in Syllabus Workshops Focused on FYS and Wabash Data

From: reder@conncoll.edu
Subject: CTL First-Year Seminar Syllabus Workshops--please RSVP
Date: August 15, 2008 12:19:39 PM EDT
To: reder@conncoll.edu

Dear First-Year Seminar Faculty Member,

I am writing to invite you to the CTL's annual **FYS Syllabus Workshops**, which will be held on two different occasions this year:

**Thursday, 21 August from 9 AM to 11:30 AM (includes breakfast) or
 Monday, 25 August from 9 AM to 11:30 AM (includes breakfast).**

During that time faculty will work in small groups reviewing each other's syllabi and giving and receiving individual feedback. We will then have a brief discussion about best practices in course design for FYSs and talk about the first day of our FYS class.

A delicious, nutritious **catered breakfast will be available at 8:45 AM.**

If you would like to attend this event, **please RSVP to me as soon as possible, no later than Tuesday 19 August.** *You will need to bring 4 copies of a draft of your FYS syllabus* as well as copies of any major assignments you wish to share. The workshop will be held in Blaustein, and the room will be announced once I have the final numbers.

Faculty teaching in the FYS program have found this event very helpful and an excellent way to share teaching ideas and tips and to transition into the semester.

Best,

Michael

Michael Reder
 Director, Joy Shechtman Mankoff
 Center for Teaching & Learning
 Connecticut College
 Box 5313
 New London, CT 06320

reder@conncoll.edu

<http://CTL.ConnColl.edu/>

Information about the Wabash National Study

WABASH NATIONAL STUDY OF
Liberal Arts Education

Effective Practices and Experiences from the Wabash National Study

In our research thus far, we have found that three broad categories of teaching practices and institutional conditions predict growth on a wide variety of student outcomes including leadership, openness to diversity and challenge, political and social involvement, and positive attitude toward literacy. These categories of good teaching practices and supportive institutional conditions correspond to scales empirically derived from survey questions in the Wabash National Study:

- **Scale 1 – Good Teaching and High Quality Interactions with Faculty**, which includes the following subscales:
 - Faculty interest in teaching and student development
 - Prompt feedback
 - Quality of nonclassroom interactions with faculty
 - Teaching clarity and organization
- **Scale 2 – Academic Challenge and High Expectations**, which includes the following subscales:
 - Academic challenge and effort
 - Frequency of higher-order exams and assignments
 - Challenging classes and high faculty expectations
 - Integrating ideas, information, and experiences
- **Scale 3 – Diversity Experiences**, which includes the following subscales:
 - Meaningful interactions with diverse peers – I
 - Meaningful interactions with diverse peers – II

Students who report higher levels of these experiences tend to grow more on our outcome measures. Similarly, students who report lower levels of these experiences are less likely to grow on the outcomes.

We have also identified three additional groups of experiences that cluster together into scales with high reliability. However, these last three scales have, so far, had a much weaker or more mixed relationship with the outcomes than the *Good Teaching*, *Academic Challenge*, and *Diversity Experiences* scales.

- **Scale 4 – Frequency of Interactions with Faculty and Staff**, which includes the following subscales:
 - Frequency of interactions with faculty
 - Frequency of interactions with student affairs staff
- **Scale 5 – Interactions with Peers**, which includes the following subscales:
 - Co-curricular involvement
 - Degree of positive peer interactions
- **Scale 6 – Cooperative Learning**

Scale 2 – Academic Challenge and High Expectations

Students who have higher scores on this scale are more likely to grow on our measures of:

- Academic Motivation
- Desire for Professional Success
- Diversity and Challenge
- Leadership
- Moral Reasoning
- Need for Cognition
- Political and Social Involvement
- Positive Attitude toward Literacy
- Well-Being

Academic Challenge and High Expectations includes the following subscales:

- Academic challenge and effort
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations?
 - During the current school year, how many assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings have you done?
 - During the current school year, how many written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages have you done?
 - In a typical week, how many problem sets take you more than an hour to complete?
 - What is the extent to which your examinations during the current school year challenged you to do your best work?
 - About how many hours in a typical week do you spend preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)?
 - To what extent does your institution emphasize spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you made a class presentation?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you come to class without completing readings or assignments? (reverse-coded)

- Frequency of higher-order exams and assignments
 - How often have exams or assignments required you to write essays?
 - How often have exams or assignments required you to use course content to address a problem not presented in the course?
 - How often have exams or assignments required you to compare or contrast topics or ideas from a course?
 - How often have exams or assignments required you to point out the strengths and weaknesses of a particular argument or point of view?
 - How often have exams or assignments required you to argue for or against a particular point of view and defend your argument?
- Challenging classes and high faculty expectations
 - How often have faculty asked challenging questions in class?
 - How often have faculty asked you to show how a particular course concept could be applied to an actual problem or situation?
 - How often have faculty asked you to point out any fallacies in basic ideas, principles, or points of view presented in the course?
 - How often have faculty asked you to argue for or against a particular point of view?
 - How often have faculty challenged your ideas in class?
 - How often have students challenged each other's ideas in class?
- Integrating ideas, information, and experiences
 - The extent to which you agree that courses have helped you understand the historical, political, and social connections of past events.
 - The extent to which you agree that courses have helped you see the connections between your intended career and how it affects society.
 - The extent to which you agree that your out-of-class experiences have helped you connect what you have learned in the classroom with life events.
 - The extent to which you agree that your out-of-class experiences have helped you translate knowledge and understanding from the classroom into action.
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions?
 - In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)?
 - During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?
 - During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions?