

Summary of General Education Assessment 2006-13

Historically the faculty has separated the CORE Curriculum from what is called at Brooklyn “Academic Foundations.” This latter area includes composition, speech, and “foreign language.” Academic Foundations and CORE each have a separate faculty committee. In addition the faculty, in general, is wary of elements that are seen (rightly) as best practices (FCY, learning communities, Freshman Seminar, etc.). These areas have not traditionally been seen by faculty as part of general education. Part of the ongoing process has been to try and persuade faculty to see all these elements under the framework of “general education.”

The historic CORE underwent a process of revision (2002-2005) and the latest iteration was implemented in 2006. At the same time a group of faculty had worked on coming up with College Wide Learning Goals and in 2005 these were finalized and formally approved by the Faculty Council and the college’s Council on Academic Policy (CAP), a body made up of the academic department chairs. The “new” CORE courses (in fact many were actually revisions of existing CORE courses) put in place in 2006 were required to have learning goals/objectives/outcomes that aligned with the appropriate college wide learning goals. At the time the 2006 iteration of the CORE was put in place faculty called for it to be reexamined after 5 years. That process has been postponed due to the Pathways debate and the challenge of merging the Brooklyn CORE into the CUNY Pathways framework.

The Provost at that time (Fall 2006) directed assessment in the CORE begin with looking at “critical thinking” (a sub element of college learning goal #1). The Provost’s preferred method reflected the desire to “get going” in that it was a 3 point scale rubric in which the specific definitions of performance levels were left to the instructors of each section of a particular course. The effort was managed by collaboration between the Director of Academic Assessment, the Director of the CORE Curriculum (a full time faculty member with partial reassign time for this role) and the CORE coordinators (faculty with a smaller amount of reassign time) for each CORE course. Between 2006 and 2011 the existing CORE has had assessment from its beginning in 2006. From fall 2006 to spring 2011 faculty looked at 11,480 pieces of student work mapped to a number of the college wide learning goals. Most assessed were elements of #1, especially the ability to “think critically.” Although 4, 5, 8 and 9 were also looked at. This had its limits as since each instructor defined their own performance levels the results could not be used for comparison across courses or even sections with some limited exceptions. However the project introduced faculty to an assessment regimen. In addition faculty learned on their own the limits of the 3 point scale and changed to a 4 point scale later in the project. Content analysis was used to examine the rubrics for common elements and a draft common rubric for critical thinking was created by the director of assessment based on the analysis and circulated to some of the CORE faculty for feedback. Further efforts at CORE assessment took a backseat to other institutional issues and priorities. (new president, new strategic plan, reorganization of the college into schools with Deans, the Pathways debate). While these went on assessment efforts were focused on learning outcomes assessment at the degree program level. B

Following the 2009 Middle States visit we undertook to begin a new assessment plan for the institution. The 2001 plan no longer represented the infrastructure that had been put in place with the hiring of a permanent full time Director of Academic Assessment, Dr. Michael Anderson.