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WASC Core Competencies Analysis 2020 - 2024

Background:

As part of our 2024-2025 reaffirmation process with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WSCUC, informally known as "WASC"), we are providing the WASC Core Competencies analysis in addition to Program Learning Outcomes analysis and other evidence of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. We define and address the WASC five Core Competencies through the demonstration of student performance, evidence of student achievement, and an explanation of its approach including how outcomes of the assessment are addressed. ArtCenter has been engaged in ongoing assessment of the competencies, integrated into regular assessment practices since 2015 and finds value in the continued use of the results of its analysis to gauge students' proficiency in these areas and whether they are prepared to use these important skills as they transition into the workplace or pursue additional education.

Method:

ArtCenter assesses the Core Competencies at the program (major) level, "at a point close to graduation as determined by the institution" based on recommendations from WSCUC[1]. The Center for Educational Effectiveness works closely with each program's faculty and administration to establish authentic definitions of the Core Competencies, identify appropriate activities, and develop corresponding rubrics for the measurement. Programs complete an annual reflection that asks how the competencies manifest in the program curriculum and what actions they have taken to make improvements to student learning in these areas.

The cycle of Core Competencies assessment takes place in the summer, fall, and spring terms (semesters). A total of 1,702 "senior level" students across 11 undergraduate programs were assessed over a four-year period (2020 – 2024). Programs also submitted evidence (examples of student work) to accompany the data helping to visually capture levels of achievements within cohorts of students and for each cycle.

The college and its programs have successfully maintained assessments in these areas since the initial measurement in 2015, with a recalibration of practices and data collection in 2016/2017 and the more recent alignment of the Core Competencies with the Program Learning Outcome assessment. The collaborative effort to address the competencies in a meaningful way has led to improvements related to data collection workflows, making it easier for faculty and administrators to engage in meaningful assessment, and an expansion of shared practices meant to support student success and educational objectives related to the WASC five.

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Assessment Scale:

During the development of the program's rubrics, guidelines were provided including the use of a 4-point scale, with a score of 2 being defined as a "Passing" score [1] for all five competencies. In a few cases where decimal places were used by the programs, data was rounded based on standard rounding practice.

SCALE[2]				
	1	2 = "Passing score"	3	4
Single Word Description	Ineffective	Progressing	Effective	Highly Effective
Corresponding Detailed Description	Struggles to demonstrate practices described in key grading criteria.	Performs within the described key grading criteria. Showing some improvement over time.	Consistently demonstrates competency regarding the practices described in the key grading criteria.	Consistently innovative, integrated, nuanced, and sophisticated demonstration of elements in the key grading criteria.
Range for Scale	1.00 - 1.49	1.50 - 2.49	2.50 - 3.49	3.50 - 4.00
Assessment Scale	Score of 1 or higher	Score of 2 or higher	Score of 3 or higher	Score of 4

Benchmarks:

Benchmarks are defined as the minimum percentage expected for students performing at or above a specific level for each of the competencies. Working with the provost, faculty, and department chairs, the Center for Educational Effectiveness established benchmarks for the College in 2015, which were re-evaluated in 2024 with minor adjustments to Information Literacy and Quantitative Reasoning benchmarks based on the results of the last report. The agreed-upon benchmarks set an ambitious standard for student achievement of all five competencies, with high expectations for the number of passing scores (95% of students scoring at least a 2) as well as scores of 3 or higher (75% of students)[3].

WSCUC Core Competencies	College Benchmarks based on the Assessment Scale		
	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Written Communication (WC)	95%	75%	40%
Oral Communication (OC)	95%	75%	40%
Information Literacy (IL)	95%	75%	40%
Quantitative Reasoning (QR)	95%	75%	40%
Critical Thinking (CT)	95%	75%	40%

[1] A "passing" score is defined as the acceptable level that a student graduating from ArtCenter is expected to perform at.
[2] As the programs worked in integrated the Program Learning Outcomes with the Core Competencies, several programs had a scale with a score of 0 used in rare situations when students failed to present any material for review. These scores have been excluded from the analysis.
[3] Benchmarks were reviewed and approved by the divisional deans in spring 2024.

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Overall Results[4]:

All college established benchmarks were met for the 2020 – 2024 period (2020/2021, 2021/2022, 2022/2023, and 2023/2024 cycles[5]). Increases in achievement since the last cycle of accreditation have been significant. The college saw the most improvement in Written Communication and Oral Communication[6].

College Benchmarks		95%	75%	40%
		Assessment Scale		
	Cycle	**2 or higher**	**3 or higher**	**4**
Written Communication	**2020/2021**	100%	93%	70%
	2021/2022	99%	91%	59%
	2022/2023	99%	92%	65%
	2023/2024	99%	90%	63%
	Cycle	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Oral Communication	**2020/2021**	100%	93%	70%
	2021/2022	100%	92%	57%
	2022/2023	99%	93%	69%
	2023/2024	100%	94%	67%
	Cycle	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Information Literacy	**2020/2021**	100%	95%	65%
	2021/2022	99%	92%	57%
	2022/2023	100%	93%	64%
	2023/2024	100%	93%	66%
	Cycle	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Quantitative Reasoning	**2020/2021**	100%	96%	72%
	2021/2022	100%	91%	67%
	2022/2023	100%	94%	71%
	2023/2024	99%	90%	66%
	Cycle	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Critical Thinking	**2020/2021**	100%	94%	69%
	2021/2022	100%	91%	64%
	2022/2023	100%	93%	65%
	2023/2024	100%	92%	67%

Met Institutional Benchmark
Did Not Meet Institutional Benchmark

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[4] A recalibration of practices and data collection occurred in 2016/2017 and no data was collected for this cycle.
[5] The assessment cycle is conducted in summer, fall, and spring terms. Data submission in summer is optional.
[6] See *ArtCenter WSCUC Core Competencies Analysis Report 2020* for comparative longitudinal analysis.

Average Scores for the Core Competencies:

Cycle	Count	Core Competencies	Average Scores[5]				
			Written Communication	Oral Communication	Information Literacy	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
2020/2021	406	Average	3.53	3.57	3.52	3.56	3.58
		Std. Deviation	0.66	0.61	0.57	0.63	0.57
2021/2022	432	Average	3.42	3.39	3.41	3.40	3.52
		Std. Deviation	0.66	0.71	0.69	0.76	0.62
2022/2023	405	Average	3.47	3.54	3.50	3.57	3.52
		Std. Deviation	0.71	0.70	0.62	0.62	0.62
2023/2024	459	Average	3.45	3.54	3.52	3.49	3.54
		Std. Deviation	.72	.62	.63	.71	.62
Overall	1702	Average	3.47	3.51	3.46	3.49	3.54
		Std. Deviation	.69	.66	.63	.69	.61

General Outcomes:

The analysis of four years of assessment data from 2020 – 2024 presents evidence of improvement in student performance across the Core Competencies. The Average Score of all five Core Competencies has increased since the 2020 report by at least .15[7] and the number of passing students has also increased by approximately 2%. Each of the Core Competencies, except Quantitative Reasoning, saw increases of at least 2% in scores of 3 or higher. Additionally, the variance in scores has decreased by at least .02 for all Core Competencies as indicated by the Standard Deviation[6].

Recommendations:

Using the results of the last report, departments worked to implement improved practices (both formal and informal) in their programs to address Oral Communication. Adjustments to curriculum and programming and co-curricular supports and resources have made a clear impact resulting in significantly increased scores across the Assessment Scale. ArtCenter plans to monitor Oral Communication given its significant international population and concern with the success of students who are English Language Learners. ArtCenter will also monitor Quantitative Reasoning, Written Communication, and Information Literacy. Even though the benchmarks were all met, these competencies had lower average scores. The provost will encourage the divisional deans and department chairs to address this at the major (program) level by identifying areas within the curriculum that need improvement and holding discussions with faculty who may be teaching courses that align with PLOs at the Developmental stage (courses that occur in the terms directly before the culminating assessments). Programs may also work with the provost to identify additional resources and partnerships to support student learning including collaboration with the Interdisciplinary departments, the library, and the Writing Center to augment skill development in the major curriculum at the upper terms. Please note that department-level results vary widely across competencies. The Provost and the Divisional Deans should consider how to address issues with student performance through specific plans for improvement via academic program review and academic department strategic planning. Additional recommendations and information for each program have been provided on their page. The department chair and program team should work with divisional leaders to maintain an acceptable level of achievement and consider the recommendations at the college level as well as actions and adjustments that need to be made to address areas of opportunity.

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[7]Average Scores in the 2020 report: Written Communication = 3.31 (Sd = 0.81), Oral Communication = 3.32 (Sd = 0.80), Information Literacy = 3.35 (Sd = 0.73), Quantitative Reasoning = 3.39 (Sd = 0.71), and Critical Thinking = 3.41 (Sd = 0.69).