

Midlands Technical College
Assessment of General Education
Contact: Charles H. Parker
Director of Academic Planning and Reporting

Summary of 1998-2001 Assessment Study

Midlands Technical College (MTC) continues its commitment to the assessment of the general education core and the use of that assessment in improving student learning. Specifically, MTC assesses students' demonstrated competencies in the general education core competencies through their attainment of a "C" or better in specified course and/or modules which deliver the specific competency as the mastery of the general education competency in the major.

The years and programs reviewed during 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 are provided below:

1998/99

Practical Nursing
Medical Laboratory Assistant
Nuclear Medicine Technologist
Physical Therapy Assistant
Dental Assisting Technology
Dental Hygiene

1999/2000

Automotive Technology
Associate Arts
Associate Science
Criminal Justice
Health Information Management

2000/2001

Civil Engineering Technology
Mechanical Engineering Technology
Engineering Graphics Technology
Architectural Engineering Technology
Electrical Engineering Technology
Respiratory Care

The 1998-2000 plan contained three objectives:

1. to continue the measurement of student performance in general education;
2. to continue the use of multiple measures to assess student success in general education;
and
3. to research the progression of students from general education courses through subsequent major courses, seeking correlation between the general education courses and the major courses.

The College met or modified the objectives as detailed below.

OBJECTIVE 1: MTC will continue the measurement of student performance in general education.

Status: The standard for achievement in general education core courses is that 75% of the associate degree students in these courses will demonstrate a satisfactory mastery of the objectives, evidenced by a grade of “C” or better. MTC department chairs, program coordinators, and discipline faculty have reviewed student grades and progress in the specific competencies to monitor success, attainment of a grade of “C” or better, in the course and/or module which delivers the specific competency as the mastery of general education as well as the evaluating the actual competencies required. As evidenced in the table below, the college exceeded the 75% standard in all competencies except one.

Table 1: Average Percentage of Students with a C or Better - 1998-2001

Competency	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001
Communication Skills	100%	87%	88%
Written	100%	85%	87%
Oral	*	92%	92%
Mathematics	79%	83%	87%
Scientific Method	100%	85%	87%
Individual or Social Behavior	100%	85%	84%
Computer	100%	93%	94%
Humanities	67%	88%	87%
Total	90%	87%	88%

(***Note:** In 1998/99 all the programs reviewed were Allied Health programs. While three of these were Associate Degree programs, most students enrolling in Allied Health programs have completed their “general education” requirements prior to enrolling in the program. For that reason, there number of observations was low. In Humanities, there were only three observations and one made a “D”. There were no students taking courses meeting the “Oral” competency.)

OBJECTIVE 2: MTC will continue to use multiple measures to assess student success in general education.

Status: MTC assesses the general education core courses each term through the measurement of student mastery of identified courses and/or modules that deliver the specific competency as the mastery of the general education competency in the major. Evaluation measures include the following: written tests, portfolios, practical exercises, oral presentations, group presentations,

and course projects. The final grade in each course and/or the grade for the module identified within each course reflect the use of the aforementioned evaluation methods.

The assessment of General Education skills is also incorporated into the Academic Program Review process through surveys of current students, alumni and employers. These survey questions, provide additional insight into student success in the general education core and the application of those skill in the workplace. When available, data comparing MTC transfer students' performance with native students at four-year institutions are used as part of the assessment.

OBJECTIVE 3: MTC will research the progression of students from general education courses through subsequent major courses, seeking correlation between the general education courses and the major courses.

Status: This objective was revised after MTC became involved with the 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project sponsored by the League for Innovation in the Community College. The college was one of 16 college selected nation-wide to participate. The project is designed to: (1) review, renew and redefine the General Education Core at the institution and (2) to develop, pilot, and implement alternative assessment strategies for general education competencies. A committee was formed, of faculty from both the Arts and Sciences and Career programs division of the college, and specific administrators to spearhead the project. One of the primary objects was to review the core to ensure that it includes the general education competencies graduates need to succeed in the 21st Century. Recommendations for the revised core have been finalized and will be presented to the entire faculty for review and discussion in Fall 2002.

Two other important projects were created as a result of MTC's participation in the 21st Century Learning Outcomes Project, the Teacher on Call Initiative and the development of the Student E-Portfolio. The Teacher on Call initiative was evaluated to determine the feasibility of providing, through collaboration between an English faculty member and a technology faculty member, just-in-time writing instruction for students who are preparing discipline-based assignments for courses within their majors.

Since 1990 a core of general education competencies have been required for graduates of each of Midlands' associate degree programs. Communication, both oral and written, is one of the required general education competencies, is identified in each career major's industry generated DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) as a key factor in local employees' successes, and is consistently ranked in national and regional surveys of employers among the top skills necessary for career advancement.

While written and oral communication skills will continue to be taught in discrete general education courses and reinforced through The Learning Centers, faculty of career majors know that students need to experience and practice the application of these skills within the careers for which they are preparing. Thus, communication skills need to be used and valued in assignments in the career majors. Many faculty in Midlands' career majors incorporate written communications in their instruction and assignments to students. However, instructors in career majors readily admit that they lack the expertise and confidence to evaluate and make

constructive suggestions to students concerning the organization, mechanics, and structure of their written assignments.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, practicality of the Teacher on Call was explored but the results were not as gainful as expected. MTC will continue to assess the Teacher-on-call for future use, but will not implement it at this time.

Midlands Technical College is also developing an electronic portfolio of student learning and achievement the student can present, along with the MTC transcript, to potential employers or other academic institutions. The electronic portfolio's main feature is *Transcript Plus*, a summary of the learning content in individual courses at MTC. For example, the curriculum content covered in "MAT 155 would be described?" On most transcripts, this level of detail is not provided and the reviewer/reader of the transcript would not have access to this information.

Because most employers are not dealing with students who have had licensing exams or may not have yet completed a degree, the electronic portfolio assists them in answering the question: "Is there not some value added by taking a series of classes, since learning can occur asymmetrically? With Transcript Plus in our E-Portfolio: grades would then correlate to a specific set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student should have learned in the course. The community would therefore have a more detailed listing of what a student should know.

2002-2005 Action Plan Objectives

Based on the assessment of past achievement and the information derived through the League for Innovation in Community College, MTC has formulated three objectives for the next timeframe of the general education report.

- (1) MTC will continue to monitor the attainment of the Grade of "C" in the course and/or the module that delivers the specific competency as the mastery of the general education components in that major. (Responsibility of the Vice-president for Arts and Sciences, the Vice-President for Career Programs, and the Director for Academic Planning and Reporting).
- (2) MTC will continue to assess the entire general education core competencies to ensure that they meet the market needs and make revisions as appropriate, to include revising competencies and/or the courses addressing them. (Responsibility of the Vice-president for Arts and Sciences, the Vice-President for Career Programs, and the appropriate Academic Department Chair).