

Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives

NEWSLETTER

Department SPOTLIGHT

Featured in this edition of the Assessment Newsletter is the Department of Communication Disorders, which for nearly a decade has been an example of excellent assessment practices.

From 2012 through 2013 Marshall University conducted its first quality initiative, *Testing the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile*, as part of the Higher Learning Commission's Open Pathways accreditation requirements. Participation in this project prompted many departments, including the Department of Communication Disorders, to closely examine the processes it used to assess student learning in its degree programs. The first thing the Communication Disorders' faculty did was to revise student learning outcomes for both their undergraduate and graduate programs.

After agreeing on the knowledge and skills students should have upon graduation, department faculty streamlined the assessment process, including developing assessment measures and rubrics for each learning outcome (one for an assessment point early to mid-way through the curriculum and one to be given close to graduation), and determining in which courses both initial and final assessments would be embedded. They also developed a process whereby each faculty member was responsible for specific data collection, with results collated and analyzed by the department's assessment coordinator. Following this step, all faculty review the results and collectively determine improvements needed in the curriculum or in pedagogy. This continues to be an annual process.

"At the beginning we sent out emails to the faculty and basically said 'This is where we're measuring this, these are what the outcomes are, are you doing things in your class that measure this?'" said Dr. Carrie Childers, associate professor of Communication Disorders. "We did quite a bit of shifting around courses to get the practice component and the achievement component."

For courses that were taught by multiple professors across different sections, steps had to be taken to make sure assessments were being carried out uniformly.

"That wasn't an easy process, because everyone has their own way of teaching and assessing," said Loukia Dixon, associate professor of Communication Disorders.

"We [now] have a series of online Excel documents, and each of those documents has the outcome as well as each of the [rubric] traits. I send out an email at the end of each semester to remind professors which classes and which point," Dr. Childers said. "I take those data and we have a master form which compiles the data. I have been able to view that form for patterns or changes over the years."

Moving the process online has been a great help, because professors can input their own data. This both eases the workload for everyone involved while also making the faculty more involved in the process. Consistency over time has been a benefit for the process, as faculty know what kinds of assessments to expect when teaching specific courses in the department.

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OUR MISSION

The Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives operates within the Division of Academic Affairs. The mission of the Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives at Marshall University is to support best practices in assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels, resulting in continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

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Dr. Childers says that it's important to gather data that will be useful to the department. For the graduate program department faculty reviewed criteria from the Council on Academic Accreditation of American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. After this review, they revised the graduate program's student learning outcomes, with early and later assessments embedded into appropriate courses, to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills essential to be successful speech-language pathologists. At the end of each year, the data are collected and shared among the departmental faculty, which is essential when planning for the next year, and making changes to the curriculum as necessary.

"It really is a collaborative event from the beginning to the end," Dr. Childers said.

In addition to making improvements to the curriculum and to pedagogical practices to ensure that students meet the outcomes important for speech-language pathologists, the process described above has allowed faculty to continue to make improvements to the graduate program's assessment process. Currently, the faculty are beginning to examine the undergraduate program's assessment process more closely.

"From an undergraduate standpoint, our outcomes have remained the same [as when originally revised in 2012-2013]," said Professor Dixon. "They will be under review soon, so that we can have a better transition from undergraduate to graduate."

Dixon said that during the HLC quality initiative, the faculty determined undergraduate assessment points, which have been revised over time. She noted that, while some assessment points worked, others did not work as well, emphasizing the importance of evaluating outcomes to inform changes.

The department's long-term plan is to revise the undergraduate outcomes and make sure they line up correctly to assignments. Once that happens, faculty will map outcomes to courses and to the university's Baccalaureate Degree Profile.

Survey REMINDERS - (NSSE)

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) will be administered to freshmen and seniors at Marshall, beginning March 1.

According to the NSSE website, the survey is a review of the amount of time and effort students put into their studies as well as how an institution deploys resources and organizes the curriculum to get students engaged with learning.

Freshmen and seniors are encouraged to watch their email for an invitation from the National Survey of Student Engagement (subject line: Please help Marshall by completing NSSE). Emails will be sent March 1, March 7, March 22, March 31, and April 6.

Student who complete the survey by April 12 will be eligible for a prize drawing. The prizes two AirPods-Pro, two AirPods, and ten Marshall University T-Shirts.

Prize drawings will be held on April 13.

Those interested in viewing results from previous surveys may see them on the Office of Assessment and Quality Initiatives website: www.marshall.edu/assessment/national-survey-of-student-engagement.

Marshall's HLC QUALITY INITIATIVE Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Marshall Community

As part of our Higher Learning Commission accreditation process, Marshall University will embark on a new Quality Initiative (QI) beginning fall 2022. An array of projects, intended to promote a strong and inclusive community at Marshall, will engage the campus throughout the coming three years and hopefully beyond.

To help focus the campus community and assist campus organizations with event planning throughout the QI, we have developed themes for the next three academic years. The first year's theme, "Complexities of Identity," will explore the reality that every person has many intersecting identities. Year 2 will extend this theme with a focus on "Building Bridges" across diverse groups and people. It is our goal that, by year 3 we will be ready to "Embrace and Celebrate our Differences," as well as recognize our commonalities.

Throughout each academic year, events will be held that tie in with each theme. In addition, two books that align with each year's theme will be selected with input from the campus community. Marshall students, faculty, and staff will be encouraged to read these books and participate in discussions and other activities that focus on these readings. To complement the books, each college will assemble a bibliography of discipline related scholarly readings aligning to the theme. These bibliographies will be available for instructors to incorporate into their courses as appropriate.

Included in the Quality Initiative will be an inaugural Diversity Living Learning Community (DLLC), open by competitive application to new freshmen. Twelve students will be chosen for the initial cohort. They will receive scholarships and live in one of the first-year residence halls. During academic year 2022-2023, they will engage in diversity programming that will provide opportunities to become leaders in building a diverse campus community. For more information and to apply for this opportunity, please visit www.marshall.edu/diversity/dllc.

Quality Initiative programming will begin during the Fall 2022 semester, and will continue through the Spring 2025 semester.

ASSESSMENT DAY 2022

Assessment Day 2022 will be held from March 22-April 12. Students are encouraged to complete surveys in order to be eligible for the prize drawing, held on April 13.

Departments across campus can submit surveys to the Assessment Office to be added to the Assessment Day website.

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