

I . N Q U I R Y
Q . U A R T E R L Y

SEPTEMBER 2009

WELCOME BACK!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WELCOME BACK	1
ANATOMY OF A RUBRIC	1-2
TEACHING & LEARNING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP	2
2009-10 IR SURVEY SCHEDULE	3
TK20 UPDATE	3

Here we are at the start of a new academic year and our second issue of I.Q.

As a reminder for those who are familiar, and an introduction for new readers, I.Q. is an online newsletter published by the Office of Institutional Research.

The goal of the newsletter is to (1) highlight efforts to measure student learning outcomes across campus both in academic departments and administrative and educational (AES) support units, (2)

provide practical tips and tools in the areas of assessment and evaluation to guide practitioners in everyday work, (3) discuss various survey efforts underway, or upcoming, that support departmental/unit work or university objectives, and (4) examine data available to assist faculty with 5-and 10-year program reviews as well as research efforts by AES units on campus.

We are confident that this newsletter will serve as a resource for members of

ANATOMY OF A RUBRIC

What is a rubric, exactly? This is one of the first questions that arise when individuals hear this term. "At its most basic, a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment." (Stevens & Levi, Introduction to Rubrics, p.3, 2005). One of the many benefits of rubrics is their versatility for use on many different types of assignments such as research papers, lab reports, oral presentations, essay questions, and so forth.

Stevens & Levi (2005) outline the "parts" of a rubric. **Part 1: Task Description** is always developed by the professor and involves "performance" of some type by the student. Often, this description is taken directly from the

syllabus and placed at the top of the rubric which has a recommended length of one page. **Part 2: Scale** describes how well the assignment has been performed and it is recommended that for novice rubric developers, only three levels of performance be used. Example scale labels include:

- ◆ Exemplary, proficient, unacceptable
- ◆ Good, better, best
- ◆ Excellent, competent, needs work

Part 3: Dimensions "should actually represent the type of component skills students must combine." (Stevens, & Levi, 2005, p. 10). Example dimensions include:

ANATOMY OF A RUBRIC (CONT.)

- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Analysis/Synthesis
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Content
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Writing

Part 4: Description of the Dimensions involves “flushing out” the categories into specifics. At a minimum, rubrics would need a description of the highest level of performance in that dimension. This is also called a scoring guide rubric.

Why Use Rubrics?

Initially, this may seem a lot of work for little in return; however, Stevens & Levi (2005) discuss a number of reasons why rubrics are useful teaching tools.

- 1) **Rubrics Provide Timely Feedback:** Faculty are well aware that feedback is most effective when given as soon after task completion as possible; however, there is often a disconnect between what faculty and students perceive as “timely.” Rubrics are time savers especially when similar issues arise across students on a given assignment.
- 2) **Rubrics Prepare Students to Use Detailed Feedback:** Including a description of what is the highest level of performance can assist students in understanding where their particular assignment veered off course. In addition, if rubrics are

used for a variety of assignments, then it is much easier for both faculty member and student to look across the dimensions and determine strengths and weaknesses.

- 3) **Rubrics Encourage Critical Thinking:** Rubrics can encourage students to thinking critically about their own learning and to identify those areas in need of improvement. One of the main ways rubrics promote critical thinking is in the discussion of the rubric prior to the assignment which serves as a model of how critical thinking occurs.
- 4) **Rubrics Help us Refine Our Teaching Skills:** Stevens & Levi (2005) state “...rubrics showing student development over time can also allow us to gain a clearer view of teaching blind spots, omissions, and strengths.” (p. 25). In addition, aggregating rubric results across students can help address problems without pointing out any one particular student.

What’s your I.Q. ?

Q: There is only one “type” of rubric, right?

- A.** No. Rubrics can be holistic or analytic, general or task specific..
- ◆ Holistic rubrics provide a single score based on an overall impression of a student’s performance on a task.
 - ◆ Analytic rubrics provide specific feedback along several dimensions.
 - ◆ General rubrics contain criteria that are general across tasks.
 - ◆ Task specific rubrics are unique to a specific task.

SAVE THE DATE:

2nd Annual Teaching & Learning
Assessment Workshop:
Rubrics & Effective Teaching

Date: Friday, October 2, 2009

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Where: Howry Center

2009-10 IR SURVEY SCHEDULE

Fall 2009

- ◆ CIRP survey: SU has participated since 1975 in this first-year survey covering a wide range of student characteristics: parental income & education, ethnicity, financial aid; secondary school achievement & activities; educational and career plans; and values, attitudes, beliefs, and self-concept .
- ◆ Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA): First- year students are participating in the CLA during September and October.

Spring 2010

- ◆ CLA: Seniors will be participating during February and March of next year. For a complete description of the CLA, please see Volume 1, Issue 1 of I.Q.
- ◆ National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): Both first-years and seniors will participate in this survey during Spring 2010. The survey measures student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development.

TK20 UPDATE

As a reminder, Tk20 is a comprehensive assessment and reporting system for the measurement of accountability, institutional effectiveness, and accreditation.

Tk20 lets you collect all your data systematically, plan your assessments, compare them against specified outcomes/objectives, and generate detailed reports for compliance, analysis, and program improvement.

Current Status

Institutional Research and the Tk20 Adoption Team, comprised of Alicia Betsinger, Sharon Fass, Paul Gaffney, and John McCann, worked over the spring and summer to begin customization of the system. In late July, the pilot groups, who will be testing the system over the 2009-20 academic year, were identified. The newly formed Academic

Assessment Committee will serve as the Academic pilot group while Academic Success, Career Services, Development, and Human Resources will serve as the Administrative & Educational Support (AES) unit pilot groups.

Alicia Betsinger and Sharon Fass are currently being trained to enter data into the system and will begin formal training with the AES pilot groups during late September and early October.

Training dates and times have not yet been scheduled with the Academic Assessment Committee but the plan is to also provide training to this group during the fall semester.

Please note that the Office of Institutional Research will be available for departmental and individual training needs as the adoption process unfolds across campus.

What's your I.Q. ?

- Q: Can rubrics be used for non-academic purposes?**
- A.** Absolutely! Rubrics help with clarifying expectations, and they support assessment, planning, and evaluation in both academic and non-academic settings. In the end, rubrics are a tool that defines different levels of performance on any type of task not just assignments or activities in the classroom.