2018-2019 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to james.solomon@csun.edu, Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by September 30, 2019. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. Please identify your department/program in the file name for your report.

College: CSBS

Department: Sociology

Program:

Assessment liaison: Ellis Godard

1. Please check off whichever is applicable:
   A. ___X____ Measured student work within program major/options.
   B. ___X____ Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.
   C. ________ Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.
   D. _________ Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Basic Skills outcomes

2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). On a separate sheet, provide a brief overview of this year’s assessment activities, including:
   • an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, application, or GE assessment) that it enacted
   • if your department implemented assessment option A, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year’s measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
   • if your department implemented assessment option B, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year’s analyses and past and future assessment activities
   • if your department implemented option C, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
   • if your program implemented option D, exclusively or simultaneously with options A, B, and/or C, identify the basic skill(s) assessed and the precise learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
   • in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university’s commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
   • any other assessment-related information you wish to include, including SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes), and/or the creation and modification of new assessment instruments

3. Preview of planned assessment activities for 2018-19 Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.
2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s).

In 2016, the Department of Sociology began assessing these three student learning outcomes (SLOs):

(1) Students will be able to recall and comprehend concepts, principles, theories, and knowledge in the field of Sociology and as related to their particular option.
(2) Students will be able to recall and interpret common statistics used in Sociology.
(3) Students will demonstrate the ability to collect, process, and interpret research data.

These outcomes were measured in four courses (SOC 368 Sociological Theory I, SOC 468 Sociological Theory II, SOC 364 Social Statistics, and SOC 497 Research Methods) in Fall 2016, Spring 2017, and Fall 2017. (Beyond the latter period, the Department underwent a curriculum revision, effective Fall 2018, including changes to some of these course titles and numbers.) While the 2016-2017 report concerned analysis for only one of the course courses (SOC 364 Social Statistics), this report (like the one for Fall 2018) provides analysis for all four core courses, assessed in Spring 2019.

Methodology

We assessed student learning by using a pre-test/post-test research methodology using online instruments. (The first two semesters were conducted via Moodle; the third and fourth were conducted via Canvas). Each semester, all students in all sections of our core courses were asked to complete a multiple-choice pre-test at the beginning of the semester to measure their baseline knowledge of the subject (theory, statistics and research methods). At the end of the semester students were asked to complete the same multiple-choice test (the post-test). This methodology allowed us to estimate gains in knowledge over the semester.

Because we had used this assessment methodology for approximately 3 years, we were already well-aware of its limitations. Since the online assessment tests were voluntary with no incentive to participate (including no effect on students’ grades), some students did not complete the tests despite the assessment liaison’s numerous pleas to do so. To address these limitations, we embedded one of our assessment instruments in the final exam for one section of SOC 364 Social Statistics during 2016-2017. We look forward to reintroducing this element in future assessment.

Participation

Table 1, below, summarizes the sample sizes for the Department’s Spring 2019 assessment tests. A total of 510 students, filling 859 seats in our core courses, were invited to complete pre- and post-test assessments in those courses. Of those 859 potential pre/post pairings, we received assessment submissions from 618 seats (72%), including 519 pre-tests and 372 post-tests, though only 273 (32%) of the potential pairs completed both pre- and post-test for the same course.
Table 1: Sample Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Theory I</th>
<th>Theory II</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invited Students</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test Submissions</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test Submissions</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired Pre &amp; Post Tests</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, participation rates ranged from 81% to 94% - below what we might expect from students responding to faculty requests, but higher than in some previous years, and remarkably high for non-incentivized surveys generally. Of the 242 students invited to take the Statistics assessment tests, 153 took the pre-test and 116 took the post-test. Only 85 took both tests, though only 184 (91%) of the 242 took at least one of the two. The lowest participation was among the 241 students invited to take the Methods assessment tests, of whom 128 took the pre-test, 93 took the post-test, and 61 took both tests, but only 160 (81%) took at least one of the two. There were 188 students each invited to take the Theory 1 and Theory 2 assessment tests. Of the 188 invited to take the Theory 1 assessments, 125 took the pre-test and 88 took the post-test; only 73 took both tests, but 140 (94%) of the 188 took at least one of the two. Of the 188 invited to take the Theory 2 assessment, 113 took the pre-test and 75 took the post-test; only 54 took both tests, but 91% of the 134 took at least one of the two.

Results

Table 2, below, provides summary descriptive results from the eight tests (pre and post, in each of four courses). For each course, this table provides the average percentage of questions correct on each test, the standard deviation of scores around each of those averages, the aggregate improvement from the pre-test to post-test, and the individual-level change from student-matched data for those participants who completed both the pre- and post-test.
Table 2: Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stats</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Theory I</th>
<th>Theory II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test Avg. % Correct</td>
<td>80.69%</td>
<td>71.97%</td>
<td>85.43%</td>
<td>81.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test Std.Dev.</td>
<td>14.12%</td>
<td>16.32%</td>
<td>9.38%</td>
<td>10.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test Avg. % Correct</td>
<td>84.60%</td>
<td>74.95%</td>
<td>86.15%</td>
<td>81.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test Std.Dev</td>
<td>9.24%</td>
<td>18.77%</td>
<td>15.26%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate Delta</td>
<td>3.91%</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
<td>0.72%</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Delta</td>
<td>3.70%</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>1.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Std.Dev.</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>18.77%</td>
<td>15.26%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the pre-test scores were higher than in previous instances of our departmental assessment. This may be partly due to the timing. The pre-test was not able to be sent until the third week of classes, with follow-ups during the fourth, rather than during the first and second, respectively. Moreover, previous assessments had been in the fall, which may have included more students new to CSUN, whereas these tests (and requests) were in the spring, which may be more likely to have students either more familiar with the department and discipline, and regardless involves students typically one semester later in their academic career and so more studied in the discipline. Post-test scores which are notably (and in some cases statistically significantly) higher also support that spring students simply do better on the assessment tests. Meanwhile, lower standard deviations, across all four classes and in both the pre- and post-tests, illustrate lower variation among the students.

As a joint effect of better scores and less variation, the change in grades from pre- to post-test – again, across all four courses – was notably smaller, ranging from 0.72% (in Theory 1) to 3.91% (in Statistics), compared to 11.07% and 22.43%, respectively, from the previous year’s assessment report. And those are based on aggregation of all pre- and post-tests, regardless of pairing; paired pre- and post-tests show an individualized change as low as 0.07% in Theory 1 – in other words, there was essentially no measured difference from the pre- to post-test in our first Theory course this term.

The 153 students who took the Statistics pre-test got an average of 81% of the 7 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 14%, while the 116 students who took the Statistics post-test got an average of 85% of the 7 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 9%. In the aggregate, that’s an improvement of 4%. But we were also able to match up data for the 85 students who took both tests; among those 85, there was an average improvement of nearly 4% with a standard deviation of 17%.

The Methods assessment had similar results, though with lower pre- and post-test averages: The 128 students who took the Methods pre-test got an average of 72% of the 11 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 16%, while the 93 students who took the Methods post-test got an
average of 75% of the 11 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 19%. In the aggregate, that's an improvement of 3%. But we were also able to match up data for the 61 students who took both tests; among those 61, there was an average improvement of 3% with a standard deviation of 19%.

Both theory courses, conversely, showed little or no change. The 125 students who took the Theory1 pre-test got an average of 85% of the 6 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 9%, while the 88 students who took the Theory1 post-test got an average of 86% of the 6 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 15%. In the aggregate, that's an improvement of 1%. But we were also able to match up data for the 73 students who took both tests; among those 73, there was an average improvement of 0% with a standard deviation of 15%. Theory 2 was only marginally better: The 113 students who took the Theory2 pre-test got an average of 82% of the 6 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 10%, while the 75 students who took the Theory2 post-test got an average of 82% of the 6 questions correct, with a standard deviation of 15%. In the aggregate, that's an improvement of 0%. But we were also able to match up data for the 73 students who took both tests; among those 54, there was an average improvement of 2% with a standard deviation of 15%.

In summary, as Figure 1 below shows, Statistics continues to have the steepest gain across the semester, as with the two immediately previous assessments. Despite other potential concerns about this year’s data, that reinforces that our Statistics offering is having an impact on SLOs and that students are, on average and in the aggregate, at least by these measures, learning about statistical techniques using by sociologists. Methods, meanwhile, showed a notable improvement, and an even sharper proportional increase than last year. However, Theory 1 continues to have the smallest gain for the third assessment in a row – and results this year and two years ago suggest that last year’s results, indicating steep improvement from the Theory 2 pre- to -post-test may have been an anomaly.

**Figure 1 – Pre- to Post-Test Delta, by Course, Last Year vs This Year.**

![2017-2018 ASSESSMENT RESULTS](chart1)

![2018-2019 ASSESSMENT RESULTS](chart2)
Conclusions & Future Plans

We continue to remain relatively optimistic about our Statistics and Methods offerings, despite substantial loss of senior faculty in these areas, including several nearing the end of their FERP years. We continue to keep an eye on our Theory offerings, which have also lost several faculty in recent years. More generally, we continue to be concerned about tenure density in our department, and with our ability to maintain adequate pools of non-tenure-track lecturers able to teach these core courses. We find no disruption in these core courses from the recent, massive revision to the Department’s curriculum, though recognize temporal variation in the implement of assessments. We look forward to continuing these pre- and post-tests for the core classes, in ways that will maximize comparability.

3. Preview of planned assessment activities for next year.

First, while our Department will be assessing GE courses this year and so is not required to conduct our regular this assessment as well, we will be implementing these assessments in the four core classes for Spring 2020 to look for any pattern from Spring 2019. Second, we will re-introduce these assessments in the Fall, for comparability with previous years – and, moreover, shift to doing them both semesters each year, both for continued comparability and to assess any systematic variation(s) across the calendar year. Third, we will work with external IT personnel to ensure that assessments start earlier in each semester, to ensure that the pre-test is as “pre” as possible. Finally, we will be assessing GE courses this year – likely including all sections of SOC 150 (our Department’s introductory course) given it’s high DFU rate and high participation by non-majors.