

Cluster
One
Annual
Report

2007-
2008

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary	3
Cluster Objectives	4
Learning Objectives:	4
Unit Accomplishments.....	6
Planning Database Objective 2007/08:.....	6
Planned Cluster Activities from the 2006-2007 annual report	6
Actual Cluster Activities.....	6
Assessment Reports	9
Information Literacy Assessment	9
Oral Communication Assessment.....	13
Critical Thinking Assessment.....	19
Writing Assessment	21
Mapping Program Objectives to Curriculum.....	23
Mapping Program Objectives to Assessment Methods	25
Mapping Objectives to Assessment Results	27
Statistical Profile 2007-2008.....	33
Planned Cluster Activities for 2008–2009	35
Appendix A: SCHEV Writing Assessment Report	37

Executive Summary

Overall, Cluster One continues to function efficiently and effectively. A number of improvements to the Cluster were planned and executed this year. Of primary note are three achievements: the construction of a set of learning objectives for information literacy; the honoring of a Cluster One faculty member, Michael Moghtader, with the General Education Distinguished Teaching Award, and a newly piloted spring wait list enrollment process which dramatically improved enrollment in GWRIT 103 for spring 2008.

Other developments within the Cluster include:

- Two newly developed and approved learning communities will be offered in 2008-09.
- A learning community for transfer students is being researched.
- A new process for completion of GCOM is being developed for interested transfer students.
- New assessment instruments in the critical thinking area are being piloted in GISAT and GBUS 160.
- Cluster One continued its work with Orientation to ensure that first year students are quickly and effectively acclimated to the JMU community.
- Cluster One continues to offer enrichment workshops to faculty across the university through regular participation with the Center for Faculty Innovation

The learning objectives for information literacy were developed as a direct response to the 2006/2007 Cluster One self-study. Cluster One will continue to integrate the learning objectives more fully into the Cluster and university community. The Teaching Award and CFI workshops offered an opportunity for Cluster One to engage faculty in conversation about the value of General Education. These conversations were encouraged by the self-study and will continue to be critical to the mission of the Cluster. Another final recommendation of the self-study, continued development and improvement of assessment methods and instruments, was met by the development and piloting of new assessment instruments in GBUS and GISAT 160. These two piloted instruments have great promise for creating consistency in pedagogy and achievement across multiple sections. It is important to note that assessment in the Cluster will continue to need construction and improvement. In an unanticipated move, SCHEV changed its requirement for assessment methodology from competency-based to a value-added model. This change will dramatically impact assessment in Cluster One.

Cluster Objectives

The learning goals and objectives reported below were used by Cluster 1 faculty during the 2007-2008 academic year.

Learning Objectives:

After completing Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century, students should be able to use reading, writing and oral communication, critical thinking, and information literacy skills for inquiring, learning, thinking and communicating in their personal, academic, and civic lives.

Required Competencies:

- Students must demonstrate competency in information literacy by successfully completing the Tech Level I exam and the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISST).

Critical Thinking

- Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments, and positions.
- Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.
- Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.

Human Communication

- Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization, and presentation.
- Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts.
- Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.
- Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of contexts.
- Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on communication.
- Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.

Writing

- Develop and support a relevant and informed thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion.

- Analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements.
- Reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing).
- Demonstrate effective writing skills and processes by employing invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion.
- Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support a thesis and effectively utilize the conventions of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Based on recommendations from the 2006/2007 self-study, Cluster One adopted a new set of learning objectives for the information literacy area. The new learning objectives are stated below:

Information Literacy

After completing both information literacy tests and course work in critical thinking, human communication, and writing, students should be able to:

- Determine when information is needed and find it efficiently using a variety of reference sources.
- Evaluate the quality of information.
- Use information effectively for an appropriate purpose.
- Employ appropriate technologies to create information-based work.
- Use information ethically and legally.

These learning objectives were liberally adapted from the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

The second change suggested by the self study, returning to a global set of learning objectives for the cluster, was considered by the Cluster One Committee during the fall semester of 2007 and tabled. The Committee will continue to consider the benefits and difficulties likely to ensue with the collapsing of the objectives into a single integrated list.

Unit Accomplishments

Planning Database Objective 2007/08:

Cluster One will respond to recommendations from self-study process completed 2006-2007.

Planned Cluster Activities from the 2006-2007 annual report

- Increased integration of the information literacy objectives into all aspects of the cluster (*See Cluster activities 4 and 5*).
- Development of a process that will increase both intra- and interdisciplinary connections of faculty within the cluster, including the training of newly hired faculty. (*See Cluster Activities 1, 2, and 4. Regular communication with Cluster faculty is accomplished through email, a blackboard website, and C1 Committee representation.*)
- Conscious and deliberate inclusion of the General Education and Cluster One learning objectives in both syllabi and class discussion. (*See Cluster Activities 2 and 14. Review of syllabi is ongoing. Participation in Center for Faculty Innovation is promoted.*)
- Reworking of the Cluster goals and learning objectives to enhance the interconnections of the coursework (*Conversation within the Cluster Committee continues. Debate continues about the appropriateness of a global list of objectives versus four area-focused sets of objectives See page 3 of this report.*)
- Continued development of assessment processes, procedures, and instruments for program corroboration and improvement. (*See Cluster Activities 11, 12, and 13.*)

Actual Cluster Activities

1. Cluster One cross-disciplinary connections were encouraged by a lunch reception for faculty in the Cluster One during the week before classes in August 2007.
2. The use of JMU developed text, Federalist 10 firmly established the academic focus of Orientation. The text was acclaimed by faculty for its appropriateness. Convocation worked smoothly.
3. Cluster One worked with Orientation to create a more efficient pre-registration sheet for summer orientation. The Cluster One Committee faculty liaisons from each of the courses developed extended descriptions of each course. The provided descriptions should permit incoming first year students to make more informed decisions in their One Book selections.
4. Based on the Center for Faculty Innovation Workshops, Kathy Clarke from Carrier Library developed an information literacy workshop for new faculty that served new acclimate new Cluster One faculty member effectively.
5. In collaboration with library personnel, the General Education Council and the Cluster One Committee, a set of learning objectives for information literacy were developed.

These learning objectives should assist the university community to recognize and promote important student competencies for the 21st century.

6. A Cluster One faculty member, Michael Moghtader, from Writing and Rhetoric Studies was honored and recognized when he received the General Education Distinguished Teaching Award for 2008.
7. The GWRIT Waiver Exam continues to provide a way for those students with SAT scores of 680 or higher to exempt out of GWRIT 103. This waiver process has resulted in reducing the required number of GWRIT 103 sections by at least one section every fall.
8. Cluster One continues to respond to a multiplicity of enrollment issues.
 - a. Changes to the pre-registration enrollment process greatly reduced the number of empty seats in GWRIT 103 for spring semester. The new enrollment process utilizes a wait list instead of increasing the number of sections of the course. The wait list proved an effective means to ensure that those students needing the course could find a seat or were given a deferral for fall 2008.
 - b. GCOM has developed an on-line version that will join GBUS 160, GPHIL 120, and GWRIT 103 in our electronic course offerings. This on-line version of GCOM 123 is being offered during the second summer session 2008 and should assist our upper-level transfer students to more efficiently complete their Cluster One required courses.
 - c. GWRIT 103 faculty applied for and received a summer grant to pilot a new hybrid version of GWRIT in fall 2008. This hybrid version will permit two sections of GWRIT 103 to use the same classroom simultaneously. Each hybrid section will meet once a week in the traditional classroom and fulfill the rest of the class meetings via blackboard and the World Wide Web.
9. A potential new course for the writing area of Cluster One, TSC 110: Writing in the Professions, was proposed and under development when there was a structural change in the College of Arts and Letters (CAL). The merging of two departments, Technical and Scientific Communication (TSC) and the Writing Program, into Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication had the unexpected outcome of sidelining the new course. It remains to be seen whether the new department will develop and propose an additional course for the writing area.
10. Learning communities continue to be an important part of Cluster One.
 - a. Our long-standing learning community Teer remains a strong offering.
 - b. The learning community, Madison International, was piloted in fall semester 2007, and, after assessment, underwent some dramatic changes. Based on faculty and student response, the learning community has been re-envisioned for 2008/2009. Cluster Four classes were removed from the course line-up because many of the students were pursuing majors that dictated coursework other than GEOG 200 in Cluster Four. Together with IBAVI, Cluster One revamped the learning community for the 2008/2009 academic year. Students will begin their experience in Madison International with a community focused GCOM 123. Because international students found that GWRIT 103 was overly challenging during the first semester, GWRIT 103 will now be part of the spring coursework for the community. This change permits international students to complete WRIT 100 during fall semester. IBAVI has identified two additional courses (an HRD

course and another general education class GEIC 202) that those students desiring to remain within Madison International for a second year will be required to complete. These changes should resolve many of the concerns articulated by faculty and students.

- c. New learning communities were developed and proposed for 2008/2009.
 - i. The first is the Eco Learning Community. Based on the Teer model, this learning community requires that students complete all three Cluster One courses in the fall semester. This community blends GIST 160, GWRIT 103, and GCOM 123 and will serve 22 students.
 - ii. The second is the Honors Learning Community. All three honors sections of GCOM will function as a learning community. The 66 students will share a living space and many co-curricular activities.
 - iii. A third new learning community for transfer students is being considered. This summer, supported by a General Education Summer Grant, a faculty member in Communication Studies is examining current models of non-residential learning communities and first semester transfer student enrollment in General Education classes to determine the appropriateness of offering a learning community opportunity for transfer students. Part of this research will be discussion with students about the desirability of being in a learning community identified as serving transfer students.
11. GBUS 160 and GISAT developed new assessment instruments and processes. While these new processes do not meet the new SCHEV mandate for value-added assessment. The instruments and processes are an important step in creating commonality and consistency across the multiple sections of the two courses. GHIST 150, supported by a 2008 General Education Summer Grant, is in the process of developing its own instrument and process.
12. In an unanticipated move, SCHEV changed its requirement for assessment methodology from competency based to a value-added model. This change will dramatically impact assessment in Cluster One and changed much of the conversation within the Cluster from March 2008 onwards. Beginning in summer 2008, a new assessment process and instrument for writing and critical thinking will be developed.
13. The Test of Oral Communication Skills (TOCS), a collaboration of the Center for Assessment and Research Studies and the School of Communication Studies was showcased nationally at the National Communication Association Conference in November 2007. Changes to adaptex software prevented TOCS from being adopted by other institutions.
14. Ongoing involvement in the Center for Faculty Innovation workshops provided a opportunity for faculty to share and hone new pedagogical techniques and processes. Of particular note during 2007/2008 were members of the GCOM who provided workshops designed to promote effective individual and group public speaking assignments.

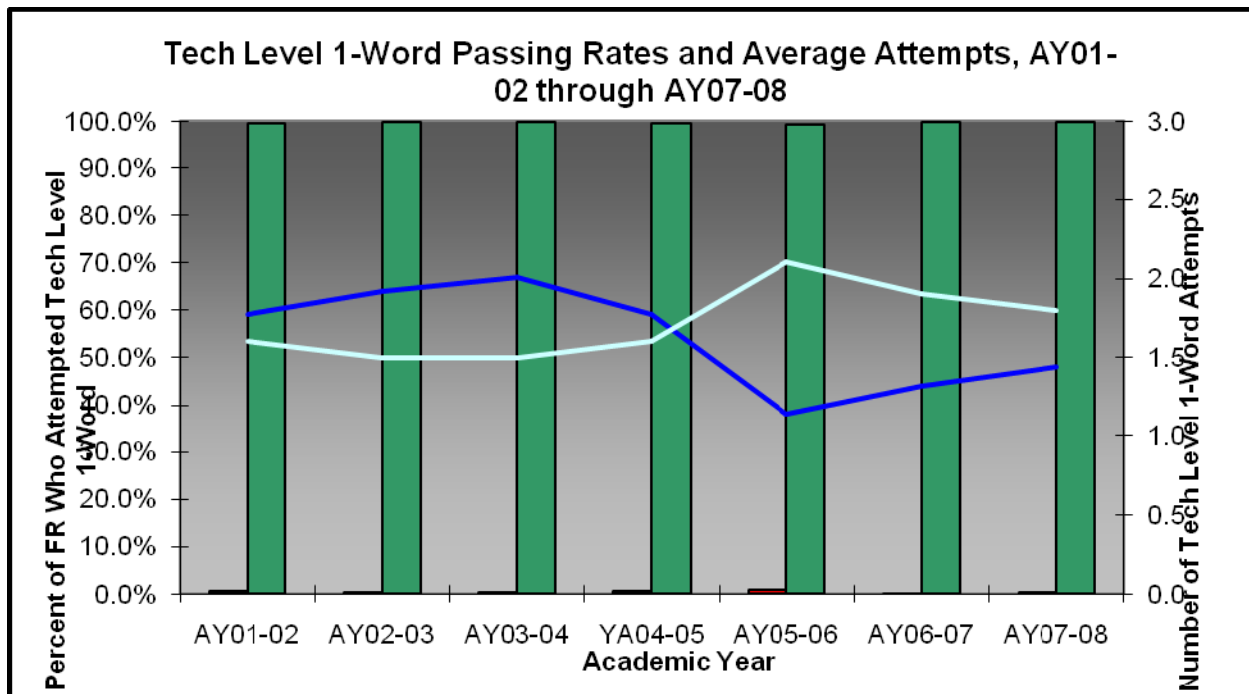
Assessment Reports

Each of the areas of Cluster One uses unique assessment instruments or processes to meet both accountability and pedagogical development needs. The four areas of Cluster One are reported below.

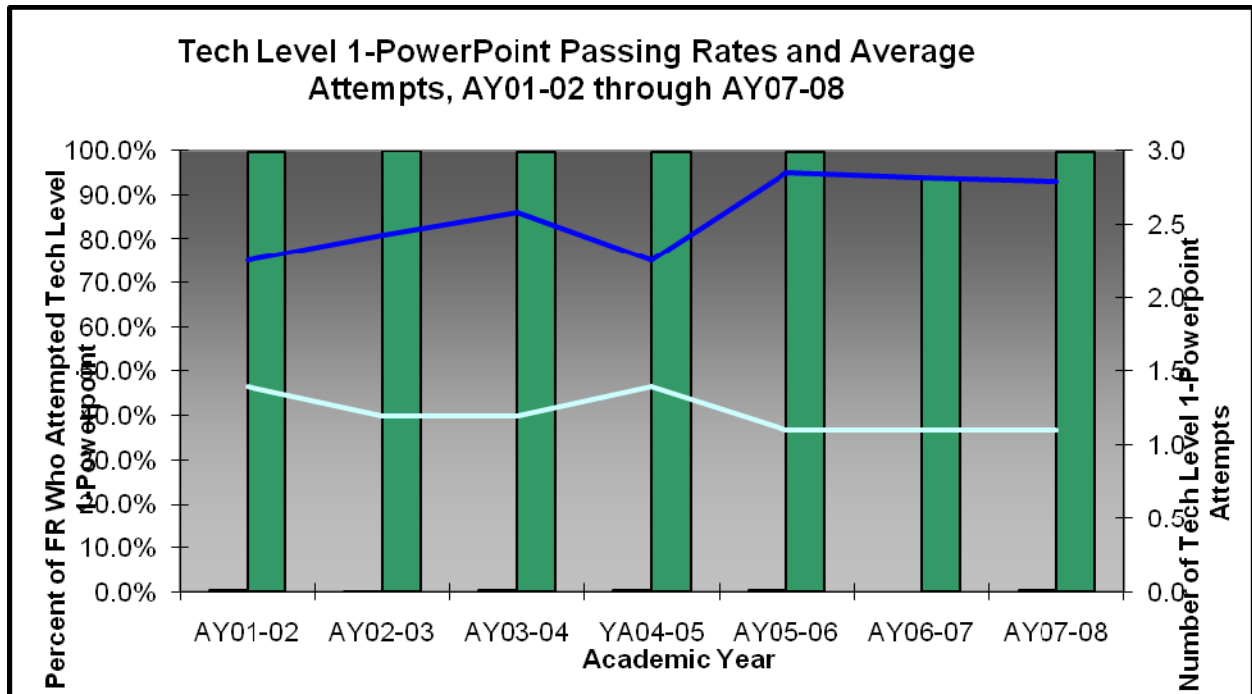
Information Literacy Assessment

The tables in the following sections list the assessment results for freshmen during the academic year 2007-2008 in the area of information literacy.

The sections below summarize the data in a variety of ways. First, basic information is provided about how students performed in general. Then, the number of students meeting the faculty's standards is presented for the, three Tech Level I tests and the ISST test.

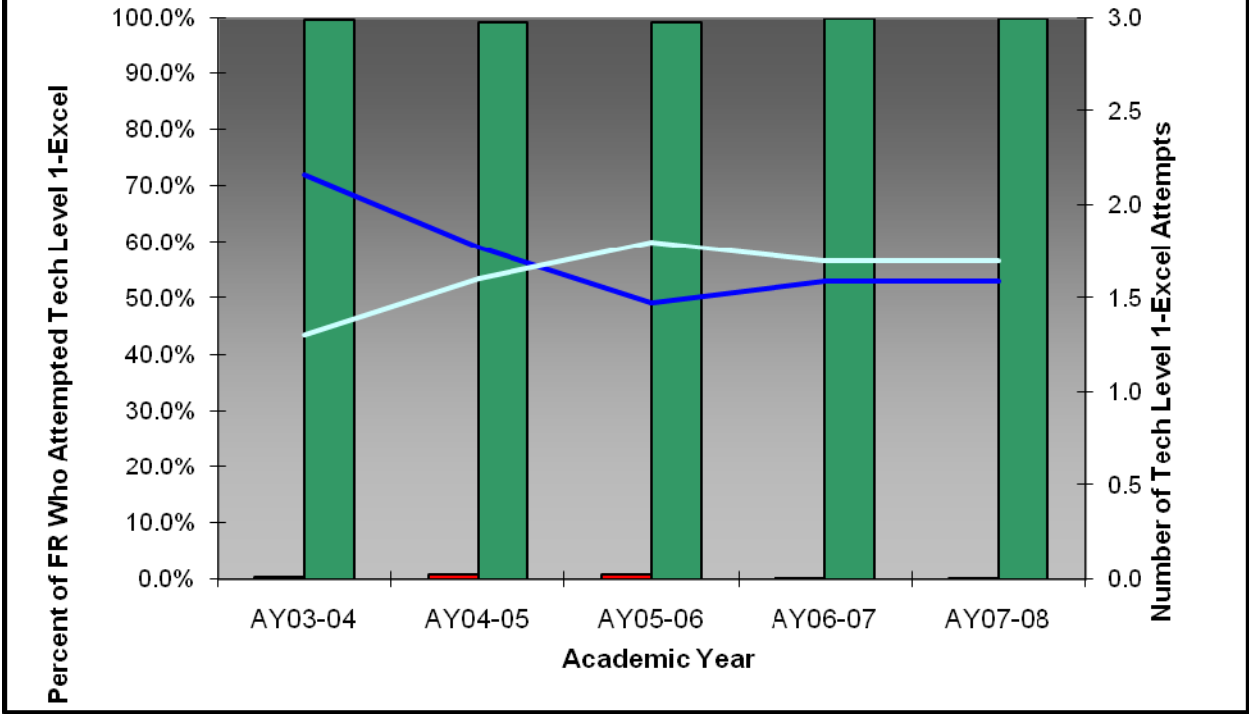






	AY01-02	AY02-03	AY03-04	YA04-05	AY05-06	AY06-07	AY07-08
Did not pass	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0.6%	0.7%	0.002%	0.2%
Passed	99.4%	99.7%	99.8%	99.4%	99.3%	99.9%	99.8%
Passed on 1st attempt	59%	64%	67%	59%	38%	44%	48%
Average attempts	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.1	1.9	1.8

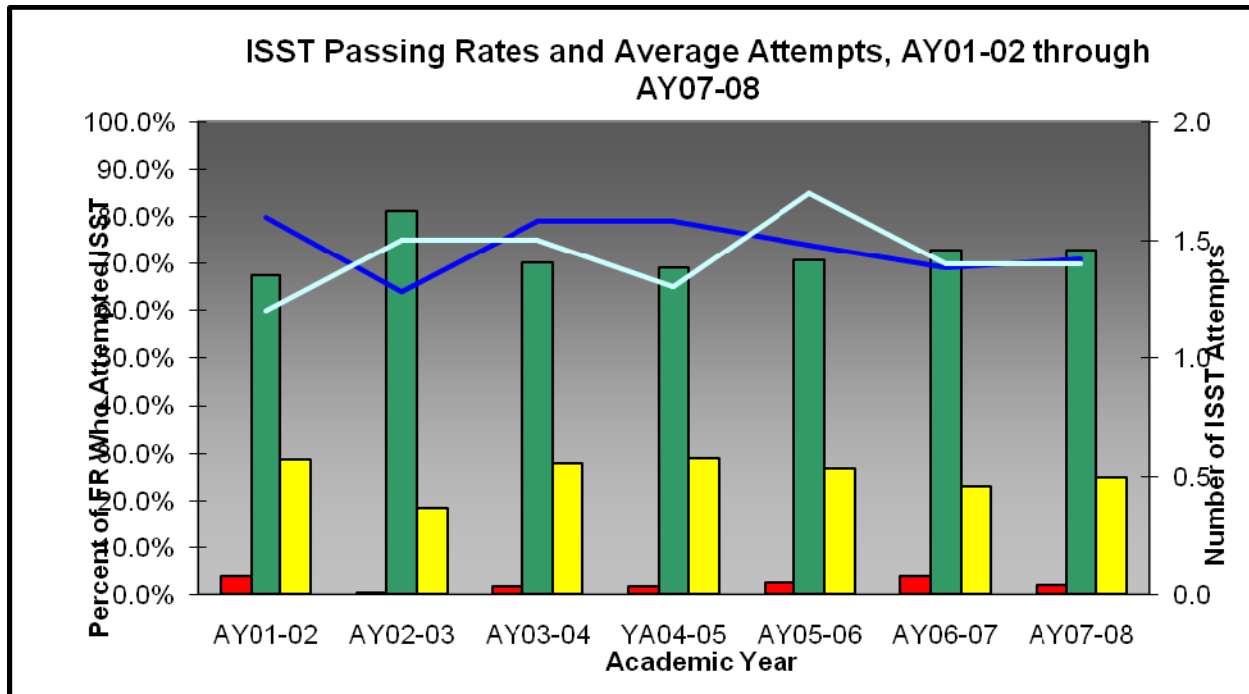


	AY01-02	AY02-03	AY03-04	YA04-05	AY05-06	AY06-07	AY07-08
Did not pass	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Passed	99.6%	99.9%	99.7%	99.6%	99.7%	94.0%	99.8%
Passed on 1st attempt	75%	81%	86%	75%	95%	94%	93%
Average attempts	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.1

Tech Level 1-Excel Passing Rates and Average Attempts, AY03-04 through AY07-08



	AY03-04	AY04-05	AY05-06	AY06-07	AY07-08
 Did not pass	0.4%	0.7%	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%
 Passed	99.6%	99.3%	99.2%	99.8%	99.8%
 Passed on 1st attempt	72%	59%	49%	53%	53%
 Average attempts	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7



	AY01-02	AY02-03	AY03-04	YA04-05	AY05-06	AY06-07	AY07-08
Did not pass	3.9%	0.3%	1.8%	1.8%	2.5%	4.0%	2.0%
Passed	67.5%	81.3%	70.3%	69.2%	70.7%	73.0%	73.0%
Advanced	28.7%	18.5%	27.9%	29.0%	26.8%	23.0%	25.0%
Passed on 1st attempt	80%	64%	79%	79%	74%	69%	71%
Average attempts	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.7	1.4	1.4

Analysis of the data above will be complete during the summer of 2008. Results for the ISST and Tech Level I will be mapped to the new learning objectives for the information literacy area. It is, however, evident from the results that 98% of the current first year cohort have reached competency in information literacy.

Oral Communication Assessment

Comparison Between GCOM Final Exam Scores Fall 2007 vs. Spring 2008

For the 2007-2008 academic year, 3,828 students completed one of the three GCOM final exams. Results for the three tests appear in table form below. Statistics generally indicate that students completing the class in spring semester earn slightly higher scores. The School of Communication Studies attributes the differences primarily to acclimatization to college testing. Faculty are pleased that the overall achievement on the test is greater than 80%.

GCOM 121

Fall 2007 Data		Spring 2008 Data	
Number of Students:	344	Number of Students:	301
Highest Score:	97	Highest Score:	97
Lowest Score:	55	Lowest Score:	49
Mean:	80.35	Mean:	81.14
Median:	82.00	Median:	83.00
Standard Deviation:	7.90	Standard Deviation:	8.24
Standard Error:	0.43	Standard Error:	0.47
Reliability:	0.79	Reliability:	0.82
Mean Quest. Difficulty:	0.80	Mean Question Difficulty:	0.81
Mean Quest. Discrimination:	17.37	Mean Question Discrimination:	17.56

GCOM 122

Fall 2007 Data		Spring 2008 Data	
Number of Students:	324	Number of Students:	273
Highest Score:	94	Highest Score:	97
Lowest Score:	47	Lowest Score:	56
Mean:	81.42	Mean:	83.15
Median:	83.00	Median:	84.00
Standard Deviation:	7.67	Standard Deviation:	6.46
Standard Error:	0.43	Standard Error:	0.39
Reliability:	0.79	Reliability:	0.73
Mean Quest. Difficulty:	0.81	Mean Question Difficulty:	0.83
Mean Quest. Discrimination:	15.95	Mean Question Discrimination:	13.70

GCOM 123

Fall 2007 Data		Spring 2008 Data	
Number of Students:	1343	Number of Students:	1243
Highest Score:	98	Highest Score:	99
Lowest Score:	36	Lowest Score:	42
Mean:	80.46	Mean:	80.79
Median:	81.00	Median:	82.00
Standard Deviation:	8.11	Standard Deviation:	8.38
Standard Error:	0.22	Standard Error:	0.24
Reliability:	0.80	Reliability:	0.82
Mean Quest. Difficulty:	0.80	Mean Question Difficulty:	0.81
Mean Quest. Discrimination:	17.70	Mean Question Discrimination:	18.16

Notes

1. For the 2007-2008 academic year, 3,828 students completed one of the three GCOM final exams. This represents an increase of 231 students when compared to the 2005-2006 academic year, when 3,141 students completed a GCOM final exam. The numbers from the Spring 2006 final exam schedule are somewhat skewed because a Saturday exam was cancelled due to computer software problems. Because of this problem, 456 more JMU students would have taken one of the three GCOM exams that semester.
2. This number (+231 students) represents a 6.42% increase in two academic years.
3. In the spring semester, all GCOM final exams were held during the Monday-Friday final exam time frame. No final exams were held on a Saturday, as has been the case for four academic years. In the spring, due to scheduling, GCOM exams were held in two additional computer labs on the JMU campus.
4. However, because of the additional number of first-year students expected to be in classes at fall census, (3,982) Saturday final exams will again have to be scheduled in order to complete GCOM final exams by the Friday of exam week. Unless the JMU administration addresses the lack of computer lab space for assessment purposes, GCOM will continue to have to schedule Saturday final exams.

Common Items (Easiest and Hardest) on GCOM Final Exams

Improvement in GCOM is increased when an item analysis of test questions is performed and that information shared with the rest of the faculty. Below is a table which shows the broad areas for each of the questions and which concepts our students find the most difficult or easiest.

Most Difficult Fall 2007			Most Difficult Spring 2008		
Question #	Subject Area	Exams Q Appears	Question #	Subject Area	Exams Q Appears
16	(Listening)	listed on 121 only	16	(Listening)	listed on 121 & 123
18	(Communication Competence)	listed on 122 & 123	18	(Communication Competence)	listed on 122 & 123
33	(Language)	listed on 121 & 123	33	(Language)	listed on 123 only
815	(Persuasion)	listed on 122 only	815	(Persuasive Speaking)	listed on 122 only
10001	(Motivated Sequence)	listed on 121 only	10001	(Motivated Sequence)	listed on 121 only
10005	(Persuasion)	listed on 122 only	10005	(Persuasion)	listed on 122 only
10008	(Source Credibility)	listed on 123 only	10008	(Source Credibility)	listed on 121 only
102035	(Speech Parts)	listed on 121 only	102034	(Persuasion)	listed on 122 & 123
102098	(Propositions)	listed on 123 only	203061	(Perception)	listed on 123 only
102101	(Propositions)	listed on 123 only	203076	(Group Think)	listed on 121 only
203076	(Group Think)	listed on 121 only	312154	(Transitions)	listed on 121 only

Easiest Fall 2007			Easiest Spring 2008		
Question #	Subject Area	Exams Q Appears	Question	Subject Area	Exams Q Appears
22	(Listening)	listed on 121 & 123	22	(Listening)	listed on 121, 122, & 123
63	(Speech Types)	listed on 121 & 123	30	(Self-Concept)	listed on 123 only
387	(Speech Parts)	listed on 123 only	63	(Speech Types)	listed on 121 & 123
750	(Cultural Communication)	listed on 122 only	387	(Speech Parts)	listed on 123 only
774	(Visual Aids)	listed on 123 only	796	(Speaker Credibility)	listed on 122 only
796	(Speaker Credibility)	listed on 121 & 122	797	(Comm Models)	listed on 122 only
101028	(Nonverbal Communication)	listed on 121, 122, & 123	816	(Transitions)	listed on 121 only
101040	(Plagiarism)	listed on 121 only	10002	(Speaker Credibility)	listed on 122 only
102117	(Communication Apprehension)	listed on 122 only	101028	(Nonverbal Communication)	listed on 121 & 123
			101040	(Plagiarism)	listed on 121 only
			101047	(Info Literacy)	listed on 121 only
			102117	(Comm Apprehension)	listed on 122 only

Notes

1. The questions on the GCOM final exams in Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 were the same in order to allow for comparisons between semesters.
2. In the Most Difficult Questions category, 8 of the hardest questions identified in Fall 2007 were also deemed to be the hardest questions in Spring 2008 as well.
3. In the Easiest Questions category, 7 of the easiest questions identified in Fall 2007 were also deemed to be the easiest questions in Spring 2008 as well.
4. The GCOM Basic Course Director, along with the three GCOM liaisons will attempt to identify why the hardest questions were difficult for students. We will look at the questions to make sure the answer key is correct, whether the ways in which the questions were asked could be made clearer, and if there are ambiguous answer choices that are distracting students. If it is determined that answer choices are causing students to pick the wrong answer, we will determine the best course of action to take.
5. As for the easiest questions, the Basic Course Director and the GCOM liaisons will attempt to determine why these 7 questions are some of the easiest questions on the final exams. We will determine whether these questions can be made more rigorous or can be

rewritten and moved higher on Bloom's taxonomy. Most of the easy questions require simple recall or for students to know the definition of a particular concept.

Critical Thinking Assessment

Since the fall of 2004, Form A of the Comprehensive Test of Critical Thinking (CTCT) has been used as the instrument for assessing critical thinking. Little value was given to the CTCT tests results because of the small effect size and the low reliability of the test. With the effect size so small it was also difficult for faculty to see how they might use the results to improve their classes.

After much conversation within Cluster One, it was determined that the CTCT would be abandoned. In its place, faculties in each of the five courses are developing independent assessment instruments. It is hoped that each of the assessment instruments will create greater alignment and consistency across the multiple sections of each course. Additionally, once the instruments have stabilized, Cluster One will once again attempt to develop a cross-discipline test of critical thinking.

Two of the five courses piloted new assessment instruments and processes during 2007/2008. Results are still being analyzed; however, preliminary data indicates that both GBUS 160 and GISAT 160 are encouraged by the results.

GBUS 160 Assessment

Members of the GBUS faculty developed a 45 item assessment instrument that was used as part of a cumulative final exam in all sections of GBUS 160 in both fall and spring 2007/2008. The instrument was designed to assess achievement (competency) in 9 areas/domains of critical thinking. The exam was designed to be given in an online format. GBUS faculty will spend the summer evaluating the results. There is concern that with the new SCHEV mandates for a value-added assessment the process might have to be changed. GBUS believes that the multiple choice cumulative exam measurement method might actually make it easier to claim that the course consistently moves students from the lower order critical thinking levels to the higher order skill sets.

GISAT 160 Assessment

GISAT 160 piloted an assessment instrument that was developed in a general education summer grant during summer 2007. Students in six faculty classes were asked to respond to a questionnaire about the same reading ("Bill Joy's Bad Dream," by Joannie Fischer from *Prism Magazine*, a publication of the American Society for Engineering Education [ASEE]) as a homework assignment twice; once during the first week of class, and again at the mid-semester point. Six student papers were selected from each class to serve as a random sample for evaluation. In short, the results of the assessment were encouraging, but GISAT 160 faculty believe that the questionnaire needs revision and further testing. One faculty member noted:

Interpreting the scores is a bit difficult. *It struck me that the scale was heavily weighted towards quantitative analysis (# of examples) rather than qualitative analysis.* A number of student answers, for example, were pretty good but only used one example. In terms of change, the two best students made the biggest improvement (+25 for two students),

which isn't surprising, I suppose. The three middling students made virtually no improvement (+2 net for three students), in part because two of them handed in papers that had very few differences with their initial answers. The weakest student actually did improve quite a bit (+9). On three of the answers (4, 7a, & 8), one or more students performed worse on the midterm than on the initial assessment.

Although I now think that the assessment instrument is a bit flawed, the improvement in some of the students was quite pronounced. It's interesting that in their course evaluations, many of the students express the belief that the course isn't important or worthwhile, but for some students it seems clear that they are learning some critical thinking skills. That, at least, is encouraging.

Another faculty member noted "As you see [by the results], almost everyone improved but both the starting and ending points were wildly varied."

All but four students (of 24) improved their scores, which is to be expected, considering most students know little about critical thinking or reading. This is a very informal assessment. Were we to perform a more formal study, faculty would agree more specifically on what sort of response constituted a particular score...as well as other specific guidelines for reading and scoring.

An additional benefit of this attempt was claimed by the liaison to the Cluster One Committee: "Since the test was administered, most GISAT 160 faculty have improved their instruction in critical reading, largely due to having more experience teaching the class."

GISAT 160 will continue to tweak the instrument and the process, accomplishing both a measure of student success and improvement as well as creating consistency and improving pedagogy.

Writing Assessment

Because the portfolio rating is accomplished during August, the results below are based on writing samples collected during the 2006 – 2007 academic year. This year, for the first time, Writing and Rhetoric Studies took primary responsibility for the construction of the Writing Assessment Report. A complete copy of this report is located in Appendix A of this report. Below is extracted information in keeping with last year's Cluster Report.

During both the fall and spring semesters, a random sample of students enrolled in GWRIT 103 courses are selected and asked to submit two of their best writing samples. The sample is selected so that each section of the course is represented in the analyses. Each pair of writing samples comprises a portfolio, which is collected at the end of each semester. During the summer months, instructors of the course volunteer to serve as raters of portfolios. Each portfolio is randomly assigned to two raters and the average of their scores is recorded. If there is more than a one point difference between the two raters, a third instructor is randomly selected and asked to rate the portfolio and provide a third score. Raters are instructed to assign a single score to the entire portfolio, using a scale from 1 to 4 and based on a scoring rubric (see appendix A).

The mean rating of student portfolios for 2006-07 is 2.20 (SD=0.68). Descriptive statistics for all eight years are shown in Table 1. The total number of portfolios this year was 508, which was rated by 22 faculty members. This downturn in mean portfolio scores was beyond that expected by chance. Although the average portfolio score for this year did not continue the pattern of increasing scores that was established in the previous three years, this year's average portfolio score was consistent with scores from 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

Table 1. Portfolio Rating Descriptive Statistics

Year	Academic Year	Average	Standard Deviation	# Portfolios	# Raters
1	1999-2000	2.36	0.65	476	17
2	2000-2001	2.43	0.67	436	18
3	2001-2002	2.47	0.67	493	12
4	2002-2003	2.45	0.68	444	13
5	2003-2004	2.20	0.60	423	18
6	2004-2005	2.23	0.59	405	17
7	2005-2006	2.37	0.69	439	17
8	2006-2007	2.20	0.68	508	22

The weighted average over the first six years is 2.36

Table 2 shows by academic year the proportion of ratings changes within various score ranges. Because each portfolio was rated by two or three raters, the scores ranges are not all integers. Interestingly, the data indicate that there were similarities in ratings for 2002-03 and for 2005-06. There were also similarities in ratings for 2003-04 and for 2004-05. Specifically, portfolio ratings of 4 dropped from 2002-03 to 2003-04, but rose slightly in 2004-05 and substantially in 2005-2006. The ratings of four for 2005-2006 approach those for 2002-03, which is the academic year before portfolios were based on GWRIT 103.

Table 2. Ratings Falling Within Various Score Ranges

Academic	Year				
Score Ratings	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
4	4.10%	0.20%	0.70%	2.50%	.60%
3 to3.5	27.30%	15.60%	16.00%	26.20%	18.70%
2 to2.67	55.00%	61.90%	62.70%	56.90%	54.50%
1 to1.67	13.70%	22.20%	20.50%	14.40%	26.20%

Discussion

While average scores in 2006-2007 did dip from their 2005-2006 high, the shift should not be cause for distress. As pointed out in “Average Portfolio Ratings,” starting on page 6 of this report, the total average rater score for 2006-2007 is comparable to the average scores in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The 2006-2007 numbers for ratings within score levels (Table 2) and for rater agreement (Table 3) are also comparable to the 2003-2005 numbers. Finally, the “semester effect” reported in 2005-2006, when the mean rating for portfolios collected in the fall semester was significantly lower than the rating for spring portfolios, has also subsided in 2006-2007. Here again, the 2006-2007 numbers (Table 4) closely resemble those reported in 2004-2005. In sum, it is very reasonable to focus on 2005-2006 as a sudden spike, instead of focusing on 2006-2007 as a drop.

Two differences between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 perhaps account for at least part of the shift in average portfolio scores. A first difference lies in this year’s relatively higher number of raters (Table 1) and in the turnover among raters. Of the twenty-two raters in 2006-2007—the highest number of raters in all the years Writing and Rhetoric Studies has conducted its self-assessment—fifteen had not participated in the previous year’s Assessment. Of the fifteen new raters in 2006-2007, seven were participating in Assessment for the first time.

The second, more obvious difference between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 came in the structure of Assessment. In 2005-2006, raters were for the first time paired in teams of two, with each team responsible for rating an identical number of portfolios. In 2006-2007, Writing and Rhetoric Studies returned to its earlier practice of not pairing raters.

As a whole, data gathered during the 2006-2007 Assessment suggests that Writing and Rhetoric Studies continues to meet and in some cases to exceed the goals and objectives stated on page 3 of this report.

Recommendations

Writing and Rhetoric Studies offers the following recommendations to improve the Assessment process and rubric:

- Spend more time engaging faculty discussion of the writing portfolio rubric and rating process
- Encourage all faculty, continuing, new, adjuncts, and graduate instructors to participate in Assessment.

Mapping Program Objectives to Curriculum

Objectives:	Courses/ Experiences Where Objective is Addressed:
Students must demonstrate competency in information literacy	2 Competency Tests: Tech Level I exam and the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISST) Go For the Gold Modules GCOM 121, 122, 123 GWRIT 103
Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120
Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments, and positions.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120
Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120
Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120
Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization, and presentation.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123
Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123
Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123
Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of contexts.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123
Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123

communication.	
Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.	Human Communication Area Courses: <i>GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123</i>
Develop and support a relevant and informed thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Course: <i>GWRIT 103</i>
Analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements.	Writing Course: <i>GWRIT 103</i>
Reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing).	Writing Course: <i>GWRIT 103</i>
Demonstrate effective writing skills and processes by employing invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Course: <i>GWRIT 103</i>
Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support a thesis and effectively utilize the conventions of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Writing Course: <i>GWRIT 103</i>

Mapping Program Objectives to Assessment Methods

Objectives:	Method(s) to Assess Objective:
Students must demonstrate competency in information literacy.	2 Competency Tests (Tech Level 1 & ISST) Items on GCOM cognitive final Writing Portfolio Rubric New learning objectives will be assessed during the 2008/2009 academic year.
Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy.	JMU Test of Critical Thinking was abandoned this year. Each course is developing unique assessment instruments. Plans remain to eventually return to a global instrument.
Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments, and positions.	JMU Test of Critical Thinking was abandoned this year. Each course is developing unique assessment instruments. Plans remain to eventually return to a global instrument.
Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.	JMU Test of Critical Thinking was abandoned this year. Each course is developing unique assessment instruments. Plans remain to eventually return to a global instrument.
Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.	In class assessments.
Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization, and presentation.	GCOM Final Exam
Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts.	GCOM Final Exam
Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.	GCOM Final Exam
Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of	GCOM Final Exam

contexts.	
Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on communication.	GCOM Final Exam
Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.	GCOM Final Exam
Develop and support a relevant and informed thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Portfolio Rating
Analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements.	Writing Portfolio Rating
Reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing).	Writing Portfolio Rating
Demonstrate effective writing skills and processes by employing invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Portfolio Rating
Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support a thesis and effectively utilize the conventions of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Writing Portfolio Rating

Mapping Objectives to Assessment Results

Objectives	Course/ Learning Experiences	Evaluation/ Assessment Methods	Results	Dissemination	Uses of Evaluation
Students must demonstrate competency in information literacy	2 Competency Tests: Tech Level I exam and the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISST) Go For the Gold Modules GCOM 121, 122, 123 GWRIT 103	2 Competency Tests (Tech Level 1 & ISST) Items on GCOM cognitive final Writing Portfolio Rubric	87-99% of all students meet the information literacy standards. The figure range may be accounted for by students who transfer out of JMU prior to completion of the tests.	Test results are shared yearly with Cluster faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	CFI workshops are created to encourage faculty to increase student competency in downstream coursework. The library continues to develop tools like CheckCite to facilitate the demonstration of skill achievement.
Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability, and accuracy.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120	In development	In development	Test results will be shared with the faculty teaching each course, with the Cluster One Committee, the General Education program, University administration, and SCHEV.	Because instruments are still in development, there has been no ability to turn assessment results into enhanced pedagogy.
Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments, and positions.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120	In development	In development	Test results will be shared with the faculty teaching each course, with the Cluster One Committee, the General Education program, University administration, and	Because instruments are still in development, there has been no ability to turn assessment results into enhanced pedagogy.

				SCHEV.	
Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: <i>GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120</i>	In development	In development	Test results will be shared with the faculty teaching each course, with the Cluster One Committee, the General Education program, University administration, and SCHEV.	Because instruments are still in development, there has been no ability to turn assessment results into enhanced pedagogy.
Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.	Critical Thinking Area Courses: <i>GBUS 160, GHIST 150, GISAT 160, GMAD 150, or GPHIL 120</i>	In class assessments.			
Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization, and presentation.	Human Communication Area Courses: <i>GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123</i>	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where averages were between 77% and 80%.	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.
Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts.	Human Communication Area Courses: <i>GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123</i>	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops

			averages were between 77% and 80%.	SCHEV.	explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.
Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where averages were between 77% and 80%.	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.
Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of contexts.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where averages were between 77% and 80%.	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.
Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on communication.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where averages were between 77% and 80%.	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.

Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.	Human Communication Area Courses: GCOM 121, GCOM 122, or GCOM 123	GCOM Final Exam	Students average between a 80.35% and 83.15% on the final. This year's averages are significantly higher than 2006/2007 where averages were between 77% and 80%.	Test results are shared each semester with GCOM faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Ongoing item development ensures that course content remains current with the discipline. Monthly pedagogy workshops explore assignments and activities to enhance student competency.
Develop and support a relevant and informed thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Course: GWRIT 103	Writing Portfolio Rating	The weighted average over the last 6 years has been 2.36. For the 2006-07 academic year, the average portfolio earned a 2.2.	Portfolio results are shared each semester with Writing Program faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Rating sessions are intended to norm the faculty evaluation of first year student competencies. Sessions result in the development of common awareness and focus for the upcoming academic year. Regular faculty meetings continue pedagogy development within GWRIT 103.
Analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements.	Writing Course: GWRIT 103	Writing Portfolio Rating	The weighted average over the last 6 years has been 2.36. For the 2006-07 academic year, the average portfolio earned a 2.2.	Portfolio results are shared each semester with Writing Program faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Rating sessions are intended to norm the faculty evaluation of first year student competencies. Sessions result in the development of common awareness and focus for the upcoming academic year. Regular faculty meetings continue

					pedagogy development within GWRIT 103.
Reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing).	Writing Course: GWRIT 103	Writing Portfolio Rating	The weighted average over the last 6 years has been 2.36. For the 2006-07 academic year, the average portfolio earned a 2.2.	Portfolio results are shared each semester with Writing Program faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Rating sessions are intended to norm the faculty evaluation of first year student competencies. Sessions result in the development of common awareness and focus for the upcoming academic year. Regular faculty meetings continue pedagogy development within GWRIT 103.
Demonstrate effective writing skills and processes by employing invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion.	Writing Course: GWRIT 103	Writing Portfolio Rating	The weighted average over the last 6 years has been 2.36. For the 2006-07 academic year, the average portfolio earned a 2.2.	Portfolio results are shared each semester with Writing Program faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.	Rating sessions are intended to norm the faculty evaluation of first year student competencies. Sessions result in the development of common awareness and focus for the upcoming academic year. Regular faculty meetings continue pedagogy development within GWRIT 103.

<p>Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support a thesis and effectively utilize the conventions of syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling</p>	<p>Writing Course: GWRIT 103</p>	<p>Writing Portfolio Rating</p>	<p>The weighted average over the last 6 years has been 2.36. For the 2006-07 academic year, the average portfolio earned a 2.2.</p>	<p>Portfolio results are shared each semester with Writing Program faculty, the General Education program, University administration, and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.</p>	<p>Rating sessions are intended to norm the faculty evaluation of first year student competencies. Sessions result in the development of common awareness and focus for the upcoming academic year. Regular faculty meetings continue pedagogy development within GWRIT 103.</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Statistical Profile 2007-2008

Skills for the 21 st Century	FALL 2007			SPRING 2008		
	# Enrolled Students (Total seats available)	Class Size (# sections)		# Enrolled Students (Total seats available)	Class Size (# sections)	
GWRIT 103	1526(1552) {+26}	18(4), 20(74)		1459(1488) {+29}	18(6), 20(69)	
GWRIT 103H	43(45) {+2}	15(3)		21(30) {+9}	15(2)	
GCOM 121	326 (312) {-14}	24 (13), 20(1)		286 (288) {+2}	24(12)	
GCOM 122	310 (312) {+2}	24 (13)		262 (264) {+2}	24(11)	
GCOM 123	1341 (1320) {-21}	30 (45)		1250 (1260) {+10}	30(42)	
GCOM ---H	60 (60) {0}	20 (3)		60(60) {0}	20(3)	
GPHIL 120	800 (762) {+38}	30(1), 40(13), 250(1)		1037 (1100) {+63}	40(12), 60(2), 500(1)	
GPHIL 120H	39 (40) {+1}	20 (2)		30(40) {+10}	20(2)	
GBUS 160	754 (730) {-24}	29(1), 34(2), 50(1), 55(8), 71(1), 72(1)		729 (715) {-14}	55(13)	
GHIST 150	407 (410) {+3}	25(2), 40(9)		427(435) {+8}	25(3), 40(9)	
GHSIT 150H	19 (20) {+1}	20(1)		0	0	
GMAD 150	148 (125) {-23}	25(5)		97 (100) {+3}	25(4)	
GISAT 160	223 (210) {-13}	30(7)		175(168) {-7}	28(6)	
Skills for the 21 st Century	# Sections taught by Full-time Faculty	# Sections taught by Part- time faculty	# Graduate Assistant	# Sections taught by Full-time faculty	# Sections taught by Part-time faculty	# Graduate Assistant
GWRIT 103	41	37		45	30	
GWRIT 103H	3	0		2	0	
GCOM 121	14	0		12	0	
GCOM 122	13	0		11	0	
GCOM 123	44	1		41	1	
GCOM ---H	3	0		3	0	
GPHIL 120	10	5		9	6	
GPHIL 120H	2	0		2	0	
GBUS 160	14	0		13	0	
GHIST 150	6	5		7	5	
GHSIT 150H	1	0		0 (not offered)	0 (not offered)	
GMAD 150	5	0		4	0	
GISAT 160	7	0		6	0	

Skills for the 21 st Century	FALL 2007			SPRING 2008		
	% Sections taught by Full-time faculty	% Sections taught by Part- time faculty	% Graduate Assistant	% Sections taught by Full-time faculty	% Sections taught by Part- time faculty	% Graduate Assistant
GWRIT 103	52.56%	47.44%		60%	40%	
GWRIT 103H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 121	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 122	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 123	97.78%	2.22%		97.67%	2.33%	
GCOM ---H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GPHIL 120	66.67%	33.33%		60%	40%	
GPHIL 120H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GBUS 160	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GHIST 150	54.55%	45.45%		58.33%	41.67%	
GHSIT 150H	100%	0%		0 (not offered)	0 (not offered)	
GMAD 150	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GISAT 160	100%	0%		100%	0%	
Skills for the 21 st Century	% Students taught by Full-time faculty	% Students taught by Part- time faculty	% Graduate Assistant	% Students taught by Full-time faculty	% Sections taught by Part- time faculty	% Graduate Assistant
GWRIT 103	52.95%	47.05%		59.15%	40.85%	
GWRIT 103H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 121	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 122	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GCOM 123	97.76%	2.24%		96.83%	3.17%	
GCOM ---H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GPHIL 120	75.59%	24.41%		83.22%	16.78%	
GPHIL 120H	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GBUS 160	100%	0%		100%	0%	
GHIST 150	51.35%	48.65%		53.86%	46.14%	
GHSIT 150H	100%	0%		0 (not offered)	0 (not offered)	
GMAD 150	100%	100%		100%	0%	
GISAT 160	100%	100%		100%	0%	
Other Factors	+ Seats unused - Number of overrides given			+ Seats unused -Number of overrides given		

Planned Cluster Activities for 2008–2009

Major initiatives Cluster One has determined to pursue include the following:

- Continue integration of the information literacy objectives into all aspects of the cluster.
 - Cluster One will specifically examine the appropriateness of the Tech Level One test. Based on assessment results, it is troubling that students appear to have the most difficulty with Word.
 - Additionally, there is some anecdotal concern about the need to ensure competencies in Blackboard, email, file management, and security. The Cluster Committee will also link the new learning objectives to the items in the ISST. More specific results will likely assist faculty to improve pedagogy and thus improve competence.

- Continued development of assessment processes, procedures, and instruments for program corroboration and improvement within each of the areas of Cluster One.
 - Development of a university-wide writing and critical thinking assessment instrument and process. A major project for 2008/09 is the establishment of a University Writing Assessment process and instrument. This work will begin in the summer of 2008 with the first attempt to create a writing rubric appropriate to evaluate writing across the university. CARS has agreed that it is appropriate to pair written expression assessment with critical thinking, so the rubric will also include critical thinking. An interdisciplinary committee will also construct a writing prompt that will be piloted to our incoming first year students in August. An interdisciplinary rating team will evaluate the functionality of the rubric, the prompt and establish a beginning competency level for the 2008 cohort. CARS and I anticipate that we will offer a similar prompt to this cohort during sophomore assessment day in spring 2010. Given confidence in the rubric, it may then be possible to ask for writing samples from writing intensive or capstone experiences at the senior level. This new process will not only be ground breaking, but will also serve to meet the new SCHEV requirements for value added assessment in both writing and critical thinking.
 - Continued development and improvement of the course specific assessment instruments in the critical thinking area. GHIST 150 has a summer grant to support the development of an instrument. GBUS and GISAT 160 will both continue to tweak their instruments. GMAD, because the course is team-taught, has less concern with standardization and consistency, however, linking items on the final in the class to the critical thinking learning objectives remains a goal. GPHIL 120 continues to engage in conversation about the appropriateness of assessment and the creation of an instrument and process.

- Continued work on enrollment management.
 - Credit and Waiver by Exam processes within the courses (GCOM and GWRIT) remain important tools in the Cluster One arsenal. Cluster

One and Communication Studies hold high hope for the new Transfer Credit By Exam process that will be piloted.

- A new hybrid version of GWRIT 103 will be piloted during fall semester which has the potential of doubling the use of our classroom space.
- Collaboration with the registrar will continue. The newly developed preference sheets for first year fall enrollment will be piloted. The new wait list procedure for spring enrollment should continue to be effective.
- The Cluster Coordinator will continue to communicate with those students who have failed to complete their Cluster One General Education required courses regularly.

Appendix A: SCHEV Writing Assessment Report

Assessment of the General Education Cluster One Writing Course Academic Year 2006-2007

**Prepared by
Kevin Jefferson, Cynthia Martin, Karen McDonnell
Mary Turner, and Elisabeth Gumnior, Ph.D.
Assessment Committee
Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies
James Madison University**

and by

**J. Patrick Meyer, Ph.D. and Jaime Cid
Center for Assessment and Research Studies
James Madison University**

March 20, 2008

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
GWRIT 103 Course Description.....	3
Purpose of Assessment.....	4
Brief Overview of Assessment Methodology for GWRIT 103	4
CARS' Description of Analysis.....	6
CARS' Analysis of 2006-07 Data.....	6
<i>Average Portfolio Ratings.....</i>	6
<i>Table 1: Overall Descriptive Statistics by Academic Year.....</i>	7
<i>Figure 1: Average Ratings by Academic Year.....</i>	7
<i>Ratings within Score Ranges.....</i>	8
<i>Table 2: Ratings Falling Within Various Score Ranges.....</i>	8
<i>Agreement among Raters.....</i>	8
<i>Table 3: Agreement among Raters by Academic Year.....</i>	9
<i>Total Semester Effect.....</i>	9
<i>Table 4: Descriptive Statistics by Semester: 2006-2007.....</i>	9
<i>SAT Writing and Verbal Scores and Average Portfolio Ratings.....</i>	10
<i>Table 5: Descriptive Statistics by Measure.....</i>	10
<i>Table 6: Correlations.....</i>	10
<i>Table 7: Descriptive Statistics by Measure and Semester.....</i>	11
<i>Table 8: Correlations by Semester.....</i>	11
<i>Race/ethnicity and Gender of Student Sample.....</i>	12
<i>Table 9: Student Demographics for the 2006-2007 Portfolios..</i>	12
Evaluation.....	13
Recommendations.....	14
Appendix A: Assessment Rubric.....	17

Introduction

All previous Writing and Rhetoric Studies Assessment reports have been authored by the Center for Assessment Research Studies (CARS) at JMU. Writing and Rhetoric Studies faculty produced the raw data and CARS crunched the numbers, wrote the analysis, and prepared the final report. In 2006-2007, for a number of reasons, Writing and Rhetoric Studies chose to take a more active role in shaping its own Assessment report.

For the sake of continuity, Writing and Rhetoric Studies has retained the order and much of the language featured in previous reports. Importantly, the “Analysis of 2006-2007 Data” section below remains entirely CARS’ work. Instead of inserting commentary into or between the CARS-produced analysis, tables, and figures in that section, Writing and Rhetoric Studies has written the new “Evaluation” and more extended “Recommendations” sections that conclude the report.

GWRIT 103 Course Description

Critical Reading and Writing (GWRIT 103) is a freshman level course delivered by faculty in Writing and Rhetoric Studies and required of all first year students who enter JMU. Exemptions are made for students who enter with scores of 4 or 5 on the Advanced Placement Literature or Composition exams, students who enter with dual enrollment credit, or transfer students who have completed a comparable course elsewhere. Students are also given the opportunity to take an exemption exam during the first week of class of their first semester.

The curriculum for the course is designed by individual instructors; however, standardization is ensured through the following description upon which all curricula should be based:

This course emphasizes the process of constructing a focused, logical, coherent, well-supported thesis, or point of view. The students will employ research and formal documentation to produce writing stylistically appropriate to its audience, purpose, and occasion. The course also places emphasis on editing for clarity and control of conventions. Instruction in writing and research includes critical analysis of primary and secondary sources through a series of reading and writing assignments. Students are prepared to use reading and writing in their personal, academic, and civic lives.

Formally, the goals and objectives of the course are such that a student should be able to:

- develop and support a relevant, informed, argumentative thesis, or point of view, that is appropriate for its audience, purpose, and occasion (rhetorical knowledge);
- analyze and evaluate information to identify its argumentative, credible, and ethical elements; students should also be able to reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse (critical thinking, reading, and writing);
- demonstrate an understanding of writing as a series of tasks involving invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose, and occasion (processes);

- effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources (traditional and non-traditional) to support an argumentative thesis, or point of view; and
- exhibit control over surface conventions such as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling that are appropriate for the writer’s audience, purpose, and occasion (knowledge of conventions).

Purpose of Assessment

The annual assessment of GWRIT 103 serves multiple purposes and audiences. At the state level, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) requires all academic programs to report on their effectiveness. For this reason, the General Education Program at JMU requires programs administering courses in Cluster One to perform an annual assessment to ensure students meet the goals of the program. The results of the assessment are synthesized and reported every four years to SCHEV, which posts results on its website for public consumption. SCHEV has given programs the ability to determine their own assessment methods.

The more immediate audience for Assessment is composed of the Writing and Rhetoric Studies faculty members who teach GWRIT 103. Performing an annual self-assessment affords Writing and Rhetoric Studies an opportunity to evaluate how effectively the department meets its stated goals and objectives. The data obtained from Assessment, summarized below, encourage discussion of the rigor of the GWRIT 103 curriculum, what the course is or is not accomplishing, and how Writing and Rhetoric Studies can best meet the goals and objectives of the course and, more broadly, of Cluster One.

Assessment also provides an important opportunity for faculty development. The conversations that take place during Assessment (see “Assessment Methodology” below) provide rich opportunities for faculty to discuss what constitutes “good” writing and to share innovative curricular ideas. In addition, faculty development workshops during the upcoming year can grow out of the concerns raised during the previous Assessment.

Finally, Assessment has become an important means of introducing new faculty to Writing and Rhetoric Studies and to the writing abilities of JMU students. New faculty participating in Assessment see and hear what experienced faculty at JMU value in argumentative writing while reading representative essays from the full range of GWRIT 103 courses. Too, affirming a collegial atmosphere at the beginning of the academic year helps to build a strong sense of community among faculty, old and new, and lays fertile ground for mentoring and other forms of collaboration in the semesters to come.

Brief Overview of Assessment Methodology for GWRIT 103

During both the fall and spring semesters, a random sample of four students enrolled in each section of GWRIT 103 courses are selected and asked to submit two of their best writing samples from class. Each pair of writing samples constitutes a portfolio, which is collected at the end of each semester.

For three consecutive days prior to the start of every fall semester, instructors of the course volunteer to serve as raters of the portfolios collected during the previous academic year. Because GWRIT 103 instructors possess expertise in the field, limiting raters only to instructors of the course lends the assessment validity.¹

During the assessment, each portfolio is randomly assigned to two raters who read and rate the portfolio on a score of 1 to 4 (see appendix A). The average of their scores is recorded. If there is more than a one point difference between the two raters, a third rater is randomly selected and asked to rate the portfolio and provide a third score.

To achieve rater reliability², extensive norming sessions are conducted at the beginning of each of the three days. Norming is also conducted after lengthy breaks, such as lunch. For the norming sessions, raters are provided with portfolios (free of scores) rated during the previous year's session. After reading the portfolios, the raters provide to the larger group a score and a justification of the score based on the rubric. The assessment chair and committee members facilitate the discussion and, ultimately, explain which score the paper received the previous year. Model portfolios for norming are selected to represent the breadth of each of the four possible scores. In addition, portfolios in which there was a discrepancy in the ratings of two or higher are used to discuss the difficulties of applying the rubric to certain portfolios. In these cases, the chair and committee members agreed in advance upon the score such portfolios should receive.

This year, the committee complemented the regular norming sessions with a few small group norming sessions. These small group sessions were conducted in a fashion similar to that described above; however, raters discussed their scores and justifications in small groups prior to the large group discussion. The reasoning behind the small group discussions was two-fold: (1) to expand and shift the range of possible conversations on how raters may value writing (and thus score portfolios) differently, and (2) to give less vocal or less assertive raters a first opportunity to develop and share their thinking.³

CARS' Description of Analysis

¹ In November 2006, the CCCC [Conference on College Composition and Communication] Committee on Assessment published a "Position Statement" on Writing Assessment: "Assessments of written literacy should be designed and evaluated by well-informed current or future teachers of the students being assessed.... The individual writing program, institution, or consortium should be recognized as a community of interpreters whose knowledge of context and purpose is integral to the assessment."

² "Rater reliability" does not pit raters against other raters; rather, it hopes that raters are true to themselves. The ideal is that a rater who somehow had his or her memory wiped clean after scoring a portfolio would award the same score to the portfolio upon reading it a second time.

³ John Bean, David Carrithers, and Theresa Earenfight discuss a theory and model for discourse-based assessment in their 2005 *WAC Journal* article titled "Transforming WAC through a Discourse-Based Approach to University Outcomes Assessment." Because it focuses "primarily on rich faculty talk about ways to improve curriculum and instruction in light of strengths and weaknesses in student performance on course-embedded assignments" (7), the approach "validates" and directly impacts what instructors do in the classroom. Small group norming sessions, which afford faculty opportunities to reach consensus about teaching goals, to share assignments, and to discuss what they value in student writing, are vital to the approach. See also Walvoord (2004) and Walvoord and Anderson (1998).

In order to estimate how the entire population of students performed in the course, a mean rating score is calculated using the sampled portfolios scores. The mean rating for 2006-2007 provides an estimate of how the entire population (i.e., all students who took GWRIT 103 during 2006-07) would have been rated had they all participated in the assessment.

The mean rating score can be used to compare the portfolios across years. However, because both the course and the rubric underwent changes in 2003-2004, data prior to that academic year has been excluded. Mean ratings and other data from previous years are included in this report for relative comparison only. Patterns that are derived from trend analysis, however, may offer insight into the overall effectiveness of the course in a given period of time.

Also included is an analysis of rater agreement. As mentioned in the methodology section above, two or three raters were assigned to each portfolio. Using these data provides the percentages and levels of agreement among raters. In turn, such data offers insight into the extent to which variability of scores from one year to the next may be due to raters instead of quality of writing.

We can also use extant data sources to draw certain conclusions about the course. For example, in the analyses below, we have incorporated students' SAT II Writing and Verbal scores to determine whether they are related to portfolio ratings. Conclusions from such comparisons should be taken lightly, however, as such tests do not accurately reflect and thus cannot easily be compared to the GWRIT 103 curriculum or the work students produce in the course. Data demonstrating whether differences between portfolio ratings from fall and spring semesters are also included and may offer insight as to whether students who enroll in the course after taking a semester of courses in other disciplines are better prepared to write on the college level. Such data helps offer insight into the extent that other courses—specifically those in which writing figures prominently—help build student competency in writing.

Finally, for descriptive purposes, limited student demographics are provided to demonstrate whether the assessment sample closely reflects JMU's overall population.

CARS' Analysis of 2006-07 Data

Average Portfolio Ratings

The total number of portfolios this year was 508, and each was rated by at least two raters from a pool of 22 faculty members from Writing and Rhetoric Studies. The average rating of student portfolios for 2006-2007 was 2.20 (SD=0.68). Descriptive statistics since the 2003-2004 academic year are shown in Table 1. The average portfolio rating for this year was slightly lower than 2005-06. Figure 1 shows that the averages have remained within the range of 2.2 to 2.4. A trend analysis indicated that there was not a statistically significant linear trend [$F(1, 1771) = 0.435, p = 0.51$].⁴ The quadratic trend was statistically significant [$F(1, 1771) = 10.70, p = 0.001$] indicating that scores increased for several years then decreased.⁵ This downturn in mean portfolio scores was beyond that expected by chance. Although the average portfolio score for this year did not continue the pattern of increasing scores that was established in the previous

⁴ In a "linear trend," mean scores steadily increase or decrease (but not both) over several years.

⁵ In a "quadratic trend," scores increase for several years and then decrease (or the reverse).

three years, this year's average portfolio score was consistent with scores from 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.

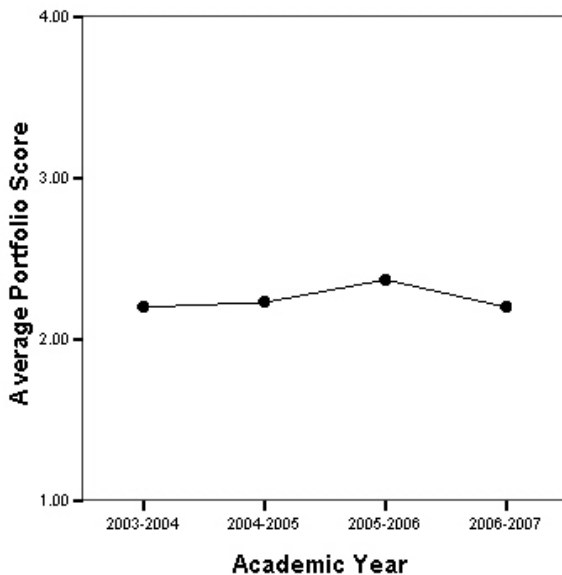
Table 1

Overall Descriptive Statistics by Academic Year

Academic Year	Average	S.D.	Number of Portfolios	Number of Raters	SAT Writing	SAT Verbal
2003-2004	2.20	0.60	423	18	-	-
2004-2005	2.23	0.59	405	17	555.90	570.26
2005-2006	2.37	0.69	439	17	557.40	541.26
2006-2007	2.20	0.68	508	22	562.80	559.30

Figure 1

Average Ratings by Academic Year



Ratings within Score Ranges

Table 2 shows by academic year the proportion of ratings changes within various score ranges. Because each portfolio was rated by two or three raters, the scores ranges are not all integers. Interestingly, the data indicate that there were similarities in ratings for 2002-03 and for 2005-06. There were also similarities in ratings for 2003-04 and for 2004-05. Specifically, portfolio ratings of 4 dropped from 2002-03 to 2003-04, but rose slightly in 2004-05 and substantially in

2005-2006. The ratings of four for 2005-2006 approach those for 2002-03, which is the academic year before portfolios were based on GWRIT 103.

Table 2

Ratings Falling Within Various Score Ranges

Score Ratings	Academic Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
4	4.10%	0.20%	0.70%	2.50%	0.60%
3 to 3.5	27.30%	15.60%	16.00%	26.20%	18.70%
2 to 2.67	55.00%	61.90%	62.70%	56.90%	54.50%
1 to 1.67	13.70%	22.20%	20.50%	14.40%	26.20%

Agreement among raters

Table 3 shows how much agreement was found among raters for the most recent four years of the writing assessment. Looking across the table, it appears that across the academic years, the percentages were relatively stable. Forty-three percent of the portfolios in 2006-2007 were scored equally by the raters, down from 52 percent in 2005-06. Adjacent agreement (portfolios scored within one point of difference by raters) increased slightly in 2006-2007 to 45 percent versus 44 percent in 2005-2006.

Table 3

Portfolio Agreement among Raters by Academic Year

Academic Year	Percent Exact Agreement	Percent Adjacent Agreement
2003-2004	42	48
2004-2005	45	47
2005-2006	52	44
2006-2007	43	45

Note: Percent adjacent agreement indicates adjacent agreement only. Exact agreement not included in this calculation.

Total Semester Effect

Because raters assess portfolios from both the fall and spring semesters, we need to ensure that there are no systematic differences in portfolio ratings due to a “semester effect.”

To test whether there are differences in portfolio ratings between the fall semester 2006 and the spring semester 2007, we performed an independent samples *t*-test of the means. The mean rating for portfolios collected in Fall is 2.17, while the mean rating for portfolios collected in Spring is 2.22 (see Table 4 for details). The difference between these two mean rating scores is not significant (equal variances assumption is met) at the .05 alpha level, $t(506) = -.914$, $p = .08$. The average rating for the portfolios collected in fall semester is not significantly lower than the average ratings for the portfolios collected in the spring semester.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics by Semester: 2006-2007

Semester	Average	S.D.	Sample Size
Fall	2.17	0.65	242
Spring	2.22	0.72	266
Total	2.20	0.68	508

SAT Writing and Verbal Scores and Average Portfolio Ratings

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for SAT Writing, SAT Verbal, SAT Total, and average portfolio ratings by measure. There were 36 students without SAT Writing scores and 16 students without SAT Verbal and SAT Total scores. Table 6 shows correlations among SAT Writing, SAT Verbal, SAT Total scores and the average of portfolio ratings. The correlation between SAT Writing scores and the average of portfolio ratings was 0.27, slightly more than the correlation between SAT Verbal and the average of portfolio ratings.⁶ All correlations were statistically significant. The effect size (a statistic that allows us to estimate the practical significance of findings) of the correlation between SAT Writing and the average of portfolio ratings was 0.07. This indicates that about 7% of variation in average portfolio ratings can be explained by SAT Writing scores and vice versa. Tables 7 and 8 show descriptive statistics and correlations for each semester.

⁶A correlation means that two variables (e.g., SAT and GPA) are related. A positive correlation occurs when the values for one variable increase while the values for the other variable increase. A negative correlation occurs when the values for one variable increase while the values for the other variable decrease.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics by Measure

Variable	Average	S.D.	N
Portfolio	2.20	0.68	508
SAT Writing	562.80	61.40	472
SAT Verbal	559.30	65.10	492
SAT Total	1123.60	106.10	492

Table 6

Correlations

Measure	Portfolio	SAT Writing	SAT Verbal	SAT Total
Portfolio	1.0	.27	.24	.19
SAT Writing		1.0	.61	.60
SAT Verbal			1.0	.82
SAT Total				1.0

Note: All correlations significant at the .01 level

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics by Measure and Semester

Semester	Variable	Average	S.D.	N
Fall	Portfolio	2.17	0.65	242
	SAT Writing	556.95	61.60	223
	SAT Verbal	556.02	65.93	236
	SAT Total	1114.62	109.06	236
Spring	Portfolio	2.22	0.72	266
	SAT Writing	568.03	61.03	249
	SAT Verbal	562.46	64.39	256

SAT Total	1131.95	102.82	256
-----------	---------	--------	-----

Table 8

Correlations by Semester

Semester	Measure	Portfolio	SAT Writing	SAT Verbal	SAT Total
Fall	Portfolio	1.0	.24	.21	.20
	SAT Writing		1.0	.60	.55
	SAT Verbal			1.0	.83
	SAT Total				1.0
Spring	Portfolio	1.0	.29	.26	.17
	SAT Writing		1.0	.65	.56
	SAT Verbal			1.0	.82
	SAT Total				1.0

Note: All correlations significant at the .01 level

Race/ethnicity and Gender of Student Sample

Table 9 shows the race/ethnicity and sex of the students who submitted portfolios for the writing assessment. Note that student demographic information was missing for 12 portfolios. The majority of students were White (81.7 percent), followed by Asian (4.6 percent) and African American (4.2 percent). Hispanics and American Indians all comprised less than 2 percent of the sample. Approximately 6 percent were some other race/ethnicity. Missing race/ethnicity data comprised about 2 percent. Sixty-six percent of students were female, compared to 30 percent male.

Table 9

Student Demographics for the 2006-2007 Writing Portfolios

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White	81.7

Asian	4.6
Hispanic	1.2
African American	4.2
American Indian	0.6
Non Specified	6.5
Missing	2.4
<hr/>	
Gender	
<hr/>	
Female	66.7
Male	30.9
Missing	2.4
<hr/>	

Evaluation

While average scores in 2006-2007 did dip from their 2005-2006 high, the shift should not be cause for distress. As pointed out in “Average Portfolio Ratings,” starting on page 6 of this report, the total average rater score for 2006-2007 is comparable to the average scores in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The 2006-2007 numbers for ratings within score levels (Table 2) and for rater agreement (Table 3) are also comparable to the 2003-2005 numbers. Finally, the “semester effect” reported in 2005-2006, when the mean rating for portfolios collected in the fall semester was significantly lower than the rating for spring portfolios, has also subsided in 2006-2007. Here again, the 2006-2007 numbers (Table 4) closely resemble those reported in 2004-2005. In sum, it is very reasonable to focus on 2005-2006 as a sudden spike, instead of focusing on 2006-2007 as a drop.

Two differences between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 perhaps account for at least part of the shift in average portfolio scores. A first difference lies in this year’s relatively higher number of raters (Table 1) and in the turnover among raters. Of the twenty-two raters in 2006-2007—the highest number of raters in all the years Writing and Rhetoric Studies has conducted its self-assessment—fifteen had not participated in the previous year’s Assessment. Of the fifteen new raters in 2006-2007, seven were participating in Assessment for the first time.

The second, more obvious difference between 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 came in the structure of Assessment. In 2005-2006, raters were for the first time paired in teams of two, with each team responsible for rating an identical number of portfolios. In 2006-2007, Writing and Rhetoric Studies returned to its earlier practice of not pairing raters.

As a whole, data gathered during the 2006-2007 Assessment suggests that Writing and Rhetoric Studies continues to meet and in some cases to exceed the goals and objectives stated on page 3 of this report.

Recommendations

How can Writing and Rhetoric Studies best structure Assessment to help participants remain on the same page in terms of (1) the scores they award portfolios, (2) the conversations they can enter into regarding writing and the teaching of writing, and (3) the belief they retain in the value of Assessment and in the validity of the scores Assessment produces?

Table 2, which shows the percentage of portfolios falling within different score ranges, offers a starting point for engaging these concerns. It is worth noting that the 2006-2007 percentages are roughly in line with the 2003-2005 percentages. It is worth noting also that the percentage of portfolios scored in the 3 to 4 range in 2006-2007 is actually *higher* than in either 2003-2004 or 2004-2005. But the 26.2 percent of portfolios scored in the 1 to 1.67 range in 2006-2007 affords a rich area for inquiry. Assessment has never sought data which would allow Writing and Rhetoric Studies to determine why portfolios are assigned this catch-all score.⁷ Now seems a good time to begin doing so, given that more than a quarter of the portfolios submitted in 2006-2007 were assigned a score of 1 by at least one rater. Writing and Rhetoric Studies can take steps in coming years to determine just how many of these portfolios should not have been included in Assessment in the first place, and can also create opportunities for conversation regarding the most common reasons for low-scoring portfolios.

Writing and Rhetoric Studies can also revisit its Assessment rubric (Appendix A). Even as qualitative data gathered during the 2006-2007 Assessment bears out the claim that Writing and Rhetoric Studies is meeting its stated goals and objectives, participants in Assessment raised questions which might help align the rubric even more closely with the course description and course goals and objectives. Preparing students to use writing in their personal, academic, and civic lives requires that GWRIT 103 instructors encourage students to engage arguments that don't have easy solutions and to try personas and organizational strategies that might be unfamiliar. Does the Assessment rubric adequately allow for essays that take on challenges and fail? Can it do so? Should it do so? In a larger sense, does the Assessment rubric adequately represent the critical thinking aspect of the GWRIT 103 goals and objectives? On the other hand, how should Writing and Rhetoric Studies score good non-critical writing? How should raters assess portfolios notable chiefly for their obviousness? How should raters handle well-written papers that are not argumentative? Finally, beyond questions of risk and obviousness, have there been advances in technology, and thus in pedagogy, for which Assessment should account?

Writing and Rhetoric Studies is already positioned to engage some of the concerns identified in this report. First, Writing and Rhetoric Studies can be better at helping raters to interpret the

⁷ All portfolios must be assigned a score. A score of 1 then might indicate either that a portfolio was in some way incomplete and should not have been included in Assessment, or that it actually merited a score of 1 on the 1 – 4 scale.

language of the rubric used in scoring. Feedback solicited during the 2006-2007 Assessment session will afford a starting point for airing concerns, finding common ground, and identifying opportunities. Second, far from being prescriptive about the score a particular portfolio should earn, Writing and Rhetoric Studies can further refine the way it facilitates norming sessions featuring small groups and portfolios free of the previous year's scores. These critically viable practices enabled extended, lively exchanges in 2006-2007. Third, Writing and Rhetoric Studies can expand the practice instituted in 2006-2007 of encouraging specific written responses to individual portfolios during rating sessions. Finally, if one of the goals of Assessment is to arrive at an average score for each portfolio that faculty recognize as meaningful both during and after the August session, Writing and Rhetoric Studies can consider shifts within the existing structure of Assessment to enable more complete engagement with and discussion of the portfolios being scored.

The strength of all of the ideas in the paragraph above is that they are limited in scope; they address only what can happen over the course of three days in mid-August. But if Assessment is, as one participant commented at the end of the 2006-2007 sessions, "the most important professional development activity we do," the rich discussions that take place during Assessment must both grow out of and carry over into the academic year. What happens in committees, workshops, brownbag lunches, and retreats should affect Assessment. In turn, Assessment should inform committees, workshops, brownbag lunches, and retreats. Assessment was moved from May to August for this very purpose. To date, however, the potential of such a move has not been fully acted upon. Realizing this potential will require the input and cooperation of Writing and Rhetoric Studies faculty, both before and after the three days of Assessment.

Writing and Rhetoric Studies cannot afford to leave new faculty out of the Assessment conversation. Even as a smaller, more consistent pool of experienced raters might yield opportunities for interesting statistical analysis, Writing and Rhetoric Studies should continue to encourage new faculty—including new adjunct and graduate instructors—to participate in Assessment. As noted earlier in this report, Assessment gives new instructors a unique opportunity to see representative writing from a range of GWRIT 103 courses; it enables these instructors to see and hear what experienced faculty at JMU value in argumentative writing; and it affords them a common ground for participating in the conversation. Assessment is a unique opportunity for Writing and Rhetoric Studies to come together as a department, instead of existing merely as a group of strangers who happen to teach the same course. The need to include new faculty in Assessment becomes all the more important as JMU continues to grow and as Writing and Rhetoric Studies adds faculty to meet demand.

The recommendation that new faculty be encouraged to participate in Assessment must be conditioned on the continued frequent participation of experienced full-time faculty in the enterprise. When experienced faculty members do not participate, the room loses some of its vitality and Assessment itself loses coherence and continuity. Experienced instructors' voices must be heard. In turn, Assessment affords these instructors an extraordinary opening to hear what the department as a whole is doing. If Assessment is to remain truly useful for Writing and Rhetoric Studies as a department, experienced faculty must both participate in and benefit from the conversation about writing and the teaching of writing that Assessment prompts. This conversation will evolve to more fully reflect the discipline's best practices and the department's

local needs as Writing and Rhetoric Studies continues to assert its ownership of Assessment and as the department engages the challenges and opportunities presented by a new major and graduate program.

Appendix A: Assessment Rubric

<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>The writing offers a focused, complex, and persuasive argument, either in closed or open form. As a whole, it features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cogent and engaging argumentative purpose, explicitly stated or implied • Cohesive organization that enhances content and overall purpose • Specific and thorough development, support, and analysis • Critical, compelling use of credible secondary sources • Exceptional writing style that reflects sophisticated rhetorical choices in writing • Deliberate control of conventions with few, if any, lapses 	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>The writing is consistently focused and offers a generally persuasive argument, either in closed or open form, but may lack complexity or incisiveness. As a whole, it demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear argumentative purpose, explicitly stated or implied • Logical organization appropriate to purpose • Sufficient development, support, and analysis • Some practical engagement and analysis of secondary sources • Effective writing style that reflects some maturity • Control of conventions with occasional lapses which do not impede meaning
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>The writing is generally underdeveloped or inconsistent in purpose, focus, and persuasion, but demonstrates some engagement. As a whole, it contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An attempt, albeit inconsistent, at an argumentative purpose, either explicitly stated or implied • Inconsistent or ineffective organization • Weak development, support, and analysis • Mostly uncritical use of secondary sources or a heavy reliance on primary sources • Simplistic or monotonous writing style that fails to engage audience • Lapses in control of conventions which may impede some meaning 	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>The writing lacks focus and thoughtfulness, or is too open or too closed to accomplish an argumentative purpose. As a whole, it demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence, or barely a pretense, of an argumentative purpose • Disorganization • Insufficient, or absence of, development, support, and analysis • Careless or indiscriminate use of sources or absent sources • Incoherent or inappropriate writing style for audience or purpose • Frequent lapses in control of conventions that significantly impede meaning

