Exams, Essays, and End-of-Semester Evaluations:

What Can They Tell Us About Our Majors?

CILA Faculty Lunch Conversation

December 4, 2012

Principles

Utilization-focused assessment

(Patton, 2008):

Focus on **intended uses**

by **intended users**

Principles

Backward design

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2005):

“Beginning with the end in mind”

Principles

Traditional assessment design:

Choose an assessment instrument

Gather and summarize evidence

Send a report to someone

Principles

Backward assessment design:

Identify intended uses

Locate the learning

Choose assessment approach

Practitioners

***Sample departments/programs** (pp. 1-2):*

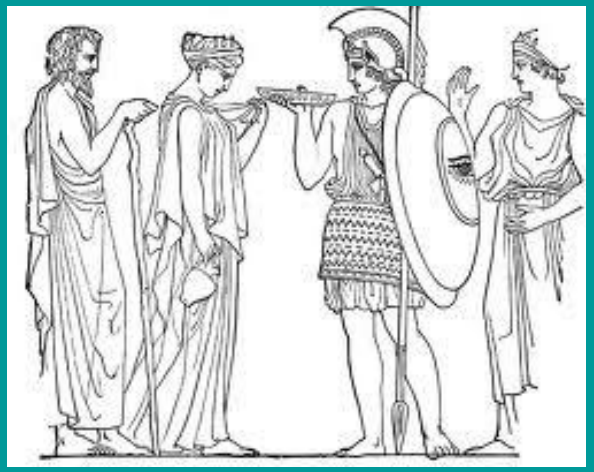
Practitioners

Studio Art *(p. 3)*

- Developed evaluation form for senior exhibit that doubles as assessment instrument
- Addressed disconnect between student and faculty criteria for artistic excellence
- Revised requirements for the major and refocused common foundation-level courses

Practitioners

History *(p. 4)*



% "exemplary" ability to…

	First-Year seminars	Senior seminars
Differentiate primary from secondary source	**45%**	**91%**
Use primary source to develop argument	**19%**	**60%**

- Gathered evidence in 2011-12 (voluntarily!) to examine sequencing in the major
- Examining ability to understand and work with historiography in new intermediate seminars for major

Practitioners

Management Studies

- ***Quiz scores:*** Teams outperform best individual students
- ***Course evaluations:*** Students believe they learned "much" or "exceptional amount" by working together in teams (73%)
- Team-based learning being extended to other courses

Mean Results – Management Studies 251 Course Quizzes

	Highest individual score	Team quiz score
Section A	4.36	4.79
Section B	4.39	4.74

Practitioners

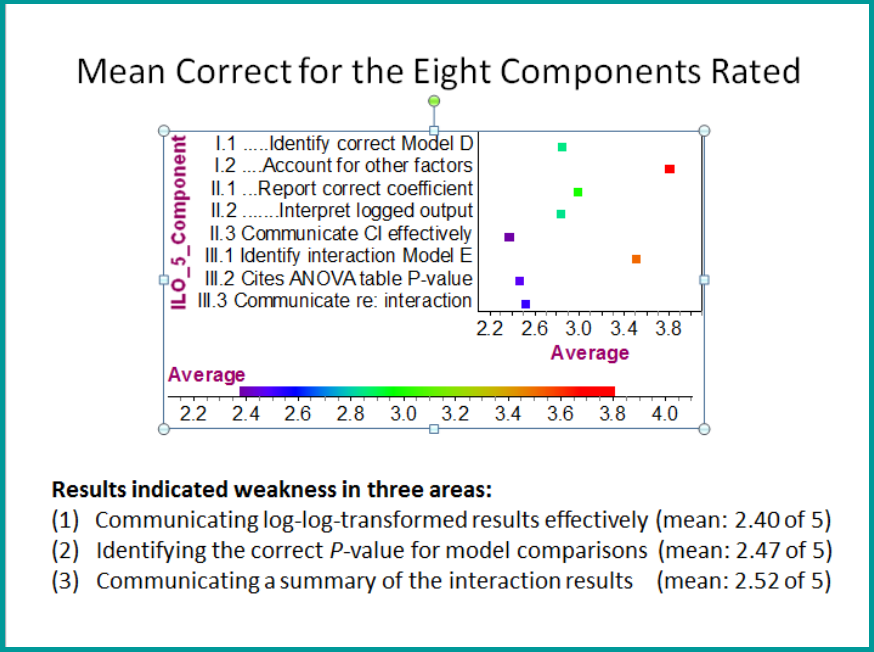
***French** (p. 5)*

- Used ACTFL guidelines to create oral proficiency form
- Most majors placed at “Intermediate-High”
- Follow-up curriculum analysis workshop to revisit what is taught, where, and when

Practitioners

Statistics

- Faculty collaboratively designed final exam question and grading rubric in Stats 270; two faculty graded essays
- Fostered collective "backward design" and collegiality
- Prompted changes in instructional emphasis



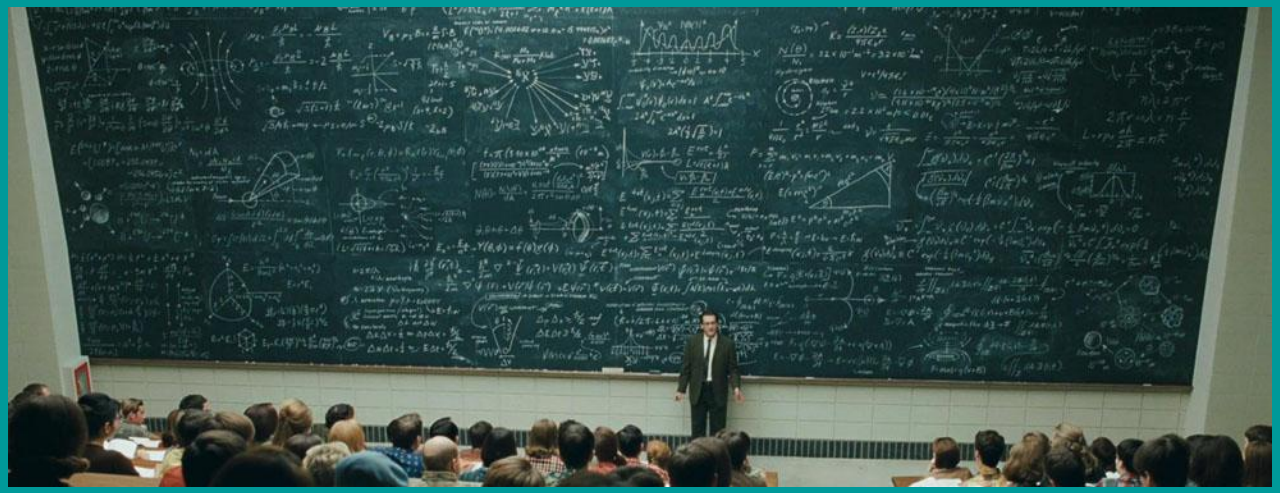
Results indicated weakness in three areas:

(1) Communicating log-log-transformed results effectively (mean: 2.40 of 5)
(2) Identifying the correct *P*-value for model comparisons (mean: 2.47 of 5)
(3) Communicating a summary of the interaction results (mean: 2.52 of 5)

Practitioners

Mathematics *(p. 6)*

- FormCreator questionnaire on mathematics ILOs
- Results generally positive, but students saw need for more technology use and math applications
- More technology being incorporated into selected courses and new applied mathematician hired



Practices

But wait!! Aren't we observing student work all the time anyway? What's the difference between ***grading*** and ***assessment***?

Practices

Grading

summarizes

many outcomes

for

one student

Assessment

summarizes

one outcome

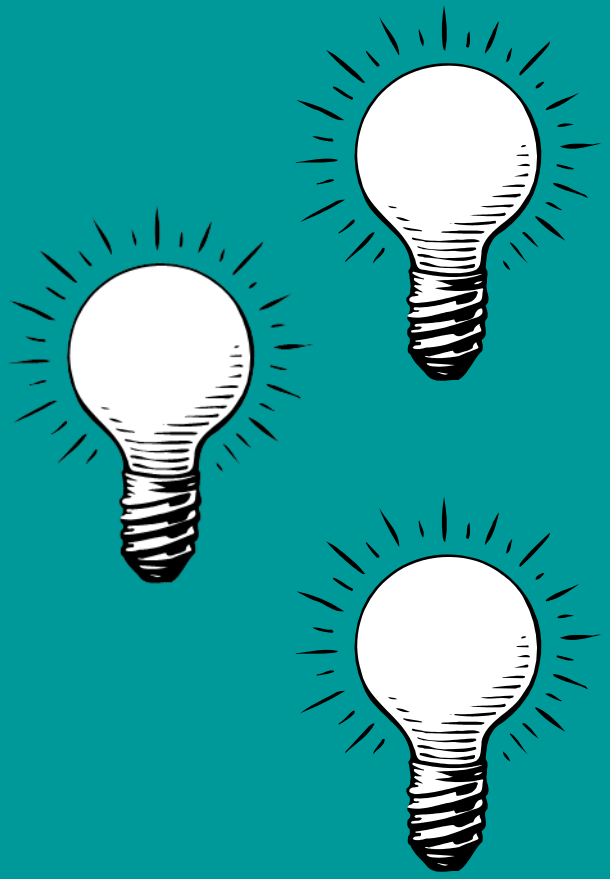
for

many students

Practices

The purpose of assessment is to provide **systematic, summarized information** about the extent to which a **group of students** has realized one or more intended learning outcomes

Practices



Your turn!

How can your department use work you and your students are already doing to assess learning in your academic major?

Practices

“Direct” Assessment

Evidence of what students actually know, can do, or care about

“Indirect” Assessment

Evidence of learning-related experiences or perceptions

Practices

Common direct assessment "artifacts"

- Theses, papers, essays, abstracts
- Presentations and posters
- Oral or written examination items
- Responses to survey or interview questions that ask for examples of knowledge, practice, or value

Practices

Common indirect assessment “artifacts”

- Course mapping, course-taking patterns or transcript analysis
- Responses to survey or interview questions about experiences, perceptions, self-reported progress, or impact of program experiences
- Reflective journals

Principles (redux)

Uses in individual courses:

- Setting priorities for content/instruction
- Revising/expanding assignments
- Clarifying expectations for students
- Enhancing “scaffolding”
- Piloting or testing innovations
- Affirming current practices

Principles (redux)

Uses in the program as a whole:

- Sending consistent messages to students
- Revising program requirements
- Contributing to hiring decisions
- Extending productive pedagogies
- Affirming current practices

Principles (redux)

More program uses:

- Telling the program's story to graduate schools and employers
- Enhancing visibility to disciplinary and inter-disciplinary associations
- Supporting grant applications
- Meeting requirements for specialized accreditation