

### Initial Findings of Assessment Committee

The committee were presented with the attached narrative summaries produced by the raters, along with spreadsheets containing individual student scores. It should be noted that the differences between scores on the first assignments in EN 103 and EN 111 may provide support for the current system used by the First Year Composition program to sort students into the two courses. It should also be noted that there is marked improvement during students' time at John Carroll University in the area of *Central Idea* and more modest improvements in other areas, such as *sophistication* and *clarity & readability*.

The concerns raised by members of the committee can be grouped into two broad categories: concerns about the validity of the assessment process and therefore the accuracy of the data (as a reflection of actual writing) and perceived weaknesses in scores at the W course level.

#### Process Concerns

The members of the committee were unfamiliar with the rubric being used and so were uncertain, for example, why the highest scores in the evidence and analysis category were awarded to papers from a creative writing course. The members of the committee also were unaware of how raters were trained prior to scoring and how consistent their judgments were.

There was also some concern that, if the focus of the W courses is truly disciplinary writing, it may be necessary to involve faculty in those disciplines in the assessment process (particularly to ensure accuracy in the categories of *evidence & analysis* and *organization & development*).

The members of the committee also felt the process lacked a mechanism to enable the faculty involved (both those in the First Year Composition program and those teaching W courses) to make use of the findings to improve student learning in the area of writing.

#### Weaknesses in W Course Scores

Based on personal experiences (anecdotal), at least some members of the committee thought it possible that the modest gains mentioned above and the lack of marked growth in *evidence & analysis* and *organization & development* were accurate measures of student ability. Many of the members expressed concerns that the current structure of the Core provided a rationalization for faculty who were resistant or reluctant to reduce the amount of writing in their non-W courses. The members of the committee were also curious about how much writing is required in various programs across campus.

### Notes from the Director of Academic Assessment

I have created a chart summarizing the individual student scores (attached) for easier comparisons of ratings. The rubric is also now attached to this report, although the question of the high score in creative writing is still open.

The Director of the Writing Center selects as scorers graduate assistants who are involved in the teaching of EN 111 and have extensive experience with rubrics and scoring student work. In past years, there has been formal calibration of the rubric by the standard process of asking all scorers to evaluate pre-selected papers to ensure uniformity among results. This year, there was no calibration because the decision to continue with assessment was communicated after most students had left campus. However, all three

raters involved in the summer of 2013 evaluated the same set of papers; this allowed me to produce the inter-rater reliability report attached, showing a fair level of consistency between scorers.

### **Actions in Response to Data**

- The committee will recommend to the subcommittee focusing on Writing for the incoming Integrative Curriculum that they regularly **involve faculty** in the assessment process and **develop a formal mechanism** not only for using assessment results to make program-level curricular changes but also for communicating the results to the faculty teaching the foundational writing courses, the integrated courses, and the writing-intensive courses in the majors.
- The Director of Academic Assessment will investigate the larger question of how much writing is being required and how it is being taught.