

East Central University
OSRHE Annual Assessment Report for 2008-09
Executive Summary

Entry-Level Assessment

The East Central University (ECU) Assessment Center uses ACT subject scores, ACT COMPASS computerized placement test scores, and other secondary tests to assess the academic skills of entering freshmen. Entering freshmen with ACT subject scores below 19 must pass the related COMPASS module or other appropriate secondary test to enroll in college-level course work in that subject area. The COMPASS modules used to assess students' academic backgrounds in English, mathematics, and reading are Writing Skills, Algebra, and Reading, respectively. The Integrated Process Skills Test II (IPS) is used to assess the students' academic background in science. During the 2008-09 academic year, a total of 641 beginning freshmen were evaluated. Of this number, 422 beginning freshmen (unduplicated count), or 66% of all beginning freshmen, had at least one ACT subject score below 19. Of this latter group, 303, 47% of all beginning freshmen, were identified as needing at least one zero-level course to remediate academic skills deficiencies. One hundred, 16%, of all beginning freshmen, had more than one academic skills deficiency.

About 94% of the entering freshmen qualified to take college-level English and reading intensive college-level course work. Approximately 65% of this cohort qualified to take a college-level math course while about 98% qualified to take college-level science courses. The 2008-09 placement distributions for English show improvement compared to the average placements for the 2003-04 through 2007-08 freshman classes (2003-08), with a significantly higher percentage of students passing the COMPASS Writing secondary placement. The placement distribution for Reading also show overall improvement with more students passing the COMPASS Reading Comprehension placement test over the previous five-year average with fewer students required to take the remedial courses in these areas. However, the placement distributions for Mathematics and Science show fewer students passing the COMPASS Algebra and Science secondary placement tests over the previous five-year average with more students required to take the remedial courses in these areas. This is primarily due to an increase in the required passing scores on the COMPASS modules for these subject areas.

The ECU Assessment Center tracked student performance in entry-level college courses by dividing students into three cohorts for each ACT subject area based on their performance on the ACT and secondary placement tests. The first cohort consisted of students who had ACT subject scores of 19 or higher. The second cohort contained students who had ACT subject scores below 19, but passed secondary placement testing. The third cohort contained students who had ACT subject scores below 19 and failed secondary testing. Students in the first cohort generally outperformed students in the second and third. The performance of 2008-09 beginning freshmen in four zero-level courses required to remediate skill deficiencies in these subject areas, when compared to the combined results for 2003-04 through 2007-08, the pass rates for ENG 0123 and MATH 0214 were higher. The pass rate for EDUC 0111 (Reading) was equal to the 2003-08 average pass rate. The pass rate for PHSCI 0123 (Science) was lower than the 2003-08 average pass rate.

For college level classes taken by the freshman class of 2008-09, entry-level assessment and placement worked best for English Composition I (ENG 1113) for the “R” cohort and the “N” cohort in the science course group. The cut score for Writing Skills resulted in very similar percentages of Cs or higher for ENG 1113 (66% to 68%). The cut scores for Algebra and Reading Comprehension also resulted in very similar C and higher rates for the “N” and “C” cohorts. However, these C and higher rates for MATH 1513 and the Reading Course Group fell 10% to 16% below the 70% desired level. The cut scores were also not as effective for the Science Course Group. A subject ACT score of 19 or higher does not appear sufficient to guarantee consistent success in College Algebra (MATH 1513), the Reading Courses Group, or in the Science Courses Group. Given the difficulty of the test-exempt “N” cohort in achieving the 70 percent C or higher performance goal, it is probably unrealistic to expect the same level of performance from the other placement cohorts. Furthermore, the data provide further evidence why entry-level assessment and placement at ECU has not significantly improved the retention rates of the freshman classes. Given the poor academic backgrounds of many entering freshmen, the remediation offered at ECU is not sufficient in many cases to provide some students with the skills necessary to succeed at the college level.

Mid-Level (General Education) Assessment

ECU assessed nine student outcomes for six academic skill areas during 2008-09. These outcomes covered critical thinking, library skills, oral or expressive communication, reading, mathematical skills, and written communication. During 2008-09, 418 students took one of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) multiple-choice sections on Reading (133), Critical Thinking (99), or the CAAP Writing Essay(186) as part of the course requirements for UNIV 3001, the general education capstone course. The test was administered to all UNIV 3001 students. This is the third academic year ECU has used CAAP, so longitudinal data is limited. The 2008-09 cohort’s scaled score for Critical Thinking was 61.1 while the cohort’s scaled score for Writing was 63.0. Both scores were about equal to the 43rd percentile nationally. On the other hand, ECU students scored 3.2 on the Writing Essay section of the CAAP, about equal to the 59th percentile nationally.

Students received 50 course points (one letter grade) for simply completing the assigned section of the exam. For a one-hour course this strategy may not induce meaningful participation on the part of many students. The average critical thinking scores of ECU students examined in 2008-09 varied from 56.5 for six students who responded they “gave little effort” to 63.5 for 13 students who responded they “tried their best” . In addition, 26% of the students taking the Critical Thinking Exam in 2008-09 did not answer the motivation question. These data suggest the majority of students who took the exam in 2008-09 were not motivated to “try their best”.

During the last five academic years, 86% of those examined have either graduated from ECU or are still enrolled at ECU. This combined graduation/retention rate is more than twice the average six-year graduation/retention rate for the institution. The data continue to show that students who took the College BASE/CAAP have developed the academic skills necessary to complete a degree program.

Program Outcomes Assessment

During 2008-09, 1,645 students were assessed as part of undergraduate program assessment. Degree programs used a variety of instruments to assess student outcomes, including locally developed exams, standardized tests (such as the ETS Major Field Achievement Tests (MFAT) and the Area Concentration Achievement Tests (ACAT)), portfolios, and various constituent surveys. Licensing and certification tests, such as the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Exam, Oklahoma Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET) Exam, National Council Licensing Exam for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN), and the Certification Exam for Oklahoma Educators (CEOE) were also used. Student performance for many programs met or exceeded performance goals with the majority of students tested either passing the exams or scoring at or above a specified level on these exams. The following are some of the program changes resulting from outcomes assessment::

- In Accounting, two sections of tax will be offered in the Fall 2009 semester to create smaller class sizes to improve student learning of Federal Income Tax Accounting. Students will be encouraged to participate in research workshops held outside of class. The number of workshops will be expanded to two: one on research methods and one on writing memos. The students will also be encouraged to participate in the Accounting Club. The faculty will submit Fall 2009 student research findings to *CPA Focus* as student publications.
- The Early Childhood Education program analyzed weak areas and stressed those in course competencies. The redesigned courses concentrate on a strong emphasis on child development and learning theory in EDUC 3043. Stronger emphasis will be placed in EDUC 3463 & 3493 covering literacy development. With current growth of pre-K in schools, more emphasis will be placed on pre-K instruction, especially oral language in EDUC 3463 & 3043.
- The Psychology faculty will address the disconnect between low test scores on the exit exam and the students' beliefs they are competent in most areas of psychology. More emphasis will be placed on the clinical/counseling psychology topics covered in the Abnormal Psychology and Personality courses. In addition, more emphasis on oral communication skills in Experimental Psychology and more emphasis will be placed on research methods for both experimental and applied fields of psychology.
- The Chemistry department will place greater emphasis on selected areas of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry. It will also place more emphasis in Physical Chemistry on over-arching concepts in addition to mechanics of problem solving, and more emphasis in Advance Inorganic Chemistry on Group Theory. A continued emphasis on report writing and communication skills is also warranted.
- In Physics, the faculty learned from the alumni surveys students needed more computer programming and software experience, lab and instrumentation skills, and scientific research experience. To meet these needs, we instituted and taught two new courses, an ultrasound lab and a x-ray and nuclear physics lab.

- In Mass Communication, assessment results confirm faculty observations that students are unprepared for the professional standard of writing required in mass media. Faculty members have proposed adding an 8-week grammar lab component to the 18-week course in order to bring student writing up to professional standards.

Student Satisfaction Assessment

During the Spring 2009 semester, the Assessment Center collected data on the satisfaction of currently enrolled students by surveying 438 students using the ACT Survey of Student Opinions. This sample consisted of lower-level and upper-level course sections selected by programs going through program review. The 2008-09 results concerning the college environment show ECU students still rate the majority of items higher than the public college norm. Overall, the students responding to the survey indicated they were more satisfied with the ECU college environment than the average public student is with their college environment. The rating for “availability of your advisor” exceeds the public college norm by the largest amount. Nineteen percent of the ratings fell significantly below the public college norm. The survey item receiving the lowest rating compared to the public college norm was “purposes for which the student activity fees are used”. “Availability of computers when you need them” received the highest average rating of items under campus facilities.

The ACT Survey of Student Opinions also surveyed students on their satisfaction with college services. Student satisfaction with ECU college surveys overall equals the public college norm. Survey items of relatively high importance to students with the highest satisfaction levels were “library facilities and services” and “student health/wellness services”. “College-sponsored tutorial services” and “food services” received the largest negative ratings compared to the public college norm.

Graduate Student Assessment

Three hundred and twenty-nine graduate students were assessed during the 2008-09 academic year using the Certification Exam for Oklahoma Educators, the Oklahoma State Subject Area Test, the Oklahoma Teacher Certification Test for School Counselors, the State Elementary Principals Exam, the State Secondary Principal Certification Exam, the National Counselor Preparation Exam, the Rehabilitation Counselor Certification Exam, locally developed comprehensive exams, internships, practicums, portfolios, and various constituent surveys. One hundred percent of students tested passed the certification exams for Library Media Specialist (22) , Reading Specialist (7), School Counseling (37) and Special Education (3). Other assessment data collected to date indicate that most program goals are either being met or close to being met. In addition, alumni and employer surveys show a high degree of satisfaction with ECU's graduate programs. In 2008-09, thirteen graduate students enrolled on probationary status.