EVIDENCE: PROGRAM ASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Explain, Inspire, Stimulate – Pathways to Strong IDEA Ratings

In an analysis of the IDEA data for the last two academic years, some relationships between students' ratings on summary characteristics such as *excellent teacher* (exT) or *excellent course* (exC) and specific teacher behaviors are strongly significant; these correlations are set out in the table below. To summarize the findings, I would say that students who rate organization, good explanations, and stimulating ideas as strong teacher characteristics are more likely to give those faculty members high ratings as excellent teachers, and those courses as excellent courses. Inspiring students is most strongly related to perceptions of learning (IDEA progress on relevant objectives (PRO), explanations to 'excellent teacher' and stimulating ideas to 'excellent course.' '*Formed teams or discussion groups*' is the least strongly related to all the summary IDEA variables and this makes sense as not all courses and pedagogies lend themselves to group work but inspiring, stimulating, and providing good explanations are universally agreed on as positive aspects of good teaching.

Strongest correlates of global IDEA ratings (N=3279)

Cumulative rating	Correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho)
Summative Evaluation (average of PRO, exT, and exC)	
Explained course materials clearly and concisely	.857
Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject	.852
Found ways to help students answer their own questions	.850
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning	.447
Progress on Relevant Objectives (PRO)	
Made it clear how each topic fits into the course	.789
Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses	.789
Inspired students to set an achieve goals which really challenged them	.794
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning	.453
Excellent Teacher (exT)	
Explained course materials clearly and concisely	.860
Found ways to help students answer their own questions	.841
Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning	.819
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning	.391
Excellent Course (exC)	
Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject	.814
Explained course materials clearly and concisely	.802
Made it clear how each topic fits into the course	.784
Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning	.389

WHY?   **Explain**

Inspire

Stimulate

Three individual items on the IDEA student rating form provide "global" indices of teaching effectiveness—As a result of taking this course, I have more positive feelings toward this field of study; Overall, I rate this instructor an excellent teacher; and Overall, I rate this course as excellent.

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Rubrics to the Rescue

By: Dr. Kathleen Klein, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy

In Stockton's Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT) program, applications from hundreds of students hoping to be admitted to the program are assessed each Spring by MSOT Admissions Committee members. Application assessment is a complex process based on many factors. The process is high stakes with only 30 applicants being selected for admission into the MSOT Program. One of the many factors considered in the admissions process is the applicant's essay. The committee currently uses a rubric to assist in scoring the essay. When considering an effective method to assess hundreds of essays, the rubric came to the rescue. A rubric provides a simple and effective tool for assessing large numbers of essays.

Many years ago, with less applicants to the MSOT Program, all committee members read and scored essays resulting in an average score for the essay. As the number of applicants increased, fewer members read and scored each essay. Committee members discussed diverse approaches to grading essays with knowledge that subjectivity existed. Members reviewed different interpretations of early version rubric components. It was recognized that discrepant scores might result from varying levels of subjectivity. The averaging of multiple scores satisfactorily addressed concerns in combination with periodic refinement of the rubric. The current analytic rubric quantifies simple key writing elements of the essay.

The use of an analytic rubric compared to a holistic rubric is understood to potentially result in higher interrater reliability. Each year, committee members evaluate the scoring process to assess achievement of desired accuracy and consistency in scoring. Based on regular assessment of the application scoring process and increasing number of applicants, the rubric and admission practices continue to be thoughtfully modified.

Before the next admission cycle, the MSOT committee members will engage in a norming process to further reduce subjectivity and improve the consistency of ratings between members. The enthusiasm of members to establish enhanced interrater reliability and refine rubrics as needed is a reflection of a strong commitment to a rigorous, fair, and effective admissions process. For a more detailed description of a norming process, please refer to the November 2015 *Evidence* article, "How to Conduct a Grade-Norming Session" by Dr. Priti Haria. The task of refining the application process is continuous with rubrics truly coming to the rescue in making the process manageable.

Dr. Kathleen Klein

CREATIVE ESSAY RUBRIC

Use: This rubric is intended for grading an in-class creative essay asking students to respond to an ethical scenario in 30 minutes. The grading point value is 8 points

Category	2	1	0
A. Quality of Evaluation and Response to Scenario (content)	☐ Provides thoughtful, logical **evaluation** of the scenario. ☐ Provides a thoughtful, logical **response** to the scenario.	☐ Provides general **evaluation** of the scenario. ☐ Provides a general **response** to the scenario.	☐ Lacks **evaluation** of the scenario. ☐ Provides unclear **response** to scenario or lacks a response.
B. Persuasive Argument (content)	Response is highly persuasive and maintains reader's attention.	Response is mildly persuasive and makes sense to the reader.	Response is not persuasive and is difficult to understand.
C. Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics (writing)	Response has 3 or less errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Response has 4-6 errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Response has 7 or more errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
D. Organization (writing)	Response paragraphs are well organized with clear topic sentences and supporting sentences. There are effective transitions between paragraphs.	Response paragraphs have appropriate topic sentences and supporting sentences. There are some transitions between paragraphs.	Response paragraphs have ineffective or no topic sentences and supporting sentences. There are ineffective or no transitions between paragraphs.

Creative Essay _____/8

Additional Comments:

ASSIGNED ESSAY RUBRIC

Use: This rubric is intended for grading an assigned essay with writing prompts and a 500 word limit. The student has the opportunity to work on the rubric outside of class with explicit instructions that the essay is graded on content and writing. The grading point value is 14 points.

Category	3	2	1	0
A. Response to Essay Question Writing Prompts (content)	Written response addresses all essay question writing prompts clearly and directly.	Written response addresses at least 2 of 3 essay writing prompts clearly and directly.	Response to writing prompts is unclear or vague and/or addresses only one writing prompt in a clear, direct manner.	Response lacks any comprehension of the essay question or appears to address a different essay question. *No essay response provided.*
B. Quality and Clarity of Thought (content)	Response indicates depth and complexity of thought in answering the essay question.	Response indicates simplistic or repetitive thoughts in answering the essay question.	Response lacks focus or demonstrates confused or conflicting thinking.	Response is unfocused, illogical or incoherent. *No essay response provided.*
C. Organization & Development of Ideas (writing)	Response is well organized and developed with appropriate support to make meaning clear (well-chosen examples).	Response is organized and developed with general supporting ideas provided (reasons/general examples).	Response is fairly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate support.	Response is disorganized and underdeveloped, providing little or no relevant support. *No essay response provided.*
D. Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics (writing)	Response is free from any errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Response has 3 or less errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Response has 4-5 errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Response has 6 or more errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. *No essay response provided.*
500 words or less (following directions)		YES		NO

Assigned Essay _____/14

Additional Comments:

Lessons learned from the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Assessment Workshop

By: Christine Tartaro

The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) is one of the two largest academic criminal justice organizations in the United States, and it is the only group that publishes standards for criminal justice education. Given ACJS's dedication to pedagogy, the organization is in a great position to help faculty learn about assessment and provide advice on developing course- and program-level assessment plans. ACJS's assessment committee organized the first of what it hopes to be annual workshops on assessment of student learning at this year's meeting in Denver, Colorado. I was invited by the coordinator of the workshop to make a presentation and then lead a discussion during the breakout session.

Christine Tartaro

The presenters covered topics relevant to faculty members whose institutions and programs are at every stage of assessment work. For those brand new to assessment, a faculty member from Franklin University defined assessment and explained why it is important. Next, a faculty member from Southern Oregon University talked about his experiences with course-level assessment. My presentation covered the process of working with a program as it goes from debating whether to do assessment all the way to the point where the whole program is participating. I talked about the steps (and missteps) that my own program took to get to where we are today. Next, a presenter from Lynn University discussed the importance of generating meaningful assessment results and using those results to improve teaching. Finally, the chair of ACJS's Academic Review Committee discussed the importance of assessment in for programs wishing to apply for the optional certification that is currently held by only a handful of colleges and universities across the nation (Stockton's MACJ program is one of them!).

The workshop was even more successful than anticipated. The room was packed, and the conversations were quite lively. Participants walked away with several important lessons. First, programs that are just starting with assessment should start small. While aiming high is admirable, it is important to start small and gradually build in order to slowly work on obtaining full faculty buy-in. Without full faculty support, large, comprehensive assessment plans are likely to fail. Second, make sure you develop a plan that students will take seriously. Data assessing student learning is worthless if students don't give you honest answers in the case of indirect assessments and try hard in the case of direct assessments. Third, speaking of indirect assessments, the ACJS certification committee made it clear that programs cannot stop at indirect measures. While indirect assessment is helpful, it does not give faculty information about exactly what students are learning. For a comprehensive assessment plan that is required for certification, there must be some direct measures *and* there has to be evidence that faculty are acting on the results. That brings me to the final lesson of the workshop; It is not enough to just collect and analyze assessment data. The whole purpose of conducting assessment is for faculty to learn about our teaching and how it relates to student learning and then make changes based on that information. Without faculty action in response to the data, the process is incomplete.

Assessment Institute

By: Dr. Susanne Moskalski
Assistant Professor of Marine Science

I attended the summer 2015 Assessment Institute because I wanted to improve the way I grade a particular research assignment, and also to improve the quality of the work my students produce. I like to assign my geology classes an annotated bibliography project, to help improve students' skills in background research. Important skills required for the project are finding peer-reviewed scientific papers that are pertinent to a chosen topic, accurately summarizing and interpreting the papers, and correctly identifying their relative usefulness or the context in which they would be most useful.

As a scientist I have learned to be as precise as possible, and I wanted to apply the same principle to grading this new kind of assignment. The Assessment Institute taught me how to construct a rubric in a systematic manner, and how to design the rubric so that it would assess the skills I am most interested in assessing. Following the procedure we learned during the institute helped me to clarify what exactly I wanted to assess, and what different levels of skill should look like in the finished assignment.

The final version of the rubric proved to be useful not only for me, but also for my students. Grading the assignments was fast and easy, because I had already decided what was important and could focus on that as I graded. I used the rubric form as a grading sheet, checking off which level each student met for each criterion and writing comments as needed. I was pleased to discover that my students all used the rubric well. I had included the rubric with the initial assignment, so the students knew exactly what they had to do to earn an A. They all made sure to fulfill the requirements for the highest category, and so they all got A's on the assignment. Being able to use the rubric while working on the assignment showed my students what the best work would look like, and so the rubric served as an additional guide to learning or improving their research skills.

Overall my experience with the Assessment Institute was positive and helpful. The instruction I received in designing rubrics has helped me to be a better teacher by improving the way I communicate assignments and expectations to my students. I highly recommend the Institute to all Stockton faculty.