2004-05 Campus-Wide Assessment Report of the Communications Caucus

by Michael Seward

Throughout this academic year, the following members of the Communications Caucus voluntarily gave of their time and expertise to improve the assessment of student learning at MCTC, going beyond their normal duties to provide guidance, support and insight to their colleagues: Carmen Buhler, Tom Eland, Joan Felice, Joe Fruth, Ginny Heinrich, Andrea Knutson, Tina Langseth, Ann Ludlow, Phil Martin, Nancy Miller, Diane Nelson, Deb Ramerth, Pat Reinhart, Linda Russell, and Deb Wertanen.

Additional staff and faculty members contributed to the efforts of the Caucus by providing their expertise in various ways: Dave Bremer, Melissa Castino-Reid, Kathleen DeVore, Holly Fairchild, Linda Reed, Kevin Rozman, Mary Thurow, and Darren Witwer.

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Executive Summary

I. Accomplishments

1. **Cultural Change:** Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Caucus this year has been its continued work toward changing the culture at the College. MCTC is moving from the beginning of the assessment process (envisioning and developing an integrated model) into the next stages of implementing that model, with varying degrees of success, in many of the College's existing structures. To facilitate the kind of deep change required for effective assessment, the Caucus's primary focus has been to institute a broad-based, interdisciplinary effort. In their work with stakeholders from across the campus, Caucus members had two goals: to increase people's understanding of MCTC's assessment efforts and to have them embrace, to some level, our assessment model *because they see how it might benefit them or their students.* To accomplish these goals, members (1) developed forms for faculty across the curriculum to use in assessing four areas of student communication, (2) changed Catalog language about the Communication General Education Competency and (3) established many personal relationships in conducting two College-wide Assessments.

2. **Institutional Avenues:** In changing the culture at the College, Caucus members have worked through (and altered) existing institutional channels: the Faculty Development Committee, the Academic Council, Program Reviews, Coordinators, MSCF and the college's AQIP plan.

3. **College-wide Assessment Tools:** The Caucus's most visible successes came about as a result of our conducting two college-wide assessments. In both cases we met our AQIP goal of collecting "data that indicate 60% of participating students are performing in speaking and reading at the appropriate college level."

   For the College-wide Reading Assessment 247 sophomore-level students (including 53 non-native speakers) retook the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension Test (the reading entrance exam for native speakers). Seventy-five per cent placed into college-level reading (82% of the native speakers and 51% of non-native speakers (which may be due to the fact that all students were tested using a tool designed for native speakers)). These results show that a higher percentage of sophomores tested into college-level reading than incoming students taking the same test: for the four semesters of 2003-04 and 2004-05 incoming native speaker testers placed into college-level reading at rates between 53%-60%, and incoming non-native speakers tested into college-level reading at rates between 8%-16%.

   For the College-wide Speaking Assessment a cadre of observers assessed 184 student speeches from 19 courses from across the curriculum during Spring 2005, looking at three areas (Content, Organization and Delivery), with each area having five skill levels . Of the students observed 71% (130) were scored at level three (college-level) or higher in all three areas. The mean score in each area was as follows: Content, 4.07; Organization 3.93; and Delivery, 3.52.

4. Embedded Assessments: Though the Caucus did not achieve its AQIP goals of embedding assessments in reading and speaking into 20 courses and collecting data from those assessments that 60% of the students were performing at college-level, we did make significant progress toward enabling ourselves to accomplish this goal next year, by establishing relationships with instructors who involve reading or speaking in their courses and who would be willing and prepared to work with us next year. We have revised our plans and feel confident that we can accomplish this in 2005-06.

II. Recommendations

The Caucus should

- include as many faculty members as possible, developing all initiatives on a grass-roots level to gain faculty buy-in and understanding of the usefulness of assessment;

- continue to be as broadly based as possible, with Caucus leaders making special efforts to include more technical faculty;

- work closely with the Faculty Development Committee and create opportunities for one-on-one and small group conversations about assessment;

- continue to work through existing institutional channels (Academic Council, MSCF, Governance Council, the Faculty Development Committee) to work for improved assessment, exploring all avenues—traditional and alternative—for utilizing resources;

- concentrate its efforts on implementing tools that collect direct data on student learning, while maintaining, perhaps as a long-term goal, the surveying of faculty, employers and transfer institutions about community expectations for our graduates and the degree to which our graduates possess those skills, knowledge sets, attitudes and abilities.

The Administration should

- continue to use its resources to acknowledge the time, effort and expertise provided by participating faculty members;

- continue to recognize that grass-roots work is *crucial* to the success of Caucus efforts, measurements of which must be considered in light of the fact that institutional change occurs at an incremental level;

- make available funding to allow someone in Institutional Research to have working with the Caucus and Assessment as part of a job description;

- use existing institutional channels to promote understanding of the Caucus and its efforts;

- allocate resources to support initiatives that will institutionalize avenues of promoting real cultural change vis-à-vis assessment.

III. Goals

The Caucus was successful in meeting one of the goals for 2004-05 laid out in the College's AQIP Action Plan; two of the goals are in progress; and one goal has been postponed.

AQIP Goals	Results
From assessment tools not linked to specific courses, collect college-wide data that indicate 60% of participating students are performing in speaking and reading at the appropriate college level.	Accomplished: 75% of the 247 sophomores tested for reading scored at college level; 71% of the 184 student speeches observed for speaking scored at college level.
Embed the assessment of communication into 20 courses across the curriculum.	In progress: This year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), so that next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses.
From those courses collect data that indicate that 60% of participating students are communicating at a satisfactory level or higher.	In progress: This year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), so that next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses.
Incorporate the reporting on the assessment of student communication skills into the Annual Program Review of ALL Programs/Divisions across the college.	Postponed: Given that so many Programs/Divisions were able only for the first time in 2004-05 to submit a report on assessment activities for their own competencies, asking them also to address one of the General Education Competencies is unreasonable. (Of note is that one division, Humanities, did choose to look at Writing for its assessment report.)

This year was the second in a three-year plan laid out last year for the Caucus. Below is a chart listing how well the plan was followed

Term	Goals	Results
Fall 2004	• Meet monthly;	• Accomplished.
	• Submit Annual Report to AASC and Cabinet;	• Accomplished.
	• Conduct Faculty Development on August 19: "Creating Communication Assessment Tools across the Curriculum";	• Postponed to 4/8/05—no time allotted to Assessment during opening days, though M. Seward did meet with Coordinators.
	• Implement college-wide assessment tools for Speaking and reading;	• Accomplished.
	• Meet with communication advocates;	• Accomplished.
	• Survey employers and transfer institutions (using Program Advisory Boards) on their communication needs and current graduate performance;	• Postponed—too involved given Caucus's limited time and resources, though maintained as a long-term goal.
	• Have subcommittees on Writing and	• In progress—creating 4 subcommittees

	Information Literacy develop college-wide assessment tools.	would have fractured Caucus too much and there is enough time next year to complete this goal.
Spring 2005	• Meet monthly;	• Accomplished.
	• Offer Faculty Development on April 8;	• Accomplished.
	• Work with communication advocates;	• Accomplished.
	• Have sub-committees on Writing and Information Literacy continue to develop college-wide assessment tools;	• In progress—creating 4 subcommittees would have fractured Caucus too much and there is enough time next year to complete this goal.
	• Collect data from Programs/ Divisions on communication skills in specific courses;	• In progress—this year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), and next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses.
	• Collate and respond to data from Employer/ Transfer Institution Survey;	• Postponed—too involved given Caucus's limited time and resources, though maintained as a long-term goal.
	• Collate and report on data gathered via college-wide assessment of speaking and reading;	• Accomplished.
	• Begin report on year's activities.	• Accomplished.
Summer 2005	• Write Annual Report	• Accomplished.
	• Plan opening day activities	• Dropped—no time allotted to Assessment in opening days.

I. Building on Past Efforts

As it conducted its work this year, the Caucus was able to achieve some level of success in following the recommendations (proposed in last year's report) for the implementation of MCTC's assessment model. Nonetheless, the Caucus faces challenges as its work continues.

1. Last year's report recommended that the Caucus **"**continue to develop initiatives that stem from faculty interests, while improving the transparency of its work and enhancing awareness of the need for its work, so that more faculty feel that they are included and that their concerns are being addressed."

   In terms of developing initiatives that stem from faculty interests, the Caucus created four documents that defined Quality Communication across the Curriculum at MCTC (see Appendix A). We distributed these documents on the January 7, 2005, Faculty Development Day. Response was positive, with many instructors commenting that the concrete examples and rubrics could be used (with or without adjustment) almost immediately in the classroom. Also, many instructors were pleased to see common definitions and expectations for student communication across the campus; they felt empowered to share with students the college's expectations and to assess the students accordingly.

   As far as improving the transparency of the Caucus's work and increasing the sense that the Caucus is addressing faculty members' concerns, this year had mixed results. First, the Caucus had great success in involving more faculty members: 23 faculty and staff members were actively involved in Caucus activities this year, representing 12 programs: English, ESL, Graphic Design, Information Literacy, Math, Nursing, Nursing Assistant and Health Aide, Reading, Spanish, Speech, Starting Point, and the Testing Center. Similarly, we were able to assist many instructors from across the college through our Faculty Development efforts by distributing useful documents on January 7, 2005, and by holding sessions for 86 attendees from across the campus on April 8, 2005. Also, through our representatives on the Academic Council we were able to communicate to faculty members proposing new programs and courses the need to address assessment of the college's General Education Competencies. Nonetheless, there still persists among some faculty members the notion that the Caucus is creating "extra" work for instructors—busy work that is not integral to the goals of their programs and that is not directly beneficial to their students. These perceptions surround much of the college's assessment work, with some faculty members, in fact, doubting the value of the General Education Competencies overall; this resistance is often fueled by the belief that assessment will not help individual instructors or students and that it is simply being forced on the faculty in a top-down fashion. Yet this year saw a significant decrease in the vocal opposition to the Caucus's efforts; whether this decrease is due to a broad-based embracing of assessment or to a resigned acceptance that assessment must be is not certain. Most likely a combination of factors is at play—with some faculty members coming to see the usefulness of assessment and others simply acquiescing to a trend they disapprove of.

   Recommendation: As it continues to develop initiatives, the Caucus should try to include as many faculty members as possible; also, all initiatives should be developed on a grass-roots level—one-on-one conversations have proved by far the most effective means of gaining faculty buy-in and understanding of the usefulness of assessment.

2. Last year's report recommended that the Caucus "build on its cross-campus representation by continuing to offer pertinent training sessions and by involving more faculty from technical programs in its activities."

    In terms of offering training to faculty across the campus, the Caucus was quite successful. As noted above, we provided the faculty with four useful documents on Communication Across the Curriculum, and on April 8, 86 faculty members attended four sessions offered by Caucus members:

    > Speaking: 11 attendees
    > Writing: 17 attendees
    > Reading: 25 attendees
    > Information Literacy: 33 attendees

    The Caucus members who ran each group reported that the sessions went well. Attendees appreciated the concrete activities and ideas that they could apply in the classrooms. At the Writing session alone several divisions were represented: Biology, Business Management, English, Math, Nursing Assistants and Home Health Aides.

    As far as involving more technical faculty in its activities, the Caucus was somewhat successful. Faculty from three technical programs participated in the Caucus: Nancy Miller from Nursing, Pat Reinhart from Nursing Assistants and Home Health Aides, and Diane Nelson from Graphic Design. Nonetheless, to enhance its impact, the Caucus does need greater involvement from technical programs. This fact was echoed by a recent request for guidance by Jo Peterson, dean for many technical programs, who noted that many of her instructors have expressed confusion about assessment.

    Recommendation: The Caucus should continue to be as broadly based as possible; next year Caucus leaders should make special efforts to include more technical faculty.

3. Last year's report recommended that the Caucus "continue to work closely with the Faculty Development Committee to offer useful, friendly, peer-led training."

    As noted above, the Caucus was quite successful in following this recommendation, providing forms to whole faculty on January 7, 2005, and conducting four concurrent sessions for 86 faculty members on April 8, 2005.

    Recommendation: Since personal relationships have been central to the growing impact of the Caucus—and since these relationships can only occur in spaces intended for them—Caucus leaders next year should once again work closely with the Faculty Development Committee and should create opportunities for one-on-one and small group conversations about assessment to take place.

4. Last year's report recommended that the Caucus **"encourage members to engage in many, many one-on-one and small group conversations with all stakeholders, especially MSCF, to achieve a critical mass of understanding of and enthusiasm for the assessment model."**

Again, the Caucus was quite successful in promoting one-on-one relationships. In addition to those noted above, through subcommittee work on college-wide assessment, Caucus members were able to establish relationships with many people from across the campus. Through the Reading College-wide Assessment we helped individuals from several areas better understand the purpose and benefits of assessment, in addition to learning ourselves the important roles that various stakeholders play on the campus and how those people can assist in promulgating greater acceptance of assessment. For example, we worked closely with Linda Reed in the Testing Center, Jason Dorsett in the Business Office and JoDee Bridges in Academic Affairs. Likewise, significant relationships resulted from the Speaking College-wide Assessment. First, by training a cadre of observers from across the curriculum, we built a broad-based understanding of the complexities involved in creating and assessing effective speaking tasks for students; observers came from diverse divisions: English, ESL, the Learning Center, Math, Nursing, Reading, Spanish, and Speech. Moreover, as the observers planned, conducted and evaluated their classroom visits, they held one-on-one conversations with 13 instructors from across the curriculum: Biology; English; Human Services; Humanities; Law Enforcement; and Urban Park, Recreation and Youth. As she solicited instructors to become involved, subcommittee chair Tina Langseth held productive conversations with an additional five instructors representing Addiction Counseling, Ceramics, Nursing, and the Urban Teacher Program. In fact, at the final meeting of the Caucus, observers noted that perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the entire exercise was the way that it provided individuals the time and opportunity to experience teaching outside their own field and to talk with someone in another subject area about meaningful pedagogy and assessment.

In terms of the Faculty Association (MSCF) Caucus members worked primarily through the Academic Council (AC). Both Michael Seward and Tom Eland held repeated conversations with other association members sitting on AC about not only the benefits of assessment but the work and change necessitated by implementing an effective assessment model. In fact, as part of their efforts, they worked with MSCF representatives on the Governance Council to seek greater institutional recognition of the work done by members of AC. Additionally, in order to try to create alternative means of establishing institutional channels of promoting assessment and allowing for assessment work to get done—instead of providing money or release time—Caucus members worked with all AC association members to propose unanimously to MSCF that the academic calendar for 2006-07 be shortened, with the resulting work days outside of the classroom to be used for curriculum and assessment purposes. However, many MSCF members opposed such changes, and the proposal was withdrawn.

Whether or not the "critical mass of understanding of and enthusiasm for the assessment model" was achieved this year can be debated. However, much of the vocal resistance to assessment has waned over the year (though some pockets of healthy and strident doubt

about assessment still persist), and discussions with instructors across the curriculum indicate that comprehension of and appreciation for the benefits of assessment are increasing.

Recommendation: The Caucus should create opportunities for one-on-one and small group conversations about assessment. Caucus members should continue to work through existing institutional channels (AC, MSCF, Governance Council, the Faculty Development Committee) to work for improved assessment. As new initiatives are developed and implemented, all avenues—traditional and alternative—for utilizing resources should be explored.

5. Last year's report recommended that the Caucus **"**continue to survey faculty members on their needs and perceptions while collecting more direct information on student learning."

Unlike last year, this year the Caucus did not survey faculty members; information on their needs and perceptions was gathered more informally through the individual contacts described above. One of the goals for the 2004-05 year laid out in the three-year plan was to "survey employers and transfer institutions (using Program Advisory Boards) on their communication needs and current graduate performance." However, given all that the Caucus was already undertaking and the complicated nature of conducting a multitude of such surveys, the Caucus opted not to pursue this goal and to concentrate its efforts on the recommendation of "collecting more direct information on student learning."

In terms of this suggestion, the Caucus's two college-wide assessments were very successful. The Reading Assessment collected data on the reading skills of 247 sophomore level students, and the Speaking Assessment observed 184 student speeches from across the campus. (For results of these assessments see below.)

Recommendation: Given the limited resources and myriad initiatives already planned, the Caucus should concentrate its efforts on implementing tools that collect direct data on student learning on campus, while maintaining, perhaps as a long-term goal, the surveying of faculty, employers and transfer institutions about community expectations for our graduates and the degree to which our graduates possess those skills, knowledge sets, attitudes and abilities.

6. Last year's report recommended that the Administration "continue to acknowledge the time, effort and expertise provided by participating faculty members (though mostly symbolic, gestures such as the stipends provided to Faculty Development presenters and to Advocates suggest that the institution is aware of the work required by faculty to ensure the success of this effort)."

The administration followed this recommendation. Advocates were once again provided a stipend for their work with the Caucus, and faculty members who planned the Faculty Development sessions of April 8 were also provided with a stipend for their efforts.

Recommendation: The Administration should continue to acknowledge the time, effort and expertise provided by participating faculty members.

7. Last year's report recommended that the Administration "recognize that grass-roots work is *crucial* to the success of Caucus efforts, measurements of which must be considered in light of the fact that institutional change occurs at an incremental level."

   As the above comments indicate, much of this year's Caucus success came about via such grass-roots work, which is both time-consuming and difficult to quantify in measurable ways. Thus, administrators should keep in mind the slow and often intangible progress being made as they review the ability of the Caucus to follow past recommendations and to achieve its goals. (See above: "Goals.")

   Recommendation: The Administration should continue to recognize that grass-roots work is *crucial* to the success of Caucus efforts, measurements of which must be considered in light of the fact that institutional change occurs at an incremental level.

8. Last year's report recommended that the Administration "increase financial support for the efforts of the Caucus, including access to clerical support."

   Administrative support for Caucus efforts was adequate—due primarily to the leadership of Vice President Lois Bollman, who maintained a close working relationship with the Caucus and was, therefore, aware of its needs. Financial support was forthcoming for Advocates and presenters, for refreshments for Caucus Faculty Development activities and for stipends for students involved in the College-wide Reading Assessment. Clerical support this year was satisfactory. Also, departments across the campus were quite helpful in assisting in Caucus work: the Testing Center, the Business Office, Academic Affairs. However, as the Caucus and Assessment continue their efforts, institutional support will need to grow to meet the increasing needs of this expanding initiative. At this point, the primary area of need is from Institutional Research (IR). Cindy Crimmins was extremely helpful this year in working with Caucus leaders in setting up databases and creating reports for the college-wide assessments. (On a side note, she and her staff were also exceedingly helpful on several division assessment initiatives and on developing tools for deans to use in reviewing those division assessments.) However, her department has many demands on it; therefore, the Caucus requests that the Administration make available funding to allow someone in IR to have working with the Caucus and Assessment on various initiatives as part of a job description.

   Recommendation: The Administration should make available funding to allow someone in IR to have working with the Caucus and Assessment as part of a job description.

9. Last year's report recommended that the Administration "understand the proposed assessment model and its implications and communicate to academic deans the College's expectations for divisions and faculty members."

   In terms of division/program assessment, this year saw a great increase in the involvement of deans, which was due primarily to the inclusion of an evaluation of the division/program

assessment report into the Program Review. As far as the Caucus is concerned, however, only one dean, Linnea Stenson, attended some meetings. Especially crucial is that administrators sitting on AC understand the implications of Caucus efforts for course and program proposals and alterations that come before them. For example, this year Caucus members brought before the AC a change in Catalog language to reflect the change in the College's approach to ensuring mastery of its General Education Competency of Communication; in effect, the change shifted responsibility for covering the competency from simply having students complete one communication course to having students demonstrate competency both in the communication course and in coursework within their program. As the assessment model becomes implemented to ever greater degrees, responsibility for ensuring that instructors from across all programs are indeed teaching, modeling, assigning and assessing the four General Education Competencies will fall on AC; thus having those on AC understand Assessment and Caucus initiatives will become increasingly important.

Recommendation: The Administration should use existing institutional channels (monthly Deans' meetings, Governance Council, the Cabinet, and, especially the Academic Council) to promote understanding of the Caucus and its efforts.

10. Last year's report recommended that the Administration "encourage administrators at all levels, especially academic deans, to inform themselves about the assessment model and develop a set of specific guidelines for divisions to follow in conducting assessment activities."

    In addition to the remarks in #9 above, of note here is that in the summer of 2005, Caucus members Michael Seward and Tom Eland, along with other members of AC, will work on two projects that should assist AC and divisions in streamlining their assessment work: (1) the creation of a database to be used for AC in tracking what courses and programs have been proposed, the General Education Competencies they have selected to cover, when they will be offered for the first time, what assessment strategies they have included for course effectiveness, and when they should be reviewed; (2) the creation of forms for divisions to use in mapping out their curriculum, to demonstrate when and where the four General Education Competencies and core program skills and competencies are introduced, reinforced, assigned and assessed. (On a side-note, Caucus member Michael Seward will also work with Cindy Crimmins in IR to revise the evaluation tool that deans use in their appraisal of division/program assessment activities in the Program Review.)

    Recommendation: The Administration should allocate resources to support initiatives that will institutionalize avenues of promoting real cultural change vis-à-vis assessment.

II. Accomplishments

1. Cultural Change

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Caucus this year has been its continued work toward changing the culture at the College vis-à-vis assessment. Establishing an educational environment in which the collection of data on student learning is central to and integrated throughout all institutional academic processes and endeavors requires that all stakeholders first understand the changes necessitated by the implementation of an effective assessment model; second agree that such changes will benefit them; and third participate in the creation, shaping and execution of the model. Simply creating an understanding of the various levels of assessment is challenging, not to mention the difficulty of overcoming entrenched resistance to change. MCTC is moving from the beginning of this process into the next stages of establishing an integrated model that is being implemented with varying degrees of success.

To facilitate the kind of deep change required for effective assessment, the Caucus's primary focus has been to institute a broad-based, interdisciplinary effort, to ensure that the responsibility for doing the work of assessment is spread across the College and embedded into courses, so that the long-term success of the project is not dependent upon a small group of individuals "in-the-know." To this end, this year the Caucus included 23 faculty and staff members in its activities, representing 12 programs: English, ESL, Graphic Design, Information Literacy, Math, Nursing, Nursing Assistant and Health Aide, Reading, Spanish, Speech, Starting Point, and the Testing Center. Through the Caucus's projects, these members continued to hold conversations with the many stakeholders at the College, both within their home divisions and with instructors in other disciplines. For example, as part of the College-wide Assessments of Reading and Speaking, Caucus members worked with individuals from many areas: Academic Affairs, Addiction Counseling, Biology, the Business Office, English, Fine Arts, Human Services, Humanities, Law Enforcement, Speech and the Testing Center.

In their work with these stakeholders from across the campus, Caucus member had two goals: first to increase people's understanding of MCTC's assessment efforts and second to have them embrace, to some degree, our assessment model *because they see how it might benefit them or their students.* To accomplish these goals, members engaged in several projects.

First, we developed forms for faculty to use in assessing student communication in four areas: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Information Literacy. (See Appendix A.) We had two goals with this project. Primarily we wanted to create and then share with all faculty a common notion of quality communication at MCTC. We wanted instructors in all areas to understand and to be able to share with students what this institution expects of college-level students in terms of their communication. Creating this mutual understanding, we hoped, would provide instructors a common means of both talking about and assessing communication. To help instructors with the assessing, we provided them with a sample rubric for each skill. (We also offered the rubrics to them electronically in case they wanted to modify them for their own needs.) One benefit of establishing this institutional standard might be, we hoped, that students would begin to hear the same language around communication in all of their courses and would eventually encounter repeatedly the same criteria for expectations and thus become familiar with them.

One of the greatest benefits of this project was for Caucus members themselves. Discussions held in Caucus meetings around assessment terms ("competency" vs. "mastery" and "college-level" vs. "exceptional" for example) were lively and engaging, with many members grappling with these important pedagogical concepts. The nature of these conversations, which resulted in members' being more informed educators able to share their growing expertise and knowledge with their peers, indicates again that the benefits of Caucus work are often difficult to measure.

A second project (related to the first) was the Caucus's effort to change Catalog language about the Communication General Education Competency. As a result of Caucus discussions, members realized that the College's approach to this competency had historically been that if Programs included one course that met Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Competency #1 (Communication), then students in the program would be considered as having fulfilled the college's General Education Competency. However, Caucus members felt that responsibility for ensuring communication competency should *not* lie solely with the instructors of those courses. Instead, members felt that such courses should be viewed as foundational: they were to provide students with the basic skills they would need to hone and apply in other coursework. Thus, the Caucus proposed to the Academic Council, which adopted the changes on December 9, that the Catalog language about the Communication General Education Competency be changed to read:
> "Students will develop the core general education competencies through a combination of appropriate general education coursework and through direct instruction and reinforcing projects and experiences within their program coursework as defined below: Communications - successful completion of one course from MnTC Goal Area 1, as well as of tasks embedded within program coursework."

The Caucus was nearly unanimous in viewing this approach to communication as the most beneficial, yet, as one member pointed out, faculty in many programs encourage students to take their communication courses *at the end of their* time at the college. Clearly, more conversations about the teaching and assessing of communication need to be held.

A third project completed was the College-wide Reading Assessment (see below), which helped promote cultural change by involving several areas of the college, in particular the Testing Center. Linda Reed was a central figure in the development and implementation of this project. Two benefits resulted from her participation: staff at the Testing Center gained an understanding of and appreciation for the College's assessment efforts; Caucus members built relationships with more individuals and came to understand the important roles the Testing Center plays on the college. Additionally, Jason Dorsett of the Business Office and JoDee Bridges in Academic Affairs worked with us on this project.

The last project the Caucus conducted was a College-wide Speaking Assessment, which involved having trained observers attend courses across the curriculum to observe student speeches. (See below.) This project was particularly successful in creating a cultural shift around assessment because it involved many one-on-one conversations in which observers spoke honestly with instructors from across the curriculum. Observers agreed that the most profound potential impact of this efforts lies in the way it provided instructors with the space, means and permission to be much more intentional in the way they design the speaking tasks that they give to students, to provide them with examples which they can adapt to their needs and which allow

them to be specific with students about their expectations before the performance and then to be clear about assessing only the pertinent aspects of the performance in a way that provides accurate evaluation and useful feedback to students.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Advocates sitting on the Caucus were able to establish personal relationships with peers both in their own divisions and in other programs. The conversations held between these Caucus members and others have laid the groundwork for change: individuals are coming to see the benefits of assessment and have even begun their own initiatives. For example, Carmen Buhler is working with three of her colleagues in math on coming up with a text reading guide lesson to be given to faculty who teach Introductory Algebra (Math 70). Also, Ann Ludlow has met with four Chemistry and Biology members to discuss direction reading, ISRS and course prereqs, and assessment of the relationship between student success in introductory chemistry classes and complying with course prereqs in reading. In fact, these conversations sparked one chemistry instructor, Rekha Ganaganur to bring an outside expert onto campus in fall to discuss these issues. Likewise, Ginny Heinrich in Information Studies worked with Linda Russell to incorporate the assessment of reading more thoroughly into the revised INFS 100 course. (See Appendix I.)

On a side note, it important to point out that, as a result of these two college-wide projects, many students also became aware of the College's assessment efforts: all sophomores received a letter (see Appendix C) about our College-wide Reading Assessment (over 2000 letters were sent out, and 247 students participated); students in 19 courses from across the campus sat in on classes in which an observer for the College-wide Speaking Assessment was present (184 student speeches were observed). Thus the Caucus was able to promote its work to the largest and most important group of stakeholders on campus.

Despite its successes this year, the Caucus has more work to do in promoting cultural change. Certainly some divisions and instructors have come to understand the benefits of assessment and have begun adapting their teaching. However, as evidenced by some concerns expressed during in-service sessions and at committee and union meetings, there still exists some passionate—and legitimate—resistance to assessment, much of which is based on perceptions of the motivations behind this effort. While such questioning is crucial to the establishment of a faculty-driven assessment model, the fears underlying some of the resistance suggest a need for still more communication. The Caucus must continue to involve more instructors from across the disciplines in its efforts.

2. Institutional Avenues

In changing the culture at the College, Caucus members have had to work through (and alter) existing institutional channels. Core among these have been the Faculty Development Committee, the Academic Council, the deans (especially in terms of their writing Program Reviews), Coordinators, MSCF and the college's AQIP plan.

One of the most productive relationships continued this year has been with **Faculty Development**. On January 7 the Caucus provided faculty four documents on the assessment of communication skills across the curriculum. (See both above and Appendix A). These

documents established an institutional definition of college-level communication, as well as a college-wide expectation for student performance. On the April 8 Faculty Development Day, we ran for faculty four concurrent sessions on Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Information Literacy. Eighty-six people attended these sessions, which provided concrete activities and ideas that could be applied in classrooms, as well as information the overall assessment process. The number of instructors participating attests to the potential of this avenue for promoting change. The key reason for the success of these sessions was the commitment of the presenters—in-house faculty willing to share their expertise with their peers. Another indicator of the usefulness of the cooperation between the Caucus and Faculty Development was the fact that during these sessions instructors felt empowered both to listen to their peers and to question them, to express concern about the assessment process—such openness is crucial to the continued success of the College's assessment model.

A second College body crucial to the success of the Caucus has been the **Academic Council** (AC). On September 2, this committee voted to house the Assessment Committee (including the Caucus) as a sub-committee of the full AC. On October 7 the AC accepted the report submitted by the Caucus on its activities for 2003-04. On December 9, this committee voted to adopt changes to the Catalog proposed by the Caucus (see above). Moreover, this body will become increasingly important in ensuring the promulgation of assessment activities, as instructors who come before it with program and course alterations and proposals include plans for the assessment of the General Education Competencies in their forms. The work involved will be considerable: tracking who has proposed what assessment activities for which courses, working with those instructors to create and implement effective assessment strategies, maintaining a record of when the results of assessments are to be reported, working with instructors to ensure that results are indeed reported and then acted upon. Because the amount of information is daunting, Caucus members Tom Eland and Michael Seward will work with other AC members in the summer of 2005 to develop a database.

A third avenue at the College that will prove of increasing value in Caucus efforts will be **Program Review**. Currently, as part of their Program Reviews, divisions are asked to report only on how they are assessing students on content-specific skills. (To that end, Michael Seward has been working with deans, with Cindy Crimmins in Institutional Research, and with fellow Assessment Co-Coordinators Diane Nelson and Tom Obermeyer, as well as with Linda Russell, to establish a clear process for evaluating division assessment reports.) However, although it had been listed as one of the Caucus's AQIP goals, we did not ask divisions to incorporate into their assessment reports any information on the Communication General Education Competency. There were several reasons for this decision. First, the assessment process is multi-faceted and complex; MCTC has only recent begun a concerted effort to implement a comprehensive assessment model—and there has been some resistance and much confusion around this model. For the Caucus to ask divisions to include even more information in their reports would only result in greater confusion and resistance (a possibility which is emphasized by the fact that for 2003-04 several divisions did not even submit an assessment report). Second, through work on AC (by having divisions address the General Education Competencies in their proposals), Caucus members have laid a groundwork that is more likely to lead to successful and lasting change than by insisting that divisions report on Communication right now. Third, in the summer of 2005, Caucus members Michael Seward and Tom Eland will work with Linnea

Stenson and Rich Pollak to develop forms for divisions that undergo an intensive Self-study to use in mapping out their curriculum, to demonstrate when and where the four General Education Competencies and core program skills and competencies are introduced, reinforced, assigned and assessed.

Throughout the year, Caucus member Michael Seward also attended several meetings of division **Coordinators**. In August, 2004, he presented them with copies of the Executive Summary of last year's report, so that they could understand the Caucus's efforts and goals and, more importantly, communicate that understanding with their divisions. Then, in February, 2005, he again spoke to the gathered Coordinators about the assessment reports that they would have to submit on their 2004-05 efforts.

As noted above, Caucus members also worked with the **Faculty Association (MSCF).** Both Michael Seward and Tom Eland held repeated conversations with other association members sitting on AC about creating alternative means of establishing institutional channels of promoting assessment and allowing for assessment work to get done. Caucus members worked with all AC association members to propose unanimously to MSCF that the academic calendar for 2006-07 be shortened, with the resulting work days outside of the classroom to be used for curriculum and assessment purposes. However, many MSCF members opposed such changes, and the proposal was withdrawn.

Finally, to ensure that it follows an overarching plan in keeping with the College's strategic plan, Caucus work has been identified as one of the College's three **AQIP Action Plans.** To fulfill AQIP expectations, the Caucus has set for itself certain goals (see above), and Caucus members have completed required reports and worked with the College's AQIP team.

3. College-wide Assessments

The Caucus's most visible successes came about as a result of our conducting two college-wide assessments: one in reading and one in speaking. In both cases we managed to meet our AQIP goal, which stated that we would "collect college-wide data that indicate 60% of participating students are performing in speaking and reading at the appropriate college level."

To conduct a **College-wide Reading Assessment** we selected as our target group sophomore-level students (those who had completed 24 or more college-level credits by Spring 2005). We wanted to know how many students in that group would test into college-level reading. Therefore, we decided to get a group of sophomores to retake the reading entrance exam (Accuplacer, Reading Comprehension). Ideally, we would have liked to select a random group and test them. However, given the logistics, such an endeavor was infeasible; instead we elected to invite all sophomores to retake the test, offering $20 as an incentive for their efforts. While this approach meant that the students involved were self-selected and also motivated to participate for various reasons (factors which could influence the nature of the results), we felt this method was the best available to us. To ensure maximum participation we sent out a letter to all qualifying students (see Appendix C), and we posted signs across the campus.

Though we did not get the 340 students we needed to re-take the reading exam in order to get generalizable results, we did get a solid group of 247 sophomore-level students—53 of whom were non-native speakers of English. The results of the assessment fulfilled our AQIP goal: 75% of the test-takers placed into College-level reading. (For more information on the overall results see Appendix D.)

Other significant results include the fact that a full 82% of the native speakers of English involved placed into college-level reading. (The fact that a lower percentage of non-native speakers—51%—placed into college-level reading may be in great part due to the fact that, for logistical purposes, all students were tested using a tool designed for native speakers.) A comparison of the results of the sophomore-level retest with past results for incoming students taking the same reading tests indicates that a significantly higher percentage of the sophomores tested into college level reading: for the four semesters of 2003-04 and 2004-05 incoming native speaker testers placed into college-level reading at rates between 53%-60%, compared to the 82% of sophomores; incoming non-native speakers tested into college-level reading at rates between 8%-16%, compared to 51% of the sophomores (a number which is most likely skewed *low,* for these non-native speakers took a test that did not take into account issues specific to ESL readers). (See Appendix E.)

On a side note, the Reading Division is looking into using the data resulting from this college-wide assessment to gain a better understanding of how they might better meet student needs.

For the **College-wide Speaking Assessment** the Caucus decided to train a cadre of observers from across the curriculum to assess student speeches given in a number courses during Spring 2005. These observers came from diverse divisions (English, ESL, the Learning Center, Math, Nursing, Reading, Spanish, and Speech); to increase inter-rater reliability, they attended a norming session on February 11, 2005. At this session, observers used a draft rubric to score sample, videotaped student speeches. Attendees discussed their experiences with the rubric and suggested changes. The changes were made, and then, from February 17 to May 2, the observers used the revised rubric (see Appendix F) to evaluate speeches in 19 courses run by 13 instructors from across the curriculum (Biology; English; Human Services; Humanities; Law Enforcement; and Urban Park, Recreation and Youth) who had agreed to participate in the project. Scores were reported using a tally sheet (see Appendix G).

A total of 184 student speeches were assessed in three areas: Content, Organization and Delivery, with each area having five levels. Of the 184 students observed 130 (71%) earned at least a score of three in all three areas; thus we again surpassed our AQIP goal. Student scores were highest in the area of Content, in which the mean score was 4.07; the mean for Organization was 3.93; and for Delivery the mean was 3.42. The percentage of students earning a 4 or 5 in each category follows: Content, 72%; Organization, 59%; and Delivery, 50%. (See Appendix H)

At the final meeting of the Caucus, the observers noted that perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the entire exercise was not the resulting data, but the way that it provided individuals the time and opportunity to experience teaching outside their own field and to talk with someone in

another subject area about meaningful pedagogy and assessment. All of those who had gone into classrooms as observers had similar comments:

(1) Using a one-size-fits-all rubric is very problematic to assess the diverse types of student speaking activities that occur on this campus, especially given the fact that so many instructors had provided students with sketchy instructions and few guidelines, which were then not always adhered to.

(2) The most useful aspect of the process was not in collecting numbers but in promoting conversations between individual faculty members (observers and instructors) around the use of assessment with student speeches. Such one-on-ones represent the spaces where real cultural change begins and are therefore the most meaningful part of our efforts.

(3) A secondary benefit was for the observers themselves, both in understanding the diversity of student needs and in fully realizing the importance of assignment design in sparking quality student performance and in being able to produce meaningful evaluation of student performance.

(4) All observers were in agreement that the most profound potential impact of such efforts lies in providing instructors with the space, means and permission to be much more intentional in the way they design the speaking tasks that they give to students, to provide them with examples which they can adapt to their needs and which allow them to be specific with students about their expectations before the performance and then to be clear about assessing only the pertinent aspects of the performance in a way that provides accurate evaluation and useful feedback to students.

4. Embedded Assessments

Though the Caucus did not achieve its AQIP goals of embedding assessments in reading and speaking into 20 courses and collecting data from those embedded assessments that 60% of the students were performing at college-level, we did make significant progress toward enabling ourselves to accomplish this goal next year.

As much of the above report has indicated, the real success of Caucus efforts has come about through individual relationships, and it is in terms of such connections that we made much advancement in this area. Through conversations held in conducting our college-wide assessments we identified several instructors who involve reading or speaking in their courses and who would be willing and prepared to work with us next year. For speaking we worked with 18 instructors in 11 areas: Addiction Counseling; Biology; English; Fine Arts; Human Services; Humanities; Law Enforcement; Nursing; Speech; Urban Teacher Program; and Urban Parks, Recreation and Youth. These instructors held several conversations with the observer who came to their course or with a subcommittee member; they are somewhat familiar with the difficulties of designing effective speaking tasks and have at least a cursory familiarity with the use of rubrics with speaking tasks. Most importantly, they have links with Caucus members and have expressed an interest in using assessment to improve their instruction. Although the reading subcommittee also identified several divisions (Biology, Math, Nursing, and Reading) the relationships here are not as developed, and these Caucus members may have more work to do to get adequate participation.

Our revised goal then is, in fall, to have each subcommittee, Speaking and Reading, identify 10 instructors who will be willing, in a spring course, to conduct some activity involving their chosen communication skill. Also in the fall subcommittee members will work with the selected instructors, providing them background on effective reading/speaking strategies and assignment design, as well as with sample assignments and rubrics. Then, early in the spring semester, Caucus members will ensure that the instructors have included time for the assignments in their syllabi. As the spring semester progresses, they should follow-up with instructors to ensure that the assessments are completed and that the instructors have kept copies of the results. Finally, by the end of the semester, the subcommittees should collect the data and analyze the results.

III. Goals

The Caucus was successful in meeting one of the goals for 2004-05 laid out in the College's AQIP Action Plan; two of the goals are in progress; and one goal has been postponed. (See Appendix B for more information on how the Caucus's work is described in the College's AQIP Action Plan.)

AQIP Goals	Results	Plans for 2005-06
From assessment tools not linked to specific courses, collect college-wide data that indicate 60% of participating students are performing in speaking and reading at the appropriate college level.	Accomplished: 75% of the 247 sophomores tested for reading scored at college level; 71% of the 184 student speeches observed for speaking scored at college level.	n/a
Embed the assessment of communication into 20 courses across the curriculum.	In progress: This year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), so that next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses.	In Fall 05 Caucus members will contact the instructors with whom they worked in 2004-05 and assist them in designing communication tasks and rubrics and in identifying courses in Spring in which they can embed these.
From those courses collect data that indicate that 60% of participating students are communicating at a satisfactory level or higher.	In progress: This year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), so that next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses.	In Spring 06 Caucus members will assist instructors in implementing the embedded tasks and will collect, collate and report on the resulting data.
Incorporate the reporting on the assessment of student communication skills into the Annual Program Review of ALL Programs/Divisions across the college.	Postponed: Given that so many Programs/Divisions were able only for the first time in 2004-05 to submit a report on assessment activities for their own competencies, asking them also to address one of the General Education Competencies is unreasonable. (Of note is that one division, Humanities, did choose to look at Writing for its assessment report.)	In 2005-06 the Caucus will not ask any Programs/ Divisions to incorporate the reporting of communication skills into their reports. However, as a long-term goal, the Caucus will work with the Academic Council and with Programs undergoing Self-Study to incorporate the assessment of communication across the curriculum.

The College's AQIP Action Plan has laid out the following goals for the Caucus for the next academic year (2005-06).

AQIP Goals	Plans
Embed the assessment of communication into 30 courses across the curriculum.	In addition to the plans laid out above for embedding the assessment of speaking and reading into courses, the Caucus will next year, via the work of its subcommittees on Writing and Information Literacy, identify courses into which those assessments can be embedded and will work with those instructors in fall to develop tools and in spring to implement those tools, with the Caucus collecting and reporting on the data in spring.
From those courses collect data that indicate that 70% of participating students are communicating at a satisfactory level or higher.	See above.
Incorporate the reporting on the assessment of student communication skills into the Annual Program Review of ALL Programs/Divisions across the college.	Given that so many Programs/Divisions were able only for the first time in 2004-05 to submit a report on assessment activities for their own competencies, asking them also to address one of the General Education Competencies is unreasonable. In 2005-06 the Caucus will not ask any Programs/Divisions to incorporate the reporting of communication skills into their reports. However, as a long-term goal, the Caucus will work with the Academic Council and with Programs undergoing Self-Study to incorporate the assessment of communication across the curriculum.
From assessment tools not linked to specific course, collect college-wide data that indicate 70% of participating students are performing in writing and information literacy at the appropriate college level.	In Fall 2005 the Caucus will establish two subcommittees (Writing and Information Literacy), each of which will design a college-wide assessment tool. In Spring 2006 each subcommittee will then implement the tool and will collect and report on the resulting data.

This year was the second in a three-year plan laid out last year for the Caucus. Below is a chart listing how well the plan was followed

Term	Goals	Results
Fall 2004	• Meet monthly; • Submit Annual Report to AASC and Cabinet; • Conduct Faculty Development on August 19: "Creating Communication Assessment Tools across the Curriculum"; • Implement college-wide assessment tools for Speaking and reading; • Meet with communication advocates; • Survey employers and transfer institutions (using Program Advisory Boards) on their communication needs and current graduate performance; • Have subcommittees on Writing and Information Literacy develop college-wide assessment tools.	• Accomplished. • Accomplished. • Postponed to 4/8/05—no time allotted to Assessment during opening days, though M. Seward did meet with Coordinators. • Accomplished. • Accomplished. • Postponed—too involved given Caucus's limited time and resources, though maintained as a long-term goal. • In progress—creating 4 subcommittees would have fractured Caucus too much and there is enough time next year to complete this goal.
Spring 2005	• Meet monthly; • Offer Faculty Development on April 8; • Work with communication advocates; • Have sub-committees on Writing and Information Literacy continue to develop college-wide assessment tools; • Collect data from Programs/ Divisions on communication skills in specific courses; • Collate and respond to data from Employer/ Transfer Institution Survey; • Collate and report on data gathered via college-wide assessment of speaking and reading; • Begin report on year's activities.	• Accomplished. • Accomplished. • Accomplished. • In progress—creating 4 subcommittees would have fractured Caucus too much and there is enough time next year to complete this goal. • In progress—this year the relationships with individual instructors were formed (via subcommittee and AC), and next year the instructors involved can embed assessment of communication into their courses. • Postponed—too involved given Caucus's limited time and resources, though maintained as a long-term goal. • Accomplished. • Accomplished.
Summer 2005	• Write Annual Report • Plan opening day activities	• Accomplished. • Dropped—no time allotted to Assessment in opening days.

Below is the plan for next year, the final year of the three-year plan.

Term	Goals as initially planned	Revised Goals
Fall 2005	• Meet monthly; • Submit Annual Report to AASC and Cabinet; • Conduct Faculty Development day; • Meet with communication advocates; • Have subcommittees on Writing and Information Literacy implement college-wide assessment tools.	• Meet monthly; • Submit Report to AC and Caucus; • Dropped—no time allotted to Assessment in opening days; • Dropped—Advocates no longer receiving stipend—Caucus should have enough members; • Have subcommittees develop and plan college-wide assessment tools for Writing and Information Literacy; • Have subcommittees identify instructors and develop and plan embedded assessment tools for Reading, Speaking, Writing and Information Literacy
Spring 2006	• Meet monthly; • Offer Faculty Development day; • Work with communication advocates; • Collect data from Programs/ Divisions on communication skills in specific courses; • Collate and report on data gathered via college-wide assessment of Writing and Information Literacy; • Begin report on year's activities; • Disband.	• Meet monthly; • Offer Faculty Development day; • Dropped—Advocates no longer receiving stipend—Caucus should have enough members; • Collect data from Programs/ Divisions on communication skills (all four areas) embedded in specific courses; • Collate and report on data gathered via college-wide assessment of Writing and Information Literacy; • Begin report on year's activities; • Disband; • Plan for next Competency Caucus: Social Responsibility.

This year Caucus leaders also laid out long-term goals for the assessment of all four of the College's General Education Competencies. After 2006, a new Caucus will be established to look into a second competency, with that Caucus lasting three years, to be replaced by the next, and so on:

     Social Responsibility—2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09
     Personal Responsibility—2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12
     Critical Thinking—2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15

Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions and Rubrics for Quality Communication across the Curriculum at MCTC

I. Reading Assessment

The Communications Caucus has developed this **description of college level reading** as well as a **rubric** designed to help instructors rate students as either <u>college level</u> or <u>exceptional</u>. This overall description can be put into your syllabus or used in some other way to help students understand the reading skills and strategies that will be necessary in college work.

To use the rubric, you might choose only some of the aspects of reading you wish to assess. Just copy the sections you want to use. You might add the sections of the rubric to one you already use to rate students on the content area knowledge or skill.

The rubric attempts to describe the criteria for college level and exceptional performance on various aspects of the reading process and resulting comprehension of texts, manuals, assignments, labs, etc. Of course, the point values are entirely up to you to modify so that they work for your grading system.

College Level Readers

- Use effective textbook or technical manual reading skills to learn content, including broad, general concepts as well as important details, steps, processes, or evidence.
- Read complex, multi-step directions accurately and thoroughly
- Read tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams appropriate for the discipline
- Recognize the organization of materials and use it to guide their learning
- Develop their vocabularies to learn both technical and non-technical college level words and building blocks to words, such as prefixes, root words, and suffixes
- Read effectively both on a computer screen and on paper
- Adjust their reading style and speed as necessary
- Apply their reading skills to the testing situation
- Are independent in their reading; they do not rely on the instructor to lecture or explain everything

College Level Readers demonstrate the above skills by

- Creating their own study methods and materials (study cards, outlines, maps, notes) while working with texts, both in terms of the general ideas as well as the important details
- Following directions accurately and completely on assignments, projects, and tests
- Correctly interpreting graphic information, processes, or results
- Identifying, using or reporting the method of organization of the text (such as cause/effect, comparison/contrast, process, etc.)
- Using technical and non-technical vocabulary correctly and appropriately or identifying correct uses or definitions of vocabulary words
- Reading from a computer screen without needing to print it first OR reading web sites accurately (using sidebars and other features effectively)
- Managing the reading load in coursework in a timely manner
- Reading test questions accurately, with no errors resulting from misreading test questions
- Coming to class prepared and understanding the readings or chapters that were required

Reading Assessment

Scoring Guide

Outcomes: Student . . .	College Level Students	Exceptional Students
Follows Directions	• Complete all sections of the assignment adequately. • Do what the directions ask in all but one part of the assignment. • Complete a project that is satisfactory.	• Complete all sections of the assignment thoroughly. • Do what the directions ask in all sections of the assignment. • Complete a project that is excellent.
Understands New Terms	• Define terms adequately. • Use terms partially correctly in speaking or writing.	• Define terms accurately and completely. • Use terms correctly in speaking or writing.
Answers Objective Questions	Answer questions with at least 70% accuracy.	Answer questions with at least 90% accuracy.
Reads Tables, Charts and Graphs	• Answer questions with at least 70% accuracy. • Demonstrate a partial understanding of the results or conclusions of the table, chart or graph.	• Answer questions with at least 90% accuracy. • Demonstrate a clear understanding of the results or conclusions of the table, chart or graph.
Processes Information (Summarizes, Maps, Outlines, Takes Notes, or Annotates)	• Identify most of the important points, adequate supporting details, and some of the important vocabulary. • Use a system to differentiate broad, general ideas from specific, supporting information. • Paraphrase most of the time.	• Identify all of the important points, an adequate number of supporting details, and important vocabulary. • Use a clear and easy-to-recognize system to differentiate broad, general ideas from specific, supporting information. • Paraphrase most of the time and do so accurately.
Answers an Essay Question	• Write and answer that addresses most of the issue(s). • Create an adequate thesis. • Develop supporting ideas logically. • Support the thesis with adequate specific details.	• Write an answer that addresses all the important issue(s). • Create a clear, strong thesis. • Develop supporting ideas logically and convincingly. • Support the thesis with ample specific details.

II. Public Speaking Assessment Rubric

Public speaking is a highly valued skill in our society. At MCTC, students learn to be effective public speakers through proficiency in selecting a topic, researching a topic, constructing a speech and delivering a speech.

Skill	College Level Proficiency	Exceptional Level Proficiency
Topic Selection **Audience Analysis**	Audience analysis is used to produce an appropriate topic and purpose for the speech.	Audience analysis is used to its fullest to produce a highly appropriate topic and purpose for the speech
Narrowing of Topic	An appropriate topic is selected and is narrowed adequately.	A topic is selected which is clearly appropriate and is extremely well narrowed.
Thesis Statement	A thesis statement which supports the content and purpose for the speech is written adequately.	A thesis statement which greatly supports the content and purpose of the speech is written exceptionally.
Research **Number and Variety of Sources**	A sufficient number of varied sources is used.	An exceptional number of extremely varied sources is used.
Verbal Citations	Citations are delivered sufficiently well and provide the audience the sources used for the information.	Verbal citations are delivered extremely well and provide the audience a detailed source citation.
Documentation	A bibliography with the minimum required sources is included with the speech outline.	A bibliography with all sources used to research the topic is included with the speech outline.
Speech Construction **Introduction**	The introduction sufficiently states an attention getter, significance, credibility, thesis statement and preview of the main points.	The attention-getter, significance, credibility, thesis statement and preview of the main points are stated exceptionally well and entice the audience to listen.
Transitions	Transitions are used well to guide the audience from one point to another.	Transitions are used extremely well, allowing the audience to follow the speech easily.
Body	Main points and sub points are stated well.	Main points and sub points are stated exceptionally well and provide great clarity.
Conclusion	A review of main points is provided as well as a final statement or call to action.	A review of main points is provided which is exceptionally succinct and well stated. The final statement or call to action provides the audience with something provocative and eloquent.
Speech Delivery **Eye Contact and Use of Notes**	Notes are used well and sufficient eye contact is maintained.	Notes are used extremely well, giving the audience maximum eye contact.
Verbal Skills	The speaker uses good volume, pitch, inflection, pauses and rate of speech.	The speaker uses excellent volume, pitch, inflection, pauses and rate of speech.
Nonverbal Skills	Appearance, gestures, movement and facial expressions are used in ways that complement the verbal delivery of the speech.	Appearance, gestures, movement and facial expressions are used exceptionally well and not only complement, but enhance the verbal delivery of the speech.
Timing	The speech is delivered in the general time frame required.	The speech is delivered in the specific time frame required.

III. Writing Assessment Rubric

At MCTC, college-level writing has all the elements that readers in business, education, and social environments expect to see. So the writing presents a context and purpose that meet the reader's needs and a style appropriate for this context and purpose. The writing is interesting because it has something to say, and the reader can follow this interest to the end of the piece because it is well organized. Finally, the reader finds few, if any, distracting errors that slow what should be a pleasurable, informative process.

Writing Evaluation Guide

Evaluation Area	At College Level Proficiency, the writing demonstrates the writer's developing ability to . . .	At Exceptional Proficiency, the writing demonstrates the writer's ability to . . .
Context	• address the issue at hand • demonstrate an awareness of his/her audience and purpose.	• convey a high degree of focus • provide a clear sense of context for the reader.
Style	• use language that is clear, specific and appropriate to task • establish an appropriate tone • avoid confusion or misuse of terms.	• control style in such a way that the reader wants to read the piece • use effectively sentence variety and word economy.
Ideas & Insights	• think critically and explore increasingly complex ideas or respond to increasingly difficult writing tasks • convey a sense of purpose and focus • express original insights about the topic (if applicable).	• convey superior and original insight about the topic or task thoroughly • support ideas with superior evidence • exert greater control over complex ideas or writing tasks.
Structure & Organization	• use appropriate structure for purpose and audience (to construct a clear thesis if applicable) • gain and hold the reader's attention • construct effective paragraphs (if applicable) • use transitions effectively • order paragraphs logically • close the writing effectively.	• gain and hold the reader's attention (using all the elements of college-level writing) • leave the reader with a strong sense of satisfaction for his or her efforts.
Grammar & Mechanics	• apply and control the conventions of Standard Written English • avoid confusion, misunderstanding or interruption due to errors in spelling, grammar, usage, mechanics, etc. • avoid a wide variety in types of errors • include proper use of source citation and documentation of research (if applicable).	• maintain superior control of grammar, mechanics, and documentation with no significant errors.
Process	• plan, write, and revise effectively • identify and correct weaknesses • respond effectively to a variety of feedback.	• produce polished writing through a high level of processing, especially in the revising and editing stages.

IV. Information Literacy Assessment Rubric

Information literacy is a component of life-long learning. To be information literate a person must possess several skills: an understanding of how knowledge is created and organized, as well as of the political, economic and social context(s) in which knowledge is created and used; the ability to formulate a search question(s); the ability to translate question(s) into a search strategy; the ability to select appropriate tools to locate desired information; and the ability to evaluate material for its credibility and authority, as well as its capacity to meet the need for information.

Assessing Student Research

One way to assess research skills is to have students submit a research portfolio with their research paper or research project. Research portfolios should include the following items:

1. Documentation of how students searched for books, journal articles, web pages (the type of searches conducted (i.e., keyword search, subject search, etc.) and the process used).
2. Explanation of how the resources support the thesis statement and research questions.
3. Evaluation of each resource for credibility and authority and explanation of why student trusts the information.

Rubric for Assessing the Research Portfolio

Requirement	College Level Proficiency	Exceptional Level Proficiency
Student is able to specify the dimensions of the topic. Student • Clearly states the focused topic. • States an appropriate working thesis. • Follows appropriate steps to narrow the topic.	Topic has discernable focus and is adequately precise. Thesis statement that is clear and focused and adequately precise. The argument is adequately stated but may need more focus. Research questions address the topic and are adequately precise.	Topic has a very clear focus that is precise, appropriately narrow, and well articulated. Thesis statement is very well focused, concise, and articulated. The argument is clear, focused and well stated. Research questions are very clear, concise and well focused.
Student demonstrates a clear research strategy. Student • Clearly articulates the process used to identify and locate resources. • Uses specific and effective search techniques.	A clear research process is articulated that takes account of the issues related to the topic. Basic and some advanced search techniques are used, with minor errors in application of search techniques or a lack of connection in search strategies across resources. Use of focused keywords and subject headings is satisfactory.	Student articulates a clear, concise, and well focused research process that takes into account all the relevant issues related to the topic. Student uses (1) basic and advanced search techniques very well and applies search techniques consistently across all resources, and (2) precise keywords and subject headings as well as sub-headings to narrow searches.
Student selects resources that are appropriate for the topic and explains why the resources are appropriate.	The majority of the selected resources are appropriate for the topic. Resource appropriateness is well documented and clearly stated. A satisfactory level of detail is provided concerning relevance of resources to thesis statement, research questions, and topic focus.	All resources are well focused on the topic or specific sub-aspects of the topic. The appropriateness of resources is very well documented with an in-depth analysis of each resource. Clear and detailed explanation of how resources support thesis statement, research questions, and various aspects of the topic is included.
Student is able to evaluate the resources according to specific criteria.	Clear evaluation of resources based upon specific criteria of authority, reliability and bias is present.	Student includes a strong and in-depth evaluation based upon specific criteria, with a clear understanding of the bias, authority, reliability, and credentials of the author, publisher, or web site sponsor.

Appendix B: AQIP Action Plan for Assessment

A. Give a short identifying title (under 10 words) to this Action Project:
- College-wide assessment of MCTC's general education core competency in communication.

B. Describe the goal(s) of this Action Project (in 100 words or fewer):

- To improve students' communication skills by developing strategies that collect, disseminate and respond to data on student mastery of the general education core competency of communication—including the implementation of broader college-wide tools, the embedding of assessment strategies into individual courses and the training of faculty in the assessment of communication skills across the curriculum.

C. Please Identify the single AQIP Criterion which the Action Project will Primarily affect and other Criteria to which it is strongly related:

Primary	X	Helping Students Learn
Related	X	Measuring Effectiveness
	X	Planning Continuous Improvement
	X	Building Collaborative Relationships

Identify up to four of the AQIP Principles of High-Performing Organizations that you hope this project will enhance.

Principles	X	Broad-based faculty, staff, and administrative involvement
	X	Leaders and leadership systems that support a quality culture
	X	A learning-centered environment
	X	Fact-based information-gathering and thinking to support analysis and decision-making

D. Please describe your Institution's rationale for addressing this *Primary* criterion at this time. Why is this project and its goal(s) one of your "vital few"?

- To know if it is meeting its mission of educating students and to ensure that it offers responsive and effective programs, MCTC must collect and respond to data on how well students are gaining the skills and competencies identified by faculty as vital to the successful education of students both in their chosen program of study and in their core general education.

E. List the organizational areas (or institutional departments and divisions) most affected.

- Divisions, Departments and Programs that provide direct student instruction
- Faculty Development
- Academic Affairs and Standards Committee
- Deans/Academic Affairs

F. List and briefly describe the critical processes most affected.

- Faculty Development
- New Course Proposals & Course Alterations
- Annual Program Reviews
- Instructional Approaches and Strategies

G. List the process measures that you plan to track as you work on this Action Project.

- The number of Programs/Divisions assessing communication skills at the course level.
- The number of students involved in assessment activities.
- The number of faculty participating in assessment activities.
- The percentage of full-time faculty attending Faculty Development activities.
- The number of faculty responding to assessment surveys and questionnaires.

H. List the outcome measures that you plan to track as you work on this Action Project.

- Results of college-wide Core Competency assessment activities.
- Results of Program/Division activities assessing Core Competencies.

I. Describe your annual stretch targets for this Action Project.

Year	Quantitative and Qualitative Targets
One (2003-04)	- Collect information from 50% of full-time faculty on their perceptions of student communication needs—both in terms of what they believe students should be able to do and what they believe students are most deficient in. - Have 50% of full-time faculty attend Faculty Development workshops on the assessment of communication skills.
Two (2004-05)	- Embed the assessment of communication into 20 courses across the curriculum. - From those courses collect data that indicate that 60% of participating students are communicating at a satisfactory level or higher. - Incorporate the reporting on the assessment of student communication skills into the Annual Program Review of ALL Programs/Divisions across the college. - From assessment tools not linked to specific course, collect college-wide data that indicate 60% of participating students are performing in speaking and reading at the appropriate college level.
Three (2005-06)	- Embed the assessment of communication into 30 courses across the curriculum. - From those courses collect data that indicate that 70% of participating students are communicating at a satisfactory level or higher. - Incorporate the reporting on the assessment of student communication skills into the Annual Program Review of ALL Programs/Divisions across the college. - From assessment tools not linked to specific course, collect college-wide data that indicate 70% of participating students are performing in writing and information literacy at the appropriate college level.

J. Briefly describe how you plan to keep your institution's attention and energies focused on this Project and its goal(s).

- Involve faculty from across the curriculum through Faculty Development
- Celebrate in-house experts through Faculty Development
- Involve faculty through work with Coordinators
- Involve faculty through college-wide assessment tools
- Increase resources and time for Assessment of Student Learning
- Implement a clear model and assessment process
- Require the embedding of assessment activities into courses through Course Alteration and New Course Proposal Forms of the Academic Affairs and Standards Committee
- Require Programs/Divisions to report on assessment activities in Annual Program Reviews

- Recognize and celebrate increased student mastery of communication through all-college events and publications

Appendix C: Letter Sent to Students for College-wide Reading Assessment

MINNEAPOLIS
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL
COLLEGE

1501 Hennepin Av.
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Student:

Congratulations! According to records at Minneapolis Community and Technical College you have successfully completed 24 or more college-level credits, which makes you a college sophomore. We hope that you are as proud of your accomplishments as we are!

Now that you're taking sophomore –level courses, we would like to offer you an opportunity to show your pride in your education and to help future students at our college. In recognition of the hard work you've put forth, we'd like to offer you the opportunity to earn $20 without leaving campus.

Currently the college is implementing a plan to assess student learning—to determine how well students are mastering certain skills and competencies. This plan will identify the areas in which we are meeting student needs, as well as those areas where we might improve our instruction. To collect information on the reading skills of advanced students, we have selected you as part of our target group for these assessment efforts.

To take part in this endeavor, we ask that you simply take the Accuplacer Reading Comprehension Assessment, which students take when they first enroll here. You can take this test in the Testing Center (Room T 2800) any time during the Center's regular hours between March 21 and April 15, 2005. You should plan on spending 30-45 minutes in completing the test. If you want to know how well you score on the test, your results will be available to you immediately.

In terms of procedure, you will simply need to bring **this letter** and a **photo ID** to the technician in the Testing Center, who will then guide you to a station where you will sign in and take the test. Once you have completed the test, the Testing Center will inform the college that you have participated in this effort, and the Business Office will send you **a check for $20 in the mail**—for record-keeping purposes, we will **NOT** be able to pay you on the spot. Please note that you will be allowed to take the test only once and that only one check will be issued to you. Also please note that this letter can only be used by the student to whom it was sent. You can expect the check to come toward the end of the semester.

We want to celebrate your progress so far and are grateful for your willingness to participate in this opportunity. We also want you to know that your scores on this test will have no effect on your program or coursework; information on individual scores will not be kept—we will only be using data on overall student performances to assess our effectiveness. We do, however, ask that you take this task seriously and that you perform to the best of your ability. How well you score is a reflection of your pride in your education!

We thank you for your time and congratulate you again. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact JoDee Bridges at JoDee.Bridges@minneapolis.edu or at 612-659-6115.

Sincerely,

Phillip Davis, President

Appendix D: Results of College-wide Reading Assessment

Reading Retest Placement

Minneapolis Community and Technical College

Students who have completed at least 24 college level credits at MCTC were re-assessed for reading placement.

	Native Speakers	Non-Native Speakers	Total
ABE	2% (N = 4)	2% (N = 1)	2% (N=5)
Reading 0100	5% (N = 9)	23% (N = 12)	9% (N=21)
Reading 0200	11% (N = 22)	25% (N = 13)	14% (N=35)
Reading 1300	82% (N = 159)	51% (N = 27)	75% (N=186)
Total	100% (N = 194)	100% (N = 53)	100% (N=247)

Legend: ■ READ 1300   ▨ READ 0200   ⊠ READ 0100   ▥ ABE
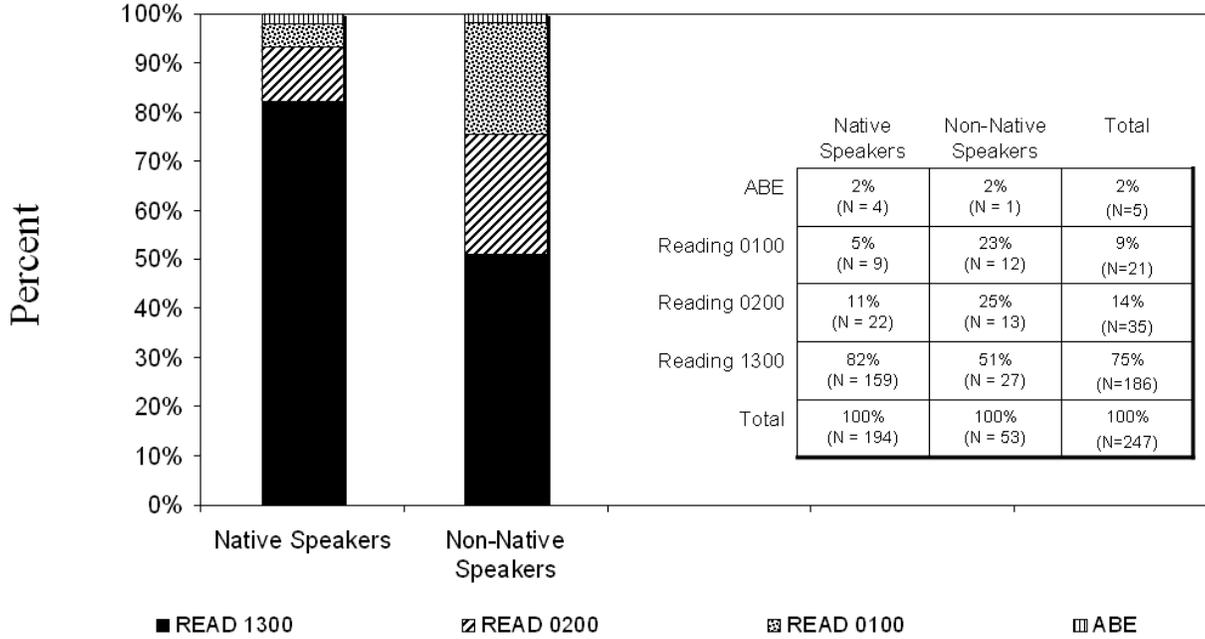
Appendix E: Comparison of Results of College-wide Reading Assessment for Sophomores with Results for Incoming Students

This table shows the number of students taking the Reading Assessments in 2003-04 and 2004-05 and where they are placed. The final two columns show how sophomore level students in Spring of 2005 retaking the Reading Assessment would have been placed.

1st Language Students	Summer/Fall 2003		Spring 2004		Summer/Fall 2004		Spring 2005		Retake Spring 2005	
	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total
Take ESL Test	25	0.9%	15	1.1%	26	1.1%	11	0.7%	n/a	n/a
ABE	121	4.5%	67	4.8%	97	4.1%	124	7.6%	4	2%
READ 100	359	13.3%	244	17.4%	348	14.7%	278	17.1%	9	5%
READ 200	589	21.9%	338	24.2%	469	19.8%	349	21.5%	22	11%
READ 1300 or above	1601	59.4%	735	52.5%	1428	60.3%	863	53.1%	159	82%
Total Taking Reading Test	2695	100.0%	1399	100.0%	2368	100.0%	1625	100.0%	194	100%
2nd Language Students (These records show only those students placing out of ESL Coursework)										
	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of students	% of Total	# of stud.*	% of Total*
READ 100	67	7.6%	48	10.6%	66	8.1%	47	6.6%	12	23%
READ 200/ESLP 0420	91	10.3%	39	8.6%	76	9.3%	66	9.3%	13	25%
READ 1300 or above	142	16.1%	51	11.3%	117	14.3%	59	8.3%	27	51%
Total of all ESL Reading Tests	300 (of 881 taken)	34.1%	138 (of 453 taken)	30.5%	259 (of 818 taken)	31.7%	172 (of 710 taken)	24.2%	52	99%

*Please note that all sophomores retaking the reading assessment used the test designed for native English speakers, which does not take into account ESL issues, which may account for the lower number of non-native speakers testing at the college-level.

Appendix F: Rubric for College-wide Speaking Assessment

	Comments
Content 5 Abundance of material clearly related to thesis/purpose; points clearly made; evidence supports thesis/purpose; variety of supporting materials used; effective use of visual aids; explanations thorough 4 Greater part of information relates to thesis/purpose; good points made, mostly balanced; supporting materials used well; good use of visual aids; explanations clear 3. Sufficient information relates to thesis/purpose; points made adequately, but unevenly balanced; some supporting materials used; adequate use of visual aids; explanations satisfactory 2 A good portion of the information is not clearly connected to the thesis/purpose; speech lacks focus and is not well supported; visual aids poorly used; explanations unclear or underdeveloped 1 Thesis/purpose is not clear; information presented does not support thesis/purpose at all; no supporting information, materials or explanations; visual aids ineffective or not appropriate	
Organization 5 Thesis/purpose is clearly stated and developed; specific examples are appropriate; introduction, main points and conclusion are clear and effective, flows well together; good transitions are used with overall good coherence; outline is well developed 4 Most information presented in logical sequence; speech is generally well organized, with introduction, main points and conclusion; speech is coherent and follows an outline 3 Information follows a basic organization, though better coherence/flow is needed; outline is coherent, but not well developed 2 Concept and ideas are loosely connected; speech lacks clear transitions; flow and organization are choppy; introduction and conclusion are not effective; outline is loosely coherent 1 Presentation is disjointed, choppy and does not flow; thesis/purpose is vague/not developed; lacks appropriate introduction and conclusion; outline is not coherent	
Delivery 5 Speaker is poised, with comfortable demeanor, clear articulation, proper volume and rate; use of voice, eye contact and rapport with audience are excellent; speaker is enthusiastic/ energetic, and expressive; no verbal fillers; speech meets time requirements 4 Speaker has clear articulation, fairly well polished; eye contact, expressiveness, rate, volume and rapport are good; few verbal fillers; time requirements met 3 Articulation, eye contact, expressiveness, volume, rate and rapport are adequate with a few exceptions; some verbal fillers; time requirements met 2 Some mumbling, little eye contact, uneven rate, little or no expression, fluctuating/improper volume; many verbal fillers; speech over/under time limits 1 Presentation not understandable or inaudible; speaker is monotone or talking too fast, with little or no eye contact or rapport; speaker seems uninterested; speech significantly over/under time requirements	

Appendix G: Tally Sheet for College-wide Speaking Assessment

Observer Name: _____

Instructor Name: _____

Course Name and Designator: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Brief Description of Assignment:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Student #	Content Score	Organization Score	Delivery Score
1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
2	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
3	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
4	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
5	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
6	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
7	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
8	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
9	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
10	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
11	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
12	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1

Appendix H: Results of College-Wide Speaking Assessment

Percent of Students Receiving a 2, 3, 4, or 5 By Category
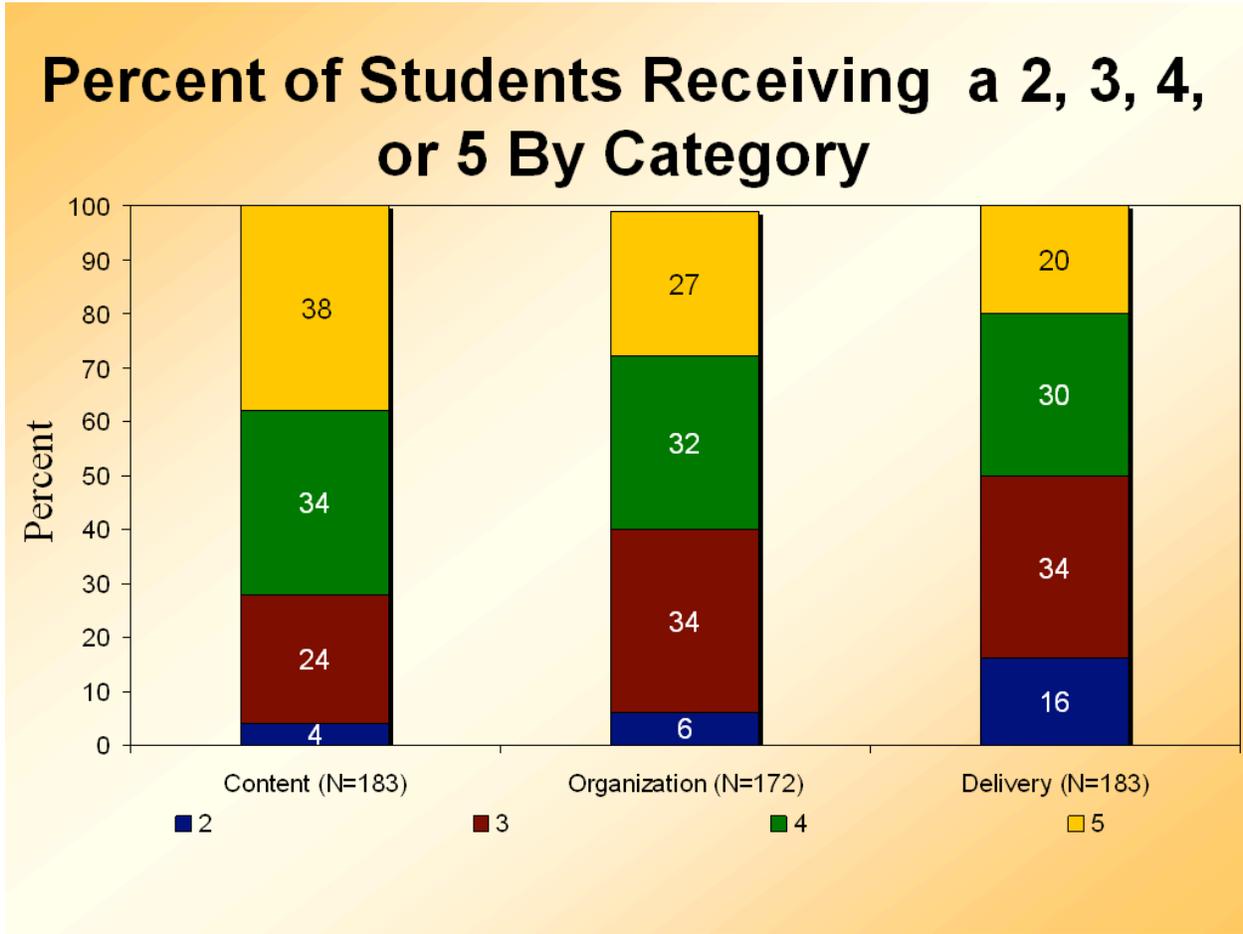
The mean score for **Content** was **4.07**.

The means score for **Organization** was **3.93**.

The mean score for **Delivery** was **3.52**.

Of the 184 students observed, **71% (130) scored at least 3's in all three categories**.

Appendix I: Advocates' Reports
Advocates/Advisors Report for 2004-05

Name: <u>Ann Ludlow</u>
Division: <u>Reading/Study Skills</u>

1. Please briefly report on the activities that you engaged in this year as part of your advocate/advisor duties. Include such things as attending meetings, training peers, conversations held with colleagues, conferences attended, workshops or sessions conducted, subcommittee meetings attended, etc.

    A. Vee Diagrams Conversation

    Because I was teaching during Communications Caucus meetings fall semester, I did little beyond reading the caucus agendas and minutes until December. I did, however, meet with Carmen Buhler fall semester for approximately an hour to show her how Vee diagrams worked and helped students read math better. (Two of my former students who were Learning Center tutors had told her about how useful Vee diagrams were to them when applying math to practical problems involving reading printed, verbal information.)

    B. Communications Caucus Meetings

    I started attending meetings on December 7. According to my calendar, I attended 5 Communications Caucus meetings this academic year.

    C. Reading Sub-Committee Meetings and the April 8 Faculty Duty Day

    Linda Russell and I had several impromptu, undocumented reading sub-committee "meetings" toward the beginning of spring semester when I had no students show up for office hours in the Learning Center and there was no one in her office.   We also had a meeting with other members of the reading sub-committee on February 14 to prepare for the April 8 Faculty Duty Day. Prep for my part of the Duty Day presentation (reading directions and Vee diagrams) took about two hours. The reading session then ran an additional two hours.

    D. Speaking Assessment

    I took part in the Speaking Assessment training. The actual assessment in Cheryl Neudauer's night Physiology class took 1½ hours. Emails before the assessment to get Cheryl's oral presentation assignments plus ancillary communications took another 2 hours.

    E. Chemistry Group

    At Lorrie Kohler's retirement party I had a fascinating conversation about reading with some of the newer Chemistry faculty members. I have since inferred that their responsibility for student safety in labs and students' apparent inability to

follow written lab instructions accurately prompts their most pressing concerns about reading.

As a result of our conversation, I met with four Chemistry and Biology faculty members on Thursday, May 26 for an hour to discuss direction reading, ISRS and course prereqs, and assessment of the relationship between student success in introductory chemistry classes and complying with course prereqs in reading. Setting up the meeting, discussion at the meeting, and follow-up emails took four hours. (See Appendix A.) We intend to meet again either in August or September to discuss the results of their proposed summer assessment project. They also promised to help Melissa O'Connor and me frame additional authentic direction reading assignments that will apply to health and pre-nursing students. I will create models showing how Vee diagrams work in chemistry reading at the next or a subsequent meeting.

2.   Please briefly describe how you worked with your division on assessment activities—to help peers to improve student mastery of communication skills and/or to help the division on its own assessment activities.

I made no greater contribution to our division's assessment activities this year than most Reading/Study Skills faculty members. Kim Zernechel, the present departmental coordinator, totally carried the ball on this year's departmental assessment after asking me some questions about whom she should contact for certain data, number crunching, etc. I'd like to think that my ability to pass the baton on departmental assessment to Kim so easily is due to the required professional coursework in Reading/Study Skills as well as background information that Kim's picked up from Peggy MacRae and me as we've facilitated the design, implementation, and evaluation departmental assessments in the past. In other words, I think that because of graduate coursework in Reading/Study Skills and a tradition of departmental assessment, most long-term faculty in the Reading/Study Skills Department are able to design and carry out useful departmental assessments. I would argue that such an outcome should be one of the goals of departmental assessment throughout the college.

3.   What examples can you offer of how the Caucus has helped to change the atmosphere/culture of your division or of the whole campus? Think in terms of improving the teaching of communication skills—instructors now employing specific rubrics, faculty attending development sessions, or individuals' changes in attitudes about teaching—or of improving people's understanding of the assessment process overall.

While I definitely do not wish to diminish the importance of the Caucus' contributions to improved dialog about reading throughout the college as a whole, I'm not sure that the Caucus' activities the last two years have greatly changed the atmosphere or culture within the Reading/Study Skills Department. I personally have been energized by the opportunities that Caucus activities have created for informal discussions like those which have started with faculty members in chemistry and biology. Most of my Reading/Study Skills colleagues, however, are focusing their energies on harnessing the capabilities of the Internet and d2l to create effective hybrid online reading and study skills classes. In so doing, they regularly interact

with faculty in other departments about issues of online reading and communication via venues other than those created by the Communication Caucus. Reading/Study Skills faculty members already regularly create and modify rubrics. Many attend faculty development sessions. They regularly create and revise their own and shared intradepartmental assessment instruments. For several years, the English as a Second Language Program and the Reading /Study Skills Department have written and shared Reading Exit Tests. In other words, the two departments have conducted a limited form of <u>interdepartmental</u> assessment. Mentoring interdepartmental discussions on reading also takes time and thought. I suspect my colleagues, like me, lack the time to pursue improvements in <u>both</u> online instruction and faculty reading outreach as vigorously as we'd like.

Within the college as a whole, I am hearing about and taking part in much more dialog about reading across the curriculum. I attribute most of this dialog to the activities of the Communications Caucus the past two years. The dialog has been invigorating and fun. THANKS!

4.   What specific suggestions might you have for continuing to enhance assessment at MCTC?

I think the kind of discussion that may be starting among Reading/Study Skills, Chemistry, and Biology faculty members is critical to graduating fully prepared students. Reading/Study Skills used to have a constant stream of such dialog with ESLP, but that, unfortunately, has dwindled the past several years. The paired course initiatives of the late 1980's also fostered such dialog, which I continue to have informally but regularly with Vincent DeLusia, my partner in the African-American History/READ 1300 pairing. Reading/Study Skills has held sporadic discussions with Nursing over the years that really need to go a lot further. Another year of the Communication Caucus plus another Faculty Duty Day in Spring 2006 devoted to 2004-2005 communication assessment successes/wake-up calls and interdepartmental "training" would be helpful in continuing the dialog.

Appendix

Mail Message

Clos e	Previou s	Nex t	Delete From This Mailbo x	Delete From All Mailboxe s	Forwar d	Reply to Sender	Reply All	Mov e	Delet e	Read Later	Propertie s

From: Wendy Naughton
To: Ann Ludlow
Date: Friday - May 27, 2005 11:22 AM

Ann-

Who do we contact about getting the prereqs of our Spring students retroactively?

Thanks,
Wendy

p.s. Thanks for organizing that meeting this week.

Dr. Wendy Naughton
Chemistry Instructor
Minneapolis Community and Technical College
612-659-6065

From:	Ann Ludlow
To:	Wendy Naughton
Date:	Friday - May 27, 2005 12:59 PM
Subject:	Getting Info on Spring Students and Safistaction of Prereqs

Hi, Wendy--

1. Talk to your dean. Is it Janis or Linnea? Get her backing.

2. Print out copies of your department's final grade sheets from S '05 for all sections of the pertinent courses. Conceivably there is a difference between day and night students.

3. I can no longer remember who actually checked whether or not students met prereqs when I looked at info concerning the Math 070 prereq for CHEM 1020. Maybe Rekha would know. The info may be in my files at school, but I doubt it. It was probably someone with access to ISRS. It might have been:

   a. Our department secretary, JoAnna Dunamis, who regularly did limited ISRS searches for Reading/Study Skills before she had Head Secretary for Continuing Ed added to her job description. Your department secretary, however, might be trained to do the analysis if she isn't already overloaded. The skills needed to effect such a study, however, often lead to a secretary's advancement to the next higher pay category, which your dean may or may not support.

   b. Linda Reed, Director of Assessment. However, this project would be much bigger than the MATH 070 Prereq Study for CHEM 1020. I doubt Linda would be a good choice for CHEM's S'05 data unless you only looked at CHEM 1020. My impression is that you and colleagues are also interested the extent to which CHEM 1151 students meet prerequisites.

   c. Mike Flanigan. The Institutional Research Department may have computer algorithms in place to do the study quickly and easily. I just don't know.

d. Your departmental coordinator. I could have executed the study myself as Reading/Study Skills Coordinator. I have certainly done exploratory studies of data available on ISRS before proposing more rigorous and comprehensive data analyses. I just can't remember doing the MATH 070 analysis.

c. With backing from your dean, one of you might gain ISRS access for a limited period of time. Doing the analysis is essentially a clerical endeavor if Mike Flanigan can't do it easily and quickly with programs that the Institutional Research Department has already written.

I'd get my dean on board and then arrange a meeting in which one/some of you and your dean, talk to Cindy Crimmins, head of Institutional Research--probably before July 1, if possible.

Hope this helps you get the lay of the land. Thursday's meeting was fun. I hope to triangulate info I got from counseling either today or tomorrow. Then I'll get back to you on probation/suspension policies and students registering for overlapping classes. Good luck.   Ann

Advocates/Advisors Report for 2004-05

Name: Carmen Buhler

Division: Mathematics

1. Please briefly report on the activities that you engaged in this year as part of your advocate/advisor duties. Include such things as attending meetings, training peers, conversations held with colleagues, conferences attended, workshops or sessions conducted, subcommittee meetings attended, etc.

I attended monthly communications assessment committee meetings and monthly reading subcommittee meetings. Spring semester I was unable to attend all of the assessment committee meetings. The subcommittee developed a rubric for all departments to use in assessing reading. We also discussed activities for faculty development days in April and May. I attended the Communications Advocate Workshop last summer (May 18,19 2004). I reported all activities at our monthly math division meetings and had conversations with various colleagues about assessment..

2. Please briefly describe how you worked with your division on assessment activities—to help peers to improve student mastery of communication skills and/or to help the division on its own assessment activities.

Linda Russell and I met with two math faculty members about incorporating reading assessment in the statistics course (math 1140). Three of us in the math division are currently coming up with a text reading guide lesson to be given to faculty who teach Introductory Algebra (math 70). I presented the rubrics that were developed by the caucus.

3. What examples can you offer of how the Caucus has helped to change the atmosphere/culture of your division or of the whole campus? Think in terms of improving the teaching of communication skills—instructors now specific rubrics, faculty attending development sessions,

or individuals' changes in attitudes about teaching—or of improving people's understanding of the assessment process overall.

I have felt some resistance by some faculty about assessment, but that seems to have changed a little. At our last division meeting on May 12, which met after faculty development sessions on communications assessment, I heard some positive comments from instructors who attended the workshops. The comments were that they felt that it was possible to teach some reading in a math class. One faculty member was very excited and suggested the initiative of the above mentioned reading assignment.

4. What specific suggestions might you have for continuing to enhance assessment at MCTC?

I suppose just more education about the responsibilities of communication assessment.

Advocates/Advisors Report for 2004-05

Name: Virginia Heinrich
Division: Library/Information Studies

1. Please briefly report on the activities that you engaged in this year as part of your advocate/advisor duties. Include such things as attending meetings, training peers, conversations held with colleagues, conferences attended, workshops or sessions conducted, subcommittee meetings attended, etc.

       Attended Caucus meetings when possible and monitored activities through minutes. Attended the Realizing Student Potential conference (3/4), and CTL Weekend Seminar, "How to Make Grading Fair, Time-efficient, and Conducive to Learning," (4/30). I presented 2 College Hour workshops (2/18, 3/25) with Kathleen Daniels on using library resources and assessing information literacy in classroom instruction. I also presented a faculty workshop (4/8) with Tom Eland on integrating and assessing information literacy skills in the curriculum. Finally, I discussed assessment priorities and strategies with political science, music, graphic arts, English, math and nursing faculty in formal and casual settings.

2. Please briefly describe how you worked with your division on assessment activities-to help peers to improve student mastery of communication skills and/or to help the division on its own assessment activities.

       I worked on departmental evaluation of assessment and redesign of course (INFS 1000) curriculum to better reflect campus assessment priorities. This included:
* Initiating a meeting with Linda Russell to improve integration of reading skill assessment
* Revising assignment design and instructional pedagogy to better teach reading skills
* Reviewing historical student scores in areas reflecting reading assessment to measure improvement
* Developing an active research plan to report change in student performance over time, based on changes made.

3. What examples can you offer of how the Caucus has helped to change the atmosphere/culture of your division or of the whole campus? Think in terms of improving the teaching of communication skills-instructors now specific rubrics, faculty attending development sessions, or individuals' changes in attitudes about teaching-or of improving people's understanding of the assessment process overall.

       Development of the 4 communication area rubrics has been a key to helping faculty understand how integrating assessment of skills outside their discipline area can be accomplished. Faculty development sessions have provided excellent outreach, in an "each one teach one" model. This has built overall buy-in, and improved faculty perceptions of the campus assessment initiative. In the Information Studies department, all 4 communication rubrics have been implemented to some degree or another in
course assignments and projects; this would not have been possible without the efforts of the Caucus.

4. What specific suggestions might you have for continuing to enhance assessment at MCTC?

       I believe the faculty workshops are working. More examples of cross-discipline faculty making assessment work in their courses can help win over hesitant faculty. Emphasizing how adding tools such as rubrics can help save time in grading and improve assessment at the same time is important.

Advocates/Advisors Report for 2004-05

Name: ____Phil Martin_____

Division: ___English_____

1. Please briefly report on the activities that you engaged in this year as part of your advocate/advisor duties. Include such things as attending meetings, training peers, conversations held with colleagues, conferences attended, workshops or sessions conducted, subcommittee meetings attended, etc.

I attended meetings of the whole group and a sub-committee. In the subcommittee, I developed a "writing rubric" to aid all faculty in evaluating student writing. I also served as a trainer during a communication workshop, focusing on message, audience, and purpose (MAP).

2. Please briefly describe how you worked with your division on assessment activities—to help peers to improve student mastery of communication skills and/or to help the division on its own assessment activities.

Most of my work related to the faculty as a whole. However, I did participate, with Michael Seward, in reporting about the work of the Communication Caucus.

3. What examples can you offer of how the Caucus has helped to change the atmosphere/culture of your division or of the whole campus? Think in terms of improving the teaching of communication skills—instructors now specific rubrics, faculty attending development sessions, or individuals' changes in attitudes about teaching—or of improving people's understanding of the assessment process overall.

From the feedback I received after the workshop, faculty will use the writing rubric. It is worth noting, that I am using a modified version of this rubric myself in my College English 1 class this summer.

Participants plan to use ideas about message, audience, and purpose that we worked with during my training session. The agreed that helping students understand their point (message), their readers' needs (audience), and their writing purpose (to persuade, inform, or entertain) are vital in the planning, writing, and revision stages.

4. What specific suggestions might you have for continuing to enhance assessment at MCTC?

I hope we as a college can continue to work on retention, especially concerning African American males. It is a college-wide challenge that requires whole-college efforts.

Advocates/Advisors Report for 2004-05

Name: Tina Langseth

Division: Humanities/Speech Communication

1. Please briefly report on the activities that you engaged in this year as part of your advocate/advisor duties. Include such things as attending meetings, training peers, conversations held with colleagues, conferences attended, workshops or sessions conducted, subcommittee meetings attended, etc.

Over the past year, I have attended all of the Communication Caucus meetings as well as the Speaking Subcommittee meetings. I have designed and facilitated two workshops which helped faculty learn new ways of designing and grading components of their courses which deal with communication skills. In addition, I have worked individually with faculty members to adapt the general communication rubrics to further meet the needs of their course.

2. Please briefly describe how you worked with your division on assessment activities—to help peers to improve student mastery of communication skills and/or to help the division on its own assessment activities.

I worked with the humanities division through a series of general discussions at division meetings as well as individual discussions on the college wide assessment. In several cases, I was able to help faculty understand the purpose of using rubrics to assess student learning and to encourage them to incorporate clear expectations to facilitate greater outcomes. The division chose to assess writing, so I was unable to use the communication rubrics for overall division assessment.

3.   What examples can you offer of how the Caucus has helped to change the atmosphere/culture of your division or of the whole campus? Think in terms of improving the teaching of communication skills—instructors now specific rubrics, faculty attending development sessions, or individuals' changes in attitudes about teaching—or of improving people's understanding of the assessment process overall.

I believe MCTC faculty has a better understanding of the purpose of assessment and are, on some level, less hesitant to participate in assessment activities. I also believe the faculty has a better understanding of the usefulness of rubrics in achieving student learning outcomes.

4. What specific suggestions might you have for continuing to enhance assessment at MCTC?

None at this time.