

2015

## Report on 2014-2015 Compliance with Continuous Quality Improvement Legislation

University of Northern Iowa

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To: Diana Gonzalez, Chief Academic Officer, Iowa Board of Regents  
From: Donna Vinton, Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness  
RE: Report on 2014-2015 Compliance with Continuous Quality Improvement Legislation  
Date: August 14, 2015

The attached report provides information on course-level assessments conducted at the University of Northern Iowa in compliance with Iowa Code Section 262.9 (36). Information for this report was gathered through a Qualtrics survey administered in March 2015. The survey was given to University of Northern Iowa faculty teaching courses enrolling 200 or more students in all sections over the 2014-2015 academic year. Faculty were invited to respond to the survey individually or in collaboration with other faculty teaching the same course.

In addition to requesting information on the types of course-level assessments being implemented and the kinds of improvements made in response to what was learned from the assessments, the survey also requested information related to the ways in which learning outcomes were communicated to students. Data showed that 95% of the faculty responding to the survey included learning outcomes for their courses on the course syllabus. Learning outcomes were also communicated verbally (84%), on a course website or eLearning course web page (70%), and on separate handouts or student guides (50%).

When asked to respond regarding the types of changes they would make as a result of their assessments of student learning, faculty listed several factors that are grouped in Table 1 in the report that follows. These include: enhancing specific student experiences/activities, modifying time spent on specific course content to better prepare students, providing more guided, hands-on practice to improve learning, changing assessment strategies to gain more accurate insight into what students are learning, changing textbook/learning resources, and including more formative assessments earlier in the semester to better identify where students may be struggling.

In addition to the specific course examples provided later in this report, several themes appeared in the examples and are worth noting. First, faculty frequently mentioned their efforts to keep course materials up-to-date through the selection of up-to-date textbooks, supplementing texts with recent articles or web resources, and incorporating current issues and information into class lectures and student assignments. Second, faculty worked to increase hands-on learning in their courses by adding discussion and in-class activities, even in large lecture sections, and creating assignments that required students to apply the concepts they learned in class to real-life situations. Third, faculty regardless of discipline showed a desire to increase their students' writing and critical thinking skills. They worked to increase opportunities for writing and provided detailed feedback on student writing, along with specific instruction in writing skills appropriate to the discipline.

The Continuous Quality Improvement process has confirmed our belief in the value placed upon teaching at UNI and encouraged conversation among faculty as they share the goals and strategies that support their work in the classroom.

## University of Northern Iowa CQI Report for 2014-2015

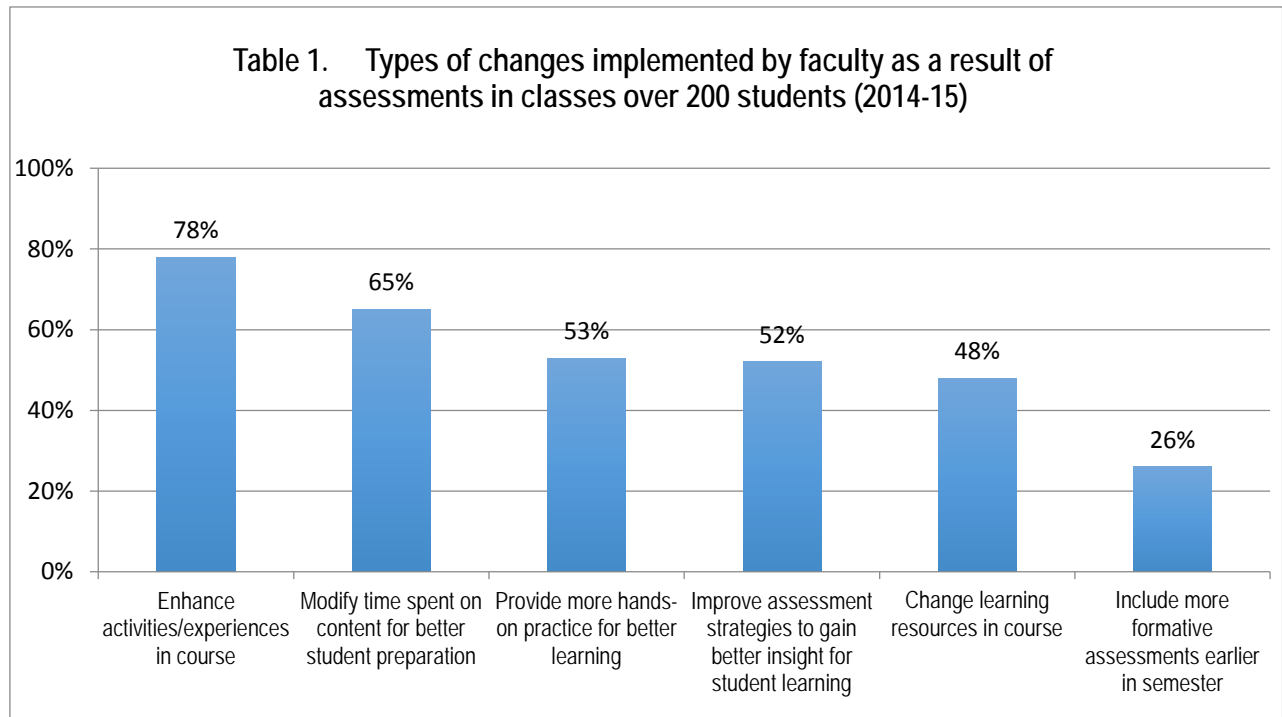
This page provides summary information on the types of assessment strategies used during 2014-2015; the following pages provide an overview of the types of course improvements undertaken by faculty and examples of assessments and related activities in selected courses.

<b>Continuous Improvement in University of Northern Iowa Courses</b>	
<i>August 2015</i>	Report Date
<i>Fall 2014 &amp; Spring 2015</i>	Report Period
<b>Number of Courses, Students Enrolled</b>	
98	Total Number of Courses Offered in both Fall & Spring with enrollment greater than 200
47,587	Total Student Enrollment in Courses
<b>Number of Courses<sup>1</sup> Utilizing Continuous Improvement Strategies</b>	
144	Locally-developed tests or quizzes
60	Faculty/professionally assessed presentation or project
58	Faculty discussion of student performance across sections of course
56	Rubrics or evaluation sheet on some culminating project
50	Survey of student perceptions of their learning
34	Comparison of course syllabi across sections
29	Journaling about difficult topics
26	Pre- and post-tests
25	Peer-assessed presentation or project
20	Review of student portfolio
15	Student performance in subsequent courses
11	Clicker questions/polling
5	Field experience evaluation forms
3	Meeting of licensure requirements
37	Other responses include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial program culminating exam</li> <li>• Written assignments, lab reports, and homework assignments</li> <li>• Class discussions and formative assessments</li> <li>• Simulation exercises</li> <li>• Student-led discussions</li> <li>• Reflection and discussion boards</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Total number of strategies in use is greater than the total number of courses because many courses employ more than one continuous improvement strategy.

## Overview of CQI Activities at UNI

As part of the Qualtrics survey administered in March 2015 to faculty teaching courses serving 200 or more students per academic year, one question asked faculty what kinds of changes they were making as they gathered assessment information and worked on continuous improvement. The table below summarizes their responses.



### Selected Examples of Assessments

The Qualtrics survey responses for the 2014-2015 academic year included many examples of the efforts made by faculty to keep their courses current and engaging and to support student learning. The examples below are just a very small sample of those provided.

#### **Level One Field Experience: Exploring Teaching (TEACHING 2017)**

The team of instructors for the Exploring Teaching course, which has over 500 students each year, has split the large course sections (80-125) into smaller learning sections based on the elementary schools or secondary content areas where students are placed for the field experience requirement of the course. The small group sessions now include a microteaching assignment, with students planning and teaching to their peers a short lesson which they hope to teach later in their field experience classroom. As a result, all students have the opportunity to teach and to receive both peer and instructor feedback to improve their performance and planning. Level 2 instructors are already reporting that the students are now more prepared and confident in their teaching.

### **General Biology: Organismal Diversity (BIOL 2051)**

Realizing that advances in the field of biology are frequent, instructors monitor the primary literature and seek to incorporate into their courses material that has not yet been included in their textbooks. In addition, when topics are particularly timely, for example, the latest Ebola outbreak in Africa, such topics are often incorporated into the course to take advantage of the heightened awareness and increased level of student interest. The lecture textbook has also recently been switched to a publication that connects well with course learning outcomes and is available as a completely free pdf for the students.

### **Introductory Seminar for Business Professionals (BUSINESS 1000)**

This class is the first-level course of three workshop-based, 0-credit professional readiness seminars required for all new business students. Weekly student evaluations and surveys from mentors are used to assess student learning and make course adjustments as needed. For example, students are paired with a businessperson to practice professional email and phone conversation skills taught during the course. This year, variances in students' skills in writing thank you emails to their mentors showed up in evaluations, so more emphasis on thank you letters will be included in course workshops during the coming year.

### **Personal Wellness: Dimensions of Well-Being (HPELS 1059)**

As part of the Liberal Arts Core required for all undergraduate degrees at UNI, students are required to take one physical activity course and one Dimensions of Well-Being course. The Dimensions courses cover a variety of topics—e.g., Personal Fitness Plan Design, Stress and Coping, Motivation and Well-Being, Personal Nutrition Philosophy, and a variety of other topics. Faculty from the School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services worked together to design common learning outcomes, common assignments, and shared rubrics to assess student learning through evaluation of student work samples. This spring in an assessment retreat, faculty discussed the first year's implementation of the rubric and identified changes to increase its usefulness, as well as creating a checklist to share with students to help them enhance their writing skills.

### **Religions of the World (RELS 1020)**

To determine the effect of technology on student learning, a faculty member is utilizing the Collaborative, Active Learning, Transformational (CAT) classroom. In CAT classrooms, technological tools are combined with face-to-face teaching, through use of a Smart Board, networked laptops at six-person tables, a wall monitor, and an instructor's station. The faculty member is engaged in a multi-year research project to compare learning in this Liberal Arts course for students in the CAT vs. a traditional classroom. The instructor is blind-reading all students' essay exams to see if the CAT classroom experience enhances the learning of students of comparable abilities (class year and GPA) and helps students sustain their learning over the semester.

### **Developmental Psychology (PSYCH 2202)**

The instructor for this course strives for mastery learning through several strategies to increase student understanding of the material. First, chapter examinations have been put online to free up more class time for lectures, demonstrations, discussions and class activities. Second, students extend their learning outside of class by posting online blogs with links to articles and YouTube videos on topics relevant to the class. Third, if exam scores and blogs suggest a need for additional instruction on key topics, the instructor approaches the topics again with direct instruction or additional classroom discussion, demonstrations, or activities, and then re-tests to ensure that student grasp of the concepts has increased.