

Date: June 5, 2014

To: Cynthia O'Dell
Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs

From: Barbara Peat
Director, School of Public and Environmental Affairs

RE: Assessment results for Principle 3 Critical Thinking – J439 – Crime and Public Policy

As per the memo dated February 26, 2014 that detailed the assessment plan of critical thinking in the J439 course in the spring semester 2014, the following represents a summary of the three areas of assessment and the results using criteria from the critical thinking rubric:

1. After reading a chapter students were to provide three points that they agreed or disagreed with the author's statement and explain why. This assignment was used to assess students' ability to "raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely". Although the assignment was given for chapters 2-14, data collection was used three time periods during the semester for assessment purposes: (1) chapter two, (2) chapter eight, and (3) chapter fourteen. There were 27 students who completed the course. The following summary represents the results based on the scoring options of the rubric for the three time periods of assessment:

Rubric Ranking	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Proficient	12	12	16
Partially Proficient	13	4	3
Not Proficient	2	8	1

2. Two essay exams were given during the semester. The questions developed were used to assess the students' ability to "come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards" and "think open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications and practical consequences". The following represents the results based on the two exams – midterm and final:

Rubric Ranking	Midterm	Final
Proficient (90-100 points)	20	10
Partially Proficient (70-89 points)	5	8
Not Proficient (69 points and below)	2	8

3. A policy paper assignment was used to assess the students on “gather and assess relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively”. The following represents the results:

Rubric Ranking	Score on assignment
Proficient (180-200 points)	16
Partially Proficient (140-179 points)	4
Not Proficient (139 points or below)	4

Summary of Results

Overall, students demonstrated proficiency or partial proficiency on the criteria described in the rubric. Reference “gather and assess relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively”, approximately 83% of the students demonstrated proficiency (66.6%) or partial proficiency (16.6%) on this criteria. In addition, 95% of the students were proficient (80%) or partially proficient (15%) in their ability to “raise vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely”. Of the three methods of measuring performance, student performance was assessed the lowest their ability to “come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards” and “think open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications and practical consequences” with only 50% being proficient and 31% being partially proficient. In addition to the exam results, it was evident in class discussions on subject matter from the required text that students had difficulty thinking open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs and in coming to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions. As a result of this assessment, the criminal justice faculty will engage in discussions to determine means through which to improve student performance on these criteria. One immediate approach that comes to mind is to have students develop these skills in lower level courses so that by the time they reach the senior capstone course they are better prepared for the type of assignment requiring them to demonstrate proficiency on these criteria.