

ICaP Assessment Plan

By

Derek Sherman, ICaP Assessment Research Coordinator

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Introduction

The goal of this guide is to illustrate ICaP's assessment project and its purpose, goals, and future. In addition, the Purdue context is elaborated because it influences many of the decisions that we are making in terms of common assignments, curriculum, etc. We want to make sure we are serving our students to the best of our ability; therefore, the Purdue context is essential to our assessment project.

We understand that assessment is a scary and complicated term because it brings back nightmares of standardized testing from high school to graduate school. Assessment is a pivotal part to any program as it helps us prove to administrators outside of ICaP that what we do as a program is beneficial, worthwhile, and fosters student growth. Any healthy program, therefore, must assess itself so that it may showcase its successes and mend its weaknesses. As a result of our assessment effort, we intend for this guide to clear up any misinformation, confusion, or questions that you may have concerning assessment. If your questions or concerns are not answered within this document, please email a member of the ICaP team so that we may assist you. We would be happy to help you work through common assignment questions or concerns about the assessment process.

Dr. Bradley Dilger, Director of ICaP
Email:

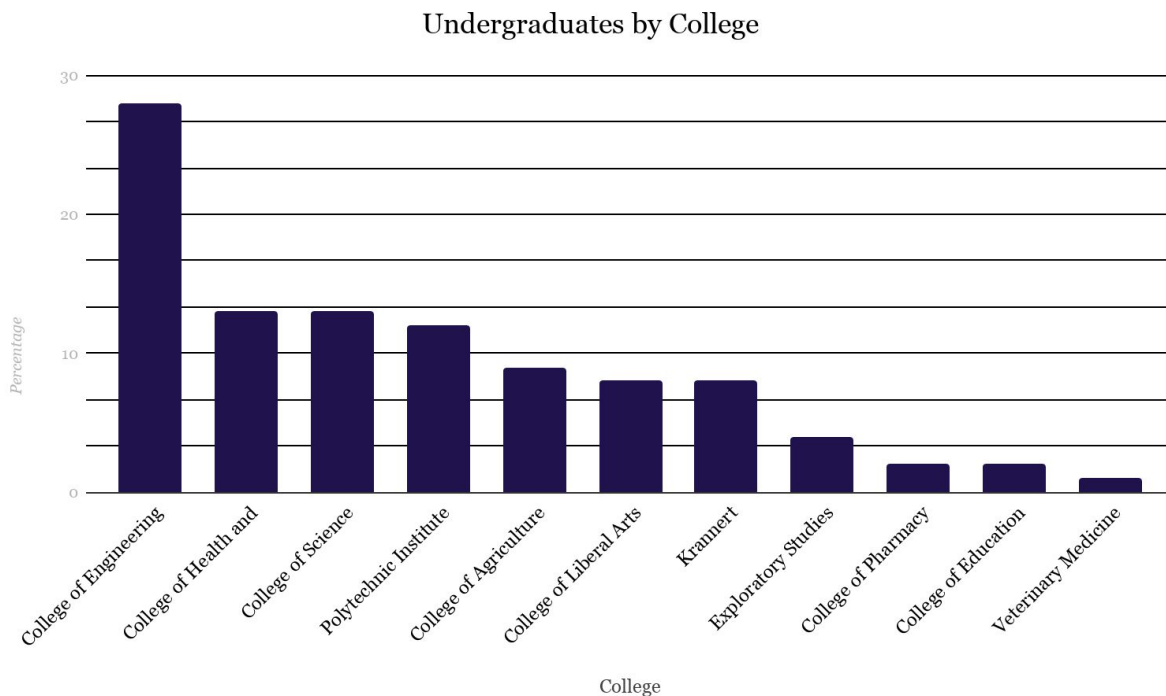
Alisha Karabinus, Assistant Director of ICaP
Email:

Linda Haynes
Email:

Derek Sherman, Assessment Research Coordinator
Email: sherman11@purdue.edu

The Purdue Context:

As a large research institution, Purdue serves a diverse and robust community of students, faculty, and staff. For the Fall 2018 semester, Purdue's undergraduate population consisted of 32,672 students with a gender distribution of 57% male and 43% female. 52% of this undergraduate population are residents of Indiana, 34% are out of state students, and 14% are international students ([Student Enrollment, Fall 2018](#)). Figure 1 shows a breakdown of undergraduate students by College:



To illustrate the student population we most likely serve (i.e., freshman class), the freshman class contains 8,357 students with a gender distribution of 58.6% male and 43.2% female. 4,271 of those students are Indiana residents, 3,301 are out of state students, and 785 are international students. The middle 50% of High School GPA ranges from 3.5-3.9, middle 50% of SAT ranges from 1190-1390, and the middle 50% ACT composite score is 25-32 ([Freshman Class Profile, Enrollment for Fall 2018](#)). The undergraduate population is diverse, so this must be taken into consideration as we continue to design our classes and assess our program.

Why are we assessing?: A History of ICaP Assessment

The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) completed a review of ICaP in 2017. Upon the CWPA's review, there were two essential concepts for continued development of ICaP and its ability to measure student outcomes: **coherency** and **consistency**. As the [2017-18 ICaP Assessment Report: Common Assignment Pilots](#) states, the common assignments are our attempt to create this coherency and consistency amongst the syllabus approaches and instructors' course

materials. This consistency will show current and future stakeholders that ICaP is able to teach our six established outcomes and that students walk away from first-year composition with an understanding of writing and its encompassing elements.

Initially, ICaP had six common assignments (i.e., professional email assignment, rhetorical analysis, literature review, reading annotations, writing portfolio, and an information literacy essay) that were developed by the Pedagogical Initiatives Committee that consisted of syllabus approach leaders. After our first round of assessments, we narrowed down the common assignments to four: the professional-email assignment, rhetorical analysis, research-based essay (formerly the literature review), and the writing portfolio. The reading annotations were eliminated because they hit many of the same outcomes that the literature review/research-based essay did. Additionally, the information literacy essay was eliminated because it lacked instructors to teach it. For a full description of the assessment results, please see this link: [2017-2018 Assessment Results](#). These assessment results also allowed ICaP to update instructor guides to meet the needs of the instructors and what they wanted to see in the common assignment.

The first round of common assignments were not mandatory. In the Fall 2018 semester, ICaP made a decision to require all instructors to complete one common assignment in each 106/108 section taught so that we could grow our data. The current numbers are as follows:

- Portfolio: 3 participants
- Professional Email: 24 participants
- Research-Based Essay: 36 participants
- Rhetorical Analysis: 8 participants

Our data have grown in each common assignment, so future read and rate sessions will illustrate how well ICaP meets its established outcomes individually and comprehensively.

Now that all instructors were required to submit common assignments, the issue arose as to how our common assignments would be submitted because we were now expecting a large amount of data that needed to be kept secure. In Fall 2018, Derek Sherman, the current assessment research coordinator, created a Qualtrics submission protocol that allows instructors to submit their common assignments, describe successes and failures in teaching the common assignment, and reflect on how the common assignment may be revised. You can access that protocol here: [Common Assignment Submission Protocol](#). We thank those beta testers who were able to help us revise and establish the final protocol.

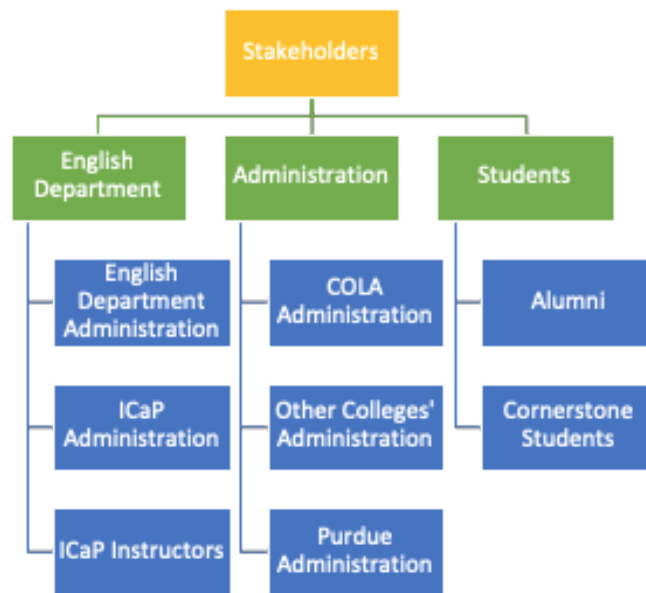
For the future, results from our rating sessions will allow ICaP to make decisions about what common assignments to keep, discard, combine, etc. In a larger sense, the data will allow ICaP to make changes to curriculum, common assignments, and how to best fit the needs of the diverse Purdue student population. However, as will be described in detail in the “What is the locus for assessment” section, the ICaP administrative staff don’t want to make these decisions solely from an administrative or positivist assessment perspective; therefore, input from instructors is essential to how we progress with our assessment goals.

Who and What is assessed?

Assessment brings with it a lot of angst because nobody is ever sure who is being assessed. Is it the students? The instructors? The program? In the case of ICaP, **we are assessing the program as a whole** and **NOT** individual classrooms, instructors, or students. The results we get from this assessment project will not be used to determine the effectiveness of single instructors, but it will allow ICaP to make decisions concerning curriculum, syllabus approaches, and the common assignments. The program as whole not only affects instructors who have to teach the common assignments, but is also impacts several other stakeholders. See Figure 2 below for a description of the stakeholders.

Although you're not being assessed for your individual performance, you are definitely one factor/stakeholder within this assessment project. Now that you know you're not being assessed individually, what is being assessed? ICaP is assessing its effectiveness at meeting the following six outcomes: Students must be able to

1. Demonstrate rhetorical aware



ness of diverse audiences, situations, and contexts.

2. Compose a variety of texts in a range of forms, equaling at least 7,500-11,500 words of polished writing (or 15,000-22,000 words, including drafts).
3. Critically think about writing and rhetoric through reading, analysis, and reflection.
4. Provide constructive feedback to others and incorporate feedback into their writing.
5. Perform research and evaluate sources to support claims.
6. Engage multiple digital technologies to compose for different purposes.

The goal of any assessment is to see whether or not the program is able to meet its objectives; therefore, the Pedagogical Initiatives Committee (PIC) designed six common assignments to

assess ICaP’s ability to meet these outcomes, individually and comprehensively. From our first round of assessment, we narrowed the common assignments down to four.

Each common assignment assesses different outcomes. The professional email, rhetorical analysis, and research-based essay each measure a set of outcomes, which helps demonstrate specific weak points in ICaP. On the other hand, the portfolio measures all outcomes and seeks to show a comprehensive assessment of the program/syllabus approach structure as a whole. Additionally, the portfolio also serves as a means to assess individual outcomes to determine weaknesses and strengths. See Table 1 for each common assignment and the outcomes, time of assessment, and assessment methods used as well as links to their Instructor Guides.

| Common Assignment | Outcomes Assessed (# outcome) | Type of Assessment | Assessment Method |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Professional Email</i> | Outcomes 1 and 3 | Two distinct emails | Outcomes-based rubric |
| <i>Rhetorical Analysis</i> | Outcomes 1 and 3 | Pretest and posttest | Outcomes-based rubric |
| <i>Research-Based Essay</i> | Outcomes 1, 3, and 5 | One larger essay | Outcomes-based rubric |
| <i>Portfolio</i> | All ICaP outcomes | All student work with reflective discussion | Outcomes-based rubric |

How is assessment conducted?

Assessment is conducted through read and rate sessions that occur at different times throughout the semester. The timing depends on the common assignment, when it is submitted, and the length of the assignment. Each read and rate session is conducted by the assessment research coordinator--currently, Derek Sherman--with a group of raters (i.e., graduate students) who have volunteered to help. The rating session begins with norming where raters agree on how to interpret the rubric through which the assignments are to be rated. A discussion ensues on how to interpret various aspects of the rubric; here, any ambiguities may be discussed and debated so that raters have a similar mindset progressing into the actual rating session. Agreed upon interpretations are marked by the raters and assessment research coordinator so that raters may refer back to them during the actual rating session.

Once terms are agreed upon, sample assignments are given to practice rating on the agreed interpretations of the rubric. Raters will discuss their ratings and why they gave the sample a specific rating, and raters can continue the debate on their interpretation of the rubric and this specific assignment. After approximately four practice rating sessions and a reliable interrater reliability is achieved, raters begin the actual rating of the common assignments. Raters will pick up a common assignment, read through the assignment, rate it, and then place it into its

respective pile (i.e., rated once or rated twice). To calculate the ratings, raters will place their score into a Qualtrics survey. Once all the assignments have been rated, the assessment research coordinator will determine if there are any assignments that will need a third rating. If a third rating is needed, the assessment research coordinator will select raters to rate the common assignment for a third time. After all the third ratings are complete, the assessment rating session is concluded. See the following link for a handout: [Assessment Sessions: How-To Guide](#)

Data and results will then be crunched by the assessment research coordinator and the ICaP staff to determine ICaP's effectiveness to teach these outcomes. Additionally, an end-of-the-year assessment report will be composed along with recommendations for the future direction of ICaP and its curriculum, common assignments, and syllabus approach structure.

Alternative assessment data collection methods:

Besides the read and rate sessions, ICaP is looking to triangulate our data and decisions with a variety of alternative data. By triangulating our assessment data, ICaP is able to make decisions that reflect the various stakeholders in ICaP and our assessment. There are a variety of alternative assessment data collection methods that we may use in the future for ICaP, which include the following:

| Method | Purpose | Participants |
|--|---|---|
| Instructor Focus Groups | To determine successes, struggles, and reflections on the common assignment implementation | Instructors, mentor group leaders, and other directly involved in the mentoring or teaching of the common assignments |
| Student Focus Groups | To determine how students feel about common assignments and their relation to the students' writing and career goals | Students |
| Gallup Poll, NSSE, and Writing Consortium data | To determine what previous data have said about writing in the Purdue context | N/A |
| Exit Interviews | To determine how graduating seniors believe writing in English 106/108 has or has not helped them throughout their academic career at Purdue | A small sample of graduating seniors |
| Exit Survey | To determine how graduate seniors believe writing in English 106/108 has or has not helped them throughout their academic | Entire graduating senior class |

| | | |
|--|--|-------------|
| | career at Purdue | |
| Common Assignment Submission Protocol Survey | To determine successes, struggles, and reflections on the common assignment implementation | Instructors |

These are just some of the alternative data collection methods that ICaP may use to triangulate our data and decisions.

When does assessment occur?

Since a majority of the common assignments will come in later in the Fall 2018 semester, Spring 2019 will require several rating sessions so that we can assess our data and make decisions for the future and Fall 2019. Currently, ICaP has the current tentative dates for the Spring 2019 semester:

- Session One
 - a. M February 25: 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - b. W February 27: 12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 - c. F March 1: 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.
- Session Two
 - a. M April 1: 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - b. W April 3: 12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 - c. F April 5: 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

From these scheduled assessment sessions, ICaP will assess the data to see how well the program is meeting our established outcomes and develop a report for the 2018-2019 Assessment Results.

In the future, ICaP may not necessarily need to hold read and rate sessions every semester because we will have selected a common assignment across syllabus approaches. Therefore, it is essential that we do read and rate sessions when the data is presented to us so that decisions can be made promptly and instructors are provided with an appropriate amount of time to change instructional materials.

Alternative assessment data collection will occur at various times, so please be on the lookout for those events.

How does this affect me?

As we have ventured into our assessment of ICaP, we have been grateful for all the help ICaP instructors have given us via common assignment development, input into the assessment protocol, and feedback before, during, and after teaching the common assignment. One difficult issue, as to be expected, is finding available times for instructors to read and rate our common

assignments. As a result, we are implementing read and rate sessions for all ICaP instructors for the Spring 2019 semester.

For these mandatory read and rate sessions, all English 106 and 106-I instructors will cancel conferences twice during the Spring 2019 semester. Instructors and graduate students who teach only course will be expected to attend at least one read and rate session per canceled week. Instructors who teach three or more courses are expected to attend at least two read and rate sessions per canceled week; however, instructors who teach three or more courses may cancel all of their conferences that week so that classes may stay synced.

For English 108 instructors, you will need to cancel at least one class session per read and rate session, so at least two classes in total. We know that class time is valuable, so we are giving you advanced notice so that you can begin building these canceled classes into your calendar (.

To be transparent, please cancel conferences for the following weeks during the Spring 2019 semester:

- Monday February 25th to Friday March 1st
- Monday April 1st to Monday April 5th

Students should be instructed not to attend conferences this week; however, you may certainly have them complete other work in lieu of face-to-face conferences.

What is the locus of assessment?

The center of this assessment project is ICaP and its instructors. This entire project has been a grassroots effort that started with the Pedagogical Initiatives Committee designing the common assignments. The project has blossomed to include graduate student raters along with instructors who have participated in focus groups, surveys, and interviews. It is this mission of a bottom-up approach that will continue to inform and propel this assessment project.

Who is the audience for the assessment results?

The audiences for these assessment results include ICaP staff, instructors, students, the various Colleges' administration, and the Purdue administration. The results will be used in a variety of ways by the varying audiences. Assessment results will be communicated with these audiences and stakeholders through an end-of-the-year assessment report.

Why is assessment needed?

Assessment is a necessary component of any healthy program. Our goal has been to answer the CWPA's call for more coherency and consistency within ICaP so that we can show our various stakeholders that what we do in ICaP is necessary and beneficial for students.

Overarching Assessment Goals

There are three overarching goals that this assessment project intends to answer. The following are the three areas that will be assessed:

Outcomes:

1. How is ICaP performing in terms of the six established outcomes?
2. Do the assessment results show that a curriculum revision is needed?
3. What do these outcomes show in terms of ICaP and Cornerstone's versions of writing?

Content:

4. What does the data say about coherency and consistency amongst the syllabus approaches?
 - a. What theme(s) should be established if a syllabus approach restructuring is necessary?

Holistic:

5. What types of personal professional development can be established to create a culture of assessment?