CINS 101: Introduction to Computers
Learning Outcomes Assessment Project
Executive Summary

Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Project

CINS 101 introduces students to computer concepts, focuses on the impact of computers on businesses and society, emphasizes applications of technology, and helps develop information retrieval techniques. The assessment instruments included a skills test correlated with the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification exam and an in-house designed cognitive skills exam correlated with the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). The initial assessment occurred in fall 2003 with continuous assessments ending in spring 2006.

Stage 2: Implementing the Design and Collecting and Analyzing the Data

The data related to the CLEP equivalent test revealed that many CCBC students did well, with a mean score of 69.5%, a median score of 70%, and a 79% course pass rate. The results of the MOS equivalency demonstrated that students were performing well on the Word, PowerPoint, and Access portions of the exam but were not mastering Excel. Only 28% of test-takers were able to pass the Excel portion of the exam with a mean score of 52%.

Stage 3: Redesigning the Course to Improve Student Learning

The CINS 101 Assessment Committee decided to focus primarily on improving Excel scores. The Committee surveyed faculty for insights and recommendations and a consensus formed that it was necessary to address the low achievement in Excel through an intervention of spending more classroom time teaching and practicing Excel skills. Spending four (4) full classroom weeks on Excel was mandated for all CINS 101 classes. In addition, it is important to note that in order to assure that the Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA) project ran smoothly, faculty had to work closely together and frequently discuss CINS issues and content. The faculty chose to adopt a common text, establish a WebCT website as a faculty resource, and provide faculty workshops in the use of Student Assessment & Manager (SAM), the software required for the CLEP equivalency exam.

Stage 4: Implementing Course Revisions and Reassessing Student Learning

The results of the spring 2006 assessment showed improvement across all four skills areas, including a statistically significant gain in the score for Excel. The mean in that portion of the exam was 55%. Although the faculty were satisfied with the mean scores on the CLEP equivalency exam on the first assessment, scores were even higher with 70.96% for the second assessment as a result of the organization necessary to administer the LOA project.

Stage 5: Final Analysis and Reporting Results

The increase in Excel performance marks the right direction and shows student learning can improve in CINS 101 with curricular enhancement. The CINS 101 faculty met their objective of increasing scores on the Excel performance test. Other methods will be used by faculty over time to continue to expand on these gains.