

**Information Competence Assessment Using First Year and Upper Division Writing  
Samples Grant 2006/2008**

**FIRST YEAR PROGRESS REPORT**

**2006/2007 Faculty Participants:**

Composition:

\*Bob Mayberry  
Associate Professor of English &  
Director, Composition Program

Stacey Anderson  
Composition Lecturer

Camilla Griggers  
Composition Lecturer

John Guelcher  
Composition Lecturer

Clifton Justice  
Composition Lecturer

Kathleen Klompfen  
Composition Lecture &  
Director, Writing Center

Adele Slaughter  
Composition Lecturer

Library:

\*Amy Wallace  
Associate Librarian  
Head of Public Services and Outreach

Debra Hoffmann  
Assistant Librarian  
Reference and Instruction Librarian

Kristen Labonte  
Assistant Librarian  
Reference and Instruction Librarian

\*Project Leaders

**Abstract:**

The California State University Channel Islands is in a unique position to pilot the assessment of information competence and the effectiveness of our information literacy program. Information literacy is one of the elements of the *Characteristics of CSUCI Graduates*; as a result, the university has a strong information literacy program with many undergraduate programs emphasizing information skills in the classroom. In fact, over 30% of students come into the library for such instruction each semester. As we plan to admit our fourth freshman class in fall 2006, the time is ripe to begin gathering data on the success of our efforts.

The composition and library programs seek a two year grant to assess the information competence of first year students enrolled in composition courses as well as students enrolled in courses that meet the upper division writing requirement for general education. These populations were targeted for three reasons. First, nearly all first year students are required to take a composition course—fewer than 10% are exempted because of advanced placement credit—and all graduates must fulfill the 9 credit upper division writing requirement. Second, all composition classes and most courses that meet the upper division writing requirement come into the library for information literacy instruction. Third, the composition courses already require students to use outside sources in assignments completed for portfolio review; and the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement Committee has recommended that a similar process should be put in place for all courses that meet the upper division writing requirement starting in Fall 2007.

The composition and library programs propose to create a rubric to assess information competence of first year and upper division students. That rubric would be applied to all first year writing assignments that require research. The programs also plan to explore ways of sampling student writing so that this assessment process could be scaled up as our student population grows or be used by larger CSU campuses. The results would be used to improve the current composition and library programs, to support CSUCI's accreditation review, and to foster campus and stakeholder dialogue.

### **Project Goals:**

The project would bring together composition and library faculty to, first, examine existing rubrics and, then, develop a rubric suited to our particular circumstances and capable of assessing the following information skills from the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education:

- The information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.
- The information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, and other unique characteristics of information.
- The Information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance.
- The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.

In the first year of the grant, the rubric would be used only to assess papers submitted for composition courses, English 102/103 and 105. In the second year, the rubric would again be applied to papers submitted to composition courses but additionally to papers submitted in courses that meet the upper division writing requirement. Scores will be given to each paper and then analyzed in relationship to the student's class standing and information literacy sessions attended.

The composition and library programs would also work with a campus assessment expert to determine the best method of guaranteeing a representative sample of papers.

The assessment results will serve several purposes: first, to inform us of the information competence of incoming and outgoing students; second, to evaluate the impact of the information competence instruction program; and third, to help identify weaknesses in the information competence instruction program in order to make recommendations for improvement.

### **2006/2007 Project Timeline:**

Fall 2006

- Examine existing rubrics
- Develop rubric for CSUCI (joint effort of composition and library faculty)

Spring 2007

- Collect writing samples from composition 102/103 & 105

Summer 2007

- Apply rubric to writing samples
- Compile results
- Send results to CSUCI Assessment Council and General Education Assessment Task Force
- Make recommendations to the Director of the Composition Program and Head of Public Services for the Library

## **Project Benefits:**

The Characteristics of CSUCI Graduates document clearly illustrates that the campus is interested in graduating information literate students. Faculty members have shown support for infusing information literacy instruction into a number of different classes at several different levels. Assessing the kinds of information students use in written work will provide more useful information than would any test, and the process of designing a rubric will engage faculty and librarians in fruitful discussions of goals and outcomes. The proposed process has several advantages for our campus:

1. It builds on a portfolio assessment system already in use by the composition program;
2. It will involve faculty outside the library;
3. It will supply evidence of information literacy that can be used in the accreditation process;
4. It will provide the kind of data necessary for program improvement; and
5. It will generate baseline information about incoming students.

In addition, the assessment of information literacy standards through analysis of writing samples might benefit the California State University System by piloting sampling techniques that can be applied to larger institutions and providing a rubric that could be used system-wide. The final results of this project will be promulgated throughout the CSU (and beyond, perhaps) not only by means of the final project report but through conference presentations and journal publications as well.

## **Project Activities:**

In Fall 2006, the librarians solicited rubrics on information literacy listservs and searched for information literacy rubrics on the web. We found that many rubrics have been developed for information literacy, but most are used to examine products created as a result of library instruction (3 unit library classes or one-shot course integrated session). We selected seven of the more relevant rubrics.

In the Fall 2006, the CSUCI academic senate passed student learning outcomes for general education. Goal 2 outcomes relate directly to information literacy. Goals 5, 7, and 8 outcomes relate indirectly to information literacy. Therefore the project leaders decided to incorporate the three Goal 2 outcomes into the project.

Goal 2. Find and critically examine information. They are able to:

- Outcome 2.1 Access needed information effectively and efficiently.
- Outcome 2.2 Evaluate information and its sources critically.
- Outcome 2.3 Explain the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

Goal 5. Cultivate intellect, imagination, sensibility and sensitivity through the study of philosophy, literature, languages, and the arts. They are able to:

- Outcome 5.1. Analyze creative human products and ideas.
- Outcome 5.2. Articulate personal thoughts and emotions when encountering human creations and ideas.
- Outcome 5.3. Create original and imaginative works in philosophy, literature, language, and/or the arts.

Goal 7. Integrate ideas and insights from multiple cultural and disciplinary perspectives. They are able to:

- Outcome 7.1 Integrate content, ideas, and approaches from various cultural perspectives.
- Outcome 7.2 Integrate content, ideas, and approaches from various disciplinary perspectives.

Goal 8. Use technology as a tool.

The librarians created a packet of information literacy basics for an information literacy retreat for the grant participants. The packet included:

- ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education
- Information Competence Assessment Using First Year and Upper Division Writing Samples Grant Proposal
- The four IL student outcomes identified in the grant
- CSUCI General Education Outcomes (Goal 2 focuses IL and Goal 5 & 7 relate)
- CSUCI Composition Scoring Rubric (includes a section on Research)
- Rockman's Rubrics for assessing Information Competence in the CSU
- Draft Rubrics from City University, University of Southern Utah, CSU Chico, LaGuardia Community College, PACE, Marquette, Austin Community College.
- Outcomes Grid (4 Grant, 3 GE) with the questions:
  1. Do any of the outcomes overlap?
  2. How many levels of assessment do we desire? (2,3,4,5)
  3. Can this outcome be assessed by using a paper from a composition course?
  4. If so, what course?
  5. How will we know it when we see it?
  6. What are the distinct levels of knowing it when we see it?
  7. If not, what other activities will we need to create to assess this outcome?
  8. Other questions the group needs to consider?

The retreat was to familiarize all participants with information literacy definitions, information literacy standards, various campus outcomes, sample rubrics, and applications. The librarian project leader was supposed to lead this session, but had the stomach flu. Debra Hoffmann and Kristen LaBonte lead this portion of the retreat. The participants found the background to be very helpful, and produced a draft rubric (See Appendix A). The bad news was that without the project leader at the retreat, the group missed the outcomes grid in the packet and as a result the outcomes created did not directly align to the grant outcomes or the CSUCI Student Learning Outcomes for General Education. The good news was that the outcomes created were typical information literacy outcomes so they were not off the mark and just needed some alignment.

The project leaders then scheduled a day long meeting to align the draft rubric with the student learning outcomes in the grant and CSUCI Student Learning Outcomes for General Education. This time the project leader experienced her first ever trip to the emergency room the night before the meeting and was unable to attend. The grant participants, again led by Debra Hoffmann and Kristen Labonte, worked to align the rubric. The draft rubric criterion were assigned numbers and questions were assigned letters. Following the meeting the librarian project leader then created a CSUCI Information Literacy Rubric Sheet (See Appendix B) to be used in conjunction with the draft rubric to examine products from the composition program.

The librarian project leader, despite her fears and jokes from the project participants, scheduled a third meeting to apply the Rubric to the composition products that had been collected over the Spring 2007 semester. The group looked at a half a dozen types of products, including narratives, problem/solution essays, and individual research papers.

The group was surprisingly uniform in its ratings for three outcomes:

- the information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts,
- the Information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance, and
- the information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.

The group also found that certain kinds of products, such as research papers or group research assignments, lent themselves to this type of assessment, while others, like the narrative paper, did not. The librarians are now looking through a much larger sample of composition products taken from all sections, (group projects, individual research, medical reports, problem/solution essays, argument, and autoethnography papers) to determine which product(s) would be the most appropriate to use for this type of assessment.

The following outcomes raised too many questions and required too many assumptions to be useful for rating student papers:

- the information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, and other unique characteristics of information,
- the information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently
- the information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically, and
- the information literate student explains the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

Therefore, the group was unable to rate any of the composition products using these outcomes. As a result, the composition faculty asked the librarians to create an annotated bibliography assignment that can be paired with their writing assignments, and at least one composition faculty has agreed to pilot the companion assignment in the fall. The librarians are currently researching annotated bibliography assignments, including Webquests and other similar assignments. They feel the ideal assignment would include four parts: an introduction that discusses the search process, annotated works the student would use and why, annotated works the student would NOT use and why, and a self-reflection on what was found and any next steps that needed to be taken in the research process. They would also like to come up with a catchier name than *annotated bibliography*, since the assignment is much more than a traditional annotated bibliography.

There were additional benefits to the first attempt to use the rubric. The library and composition programs now have a better understanding of each others' values, goals, outcomes, and the research-writing connection. We found that there is a lot of common ground between the two programs as well as the university's critical thinking class. Ties have been strengthened and new partnerships have been established between the Library and the Writing Center as well as between the faculty that teach in Composition, the Library, and UNIV 110 (Critical Thinking). The group seems confident that more informed research will lead to better writing in a number of assignments. The group also appears to be excited about assessing this connection and information literacy when it happens as opposed to the library doing it in isolation or via a standardized test. The incorporation of the recently adopted information literacy outcomes for General Education allowed this project to be placed on the campus General Education Assessment Plan and the final Education Effectiveness Report to WASC.

The project appears to be on track, except for application of the rubric to get baseline data. The grant was written just prior to some similar General Education Assessment endeavors. From those projects, several project participants learned that coming to consensus on product selection and norming ratings take more time than the grant allowed. This summer we hope to reformat the rubric to reflect the alignment. We will finalize the product(s) that will be used in assessing three of the outcomes:

- the information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts,
- the Information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance, and
- the information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.

Having done that, we can select an appropriate sample from the composition portfolios. Next, we will create the annotated bibliography assignment, so that we will have products to assess the remaining outcomes:

- the information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, and other unique characteristics of information,
- the information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently,
- the information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically, and
- the information literate student explains the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

Once we have completed those steps, we will have useful baseline data for all of the outcomes, and be better prepared to help our students engage in more useful research and produce more informed writing.

## Information Literacy Rubric from the First Retreat

Criterion	Questions	Emerging	Proficient	Advanced
<b>Determining information needed and identifying a variety of potential sources.</b>	Does the student identify general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic?	Student identifies insufficient and/or inadequate information sources.	Student identifies sufficient and somewhat varied information sources.	Student identifies extensive and varied information sources in numerous formats.
	Does the student identify key concepts and terms that describe the information need?	Student identifies insufficient or inadequate concepts and terms that lead to limited information.	Student identifies some concepts and terms that lead to somewhat appropriate information.	Student clearly identifies key concepts and terms that lead to the appropriate information.
	Does the student develop research questions based on the information need?	Student develops ineffective research questions lacking focus and clarity.	Student develops research questions with limited focus and clarity.	Student develops research questions that are focused, clear, and complete.
<b>Accessing needed information effectively and efficiently.</b>	Does the student create a search strategy?	Student creates an ineffective search strategy using limited and/or inappropriate research methods.	Student creates a search strategy using somewhat varied and appropriate research methods.	Student creates a thorough search strategy using a variety of appropriate research methods.
	Does the student allow an appropriate amount of time to implement the search strategy?	Student develops an unrealistic or inadequate timeline for implementation of the search strategy.	Student develops a realistic timeline for implementation of the search strategy.	Student develops a flexible timeline that allows for implementation and revision of the search strategy.
	Does the student gather a variety of sources?	Student gathers insufficient and/or inappropriate sources of limited variety.	Student gathers sufficient and somewhat varied sources.	Student gathers numerous and varied sources in multiple formats.
<b>Evaluating information and its sources critically.</b>	Does the student summarize and synthesize the main ideas from the information gathered to develop his or her own interpretation?	Student poorly summarizes and fails to synthesize the main ideas from the information gathered to develop his or her own interpretation.	Student proficiently summarizes and struggles to synthesize the main ideas from the information gathered to develop his or her own interpretation.	Student clearly summarizes and synthesizes the main ideas from the information gathered to develop his or her own interpretation.
	Does the student compare new information with prior information?	Student unsuccessfully or inadequately compares new information to prior information.	Student sufficiently compares new information to prior information.	Student uses critical thinking to compare new information to prior information and create a heightened understanding of the research.
	Does the student evaluate sources for relevance, accuracy and credibility?	Student fails to or is unaware of how to evaluate sources for relevance, accuracy and credibility.	Student evaluates sources for relevance, accuracy and credibility.	Student uses critical thinking to evaluate sources for relevance, accuracy and credibility to establish his or her own authority.
<b>Using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.</b>	Does the student exhibit mastery over the information being incorporated?	Student exhibits little control over information and fails to integrate it into his or her research.	Student exhibits proficient control over information with competent integration into his or her research.	Student expertly controls information and integrates it seamlessly to advance his or her research.
	Does the student present the information in a format appropriate to the purpose and audience of the assignment?	Student presents the information in a format inappropriate to the purpose and audience of the assignment.	Student presents the information in a format somewhat appropriate to the purpose and audience of the assignment.	Student presents the information in a format highly appropriate to the purpose and audience of the assignment.
	Does the student demonstrate an understanding of intellectual property and fair use of copyrighted material?	Student demonstrates little or no understanding of intellectual property and fair use of copyrighted materials.	Student demonstrates a working understanding of intellectual property and fair use of copyrighted materials.	Student demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of intellectual property and fair use of copyrighted materials.

CSUCI Information Literacy Rubric Sheet

Product:

Reviewer:

Grant Outcomes

Outcome	Criterion	Emerging	Proficient	Advanced	Difficult to Determine from Product
The information literate student synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.	3A				
The information literate student compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, and other unique characteristics of information.	3B				
The Information literate student applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or performance.	1A				
	1B				
	1C				
	2A				
The information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.	4A				

GE Outcomes

Outcome	Criterion	Emerging	Proficient	Advanced	Difficult to Determine from Product
Access needed information effectively and efficiently.	2A				
	2C				
Evaluate information and its sources critically.	3C				
Explain the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.	4B				
	4C				

Reviewer Comments: