

# **Curricular Assessment: Tips and Techniques**

Special Session Facilitators:

Henry M. Walker, Grinnell College

Sue Fitzgerald, Metro State Univ (MN)

John Dooley, Knox College

# Session Outline

1. Preliminaries (5 minutes)
2. Interests on sticky sheets (5 min.)
3. Simple assessment activities (15 min.)
4. Challenges – small groups  
(15 min. discussion; 15 min. reporting)
5. Remaining challenges and brainstorming –  
large group (20 minutes)

# Part 1: Preliminaries

Introductions

Outline of this Special Session

Tone: Constructive problem solving  
(no rants, please)

Identification of attendee interests: sticky  
sheets

# Exercise: Write Your Questions

Attendees:

- See themes on sticky sheets
- Write your questions on related sheets
- Theme not there? Start a new sheet
- Are you a lurker? Put your name on the relevant sheet

# Part 2: Some Simple Assessment Activities – Session Leaders

- Henry Walker
  - Exit interviews of graduating students
  - Using CS2013 to identify learning outcomes
- John Dooley
  - Collaborate with a Director of Assessment
  - Focus on one class or sequence at a time
- Sue Fitzgerald
  - Use grading rubrics to collect data

# Exit Interviews: Graduating Students

- Invite each graduating student
- Email questions in advance (many prepare)
- Students see faculty 1-3 weeks before graduation day
- Questions elicit feedback — interview flexible
  - Scripted questions start the conversation
  - Faculty explore additional topics
  - Students encouraged to go beyond formal questions

# General, Every-year Exit Interview Questions

## 1. Highs and lows

- (a) Looking back on your experiences in the major, what did you like best?
- (b) What did you like least?

## 2. Benefits

- (a) What did you gain from the major?
- (b) What do you wish you had gained from the major?

## 3. Courses

- (a) What major courses do you consider essential to your CS education?  
Why?
- (b) Which, if any, courses in the major did you take but wish you had not?
- (c) Which, if any, major courses do you wish you had taken but didn't?
- (d) Which, if any, courses outside the major that you consider essential?

# Focused Exit Interview Questions for One Year

Pick a focus, such as

- Ethical and social issues in CS and non-CS courses
- Lab experience inside and outside the classroom
- Learning environment for CS students
- Prerequisite structure: opportunities and challenges
- Opportunities and constraints from study abroad

Select 2-4 questions to address issues with this focus

Theme: Targeted data collection

# Using CS2013 Student Outcomes

CS2013 identifies 1052 learning outcomes

- Provides good start for clarifying outcomes for current, new, or evolving courses
- Provides framework for full curricular review
  - Divide courses in groups of 2-3
  - Two faculty collaborate to review outcomes
  - Time: 2-3 hours per faculty pair per group
  - Promotes faculty discussion

More details: <http://www.cs.grinnell.edu/~walker/talks/cs2013-sigcse2014/>

# Tips from a Reluctant Professor

- Make the Director of Assessment your friend
  - good ideas
  - what kinds of data to collect
  - analysis
  - survey preparation and administration
  - your assessment director can save you lots of time

# Tips from a Reluctant Professor

- Focus on one class or sequence at a time
  - We started with our Intro to CS class
    - developed learning goals (as part of our overall learning goal effort)
    - entrance/exit surveys (baseline data)
    - we tracked how various types of students did in our classes
    - using the results as we are changing the pedagogy in the intro sequence
    - the data will be useful in other areas as well

# Use Grading Rubrics

## Principles

- Keep it simple
- Use data you are already collecting
- Connect to program outcomes and course learning objectives

# Program Outcomes

1. Design, implement and evaluate a computer-based system, process, component, or program to meet desired needs.
2. Apply principles of design and development in the construction of software systems of varying complexity.
3. And so forth...

# Course Learning Objectives

- Can apply elementary data structures such as queues and stacks to solve practical problems including simple simulations.
- Can implement lists using both arrays and dynamic storage.
- Can apply sorting and searching algorithms.
- Understands recursive solutions and can use recursion to solve problems such sorting and searching.
- Can store and search data using the basics of more advanced data structures such as trees.
- And so forth...

# Grading Rubric

|    |                                                       |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | Design                                                |
|    | UML class diagram for each class                      |
|    | UML structure diagram (relationships between classes) |
| 30 | Correctness                                           |
|    | Collection class is generic                           |
|    | Implements Cloneable                                  |
| 10 | Style                                                 |
|    | Consistent and correct indenting                      |

# Data Analysis

- Average overall design score 86.4 %
- Average overall correctness score 92.1 %
- Average overall readability score 91.8 %
  
- % of designs  $\geq 80\%$  (by count) 71.6 %
- % of correctness  $\geq 80\%$  (by count) 86.3 %
- % of readability  $\geq 80\%$  (by count) 76.5 %
  
- % of students with average design  $> 80\%$  (by count) 64.7 %
- % of students with average correctness  $> 80\%$  (by count) 94.1 %
- % of students with average readability  $> 80\%$  (by count) 76.5 %

# Conclusions

- On average, the class successfully completed designs (average score = 86.4 %) (GOAL MET)
- On average, the class was successful at implementing solutions (average score = 92.1 %) (GOAL MET)
- On average, the class successfully wrote readable code (average score = 91.8%) (GOAL MET)
- Only 71.6% of the designs were acceptable (GOAL NOT MET)
- 86.3% of the implementations were acceptable (GOAL MET)
- Only 76.5% of the readability scores were acceptable (GOAL NOT MET)

# Close the Loop

Discuss results with colleagues

Examine pre-requisite courses

Alter teaching in some way

Collect data again

Compare over time

# Part 3: Challenges – Small Groups

Choose your group by theme

- Group discussion (15 minutes)
  - What challenges do you encounter?
  - What solutions have group members tried?
- Reporting (*short*):
  - Themes and challenges
  - Solutions
  - 2 per group

# Part 4: Moderated Discussion

- What do you want to know more about?
- What are your suggestions?
- What resources are available?

# Additional Resources

- National Science Foundation, Merit Review Criteria
- ACM/IEEE-CS Task Force, Computer Science Curricula 2013
- ABET Assessment Planning -- <http://www.abet.org/assessmentplanning/>
- ABET Assessment Planning Resources -- <http://www.abet.org/assessment-planning-resources/>
- Association of American Colleges & Universities <https://www.aacu.org/search/node/assessment>
- The Assessment Commons is at <http://assessmentcommons.org/>
- Materials from the Mathematical Assoc. of America (maa.org)
  - *Guidelines for Undertaking a Self-Study in the Mathematical Sciences* at <http://www.maa.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ProgramReview/MAA-SelfStudyManual.pdf>
  - Bonnie Gold, Sandra Z. Keith, William A. Marion, *Assessment Practices in Undergraduate Mathematics* at <http://www.maa.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ebooks/pdf/NTE49.pdf>