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5-4-2009

### CLA Final Report

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#### Recommended Citation

Phoenix-Neal, Diane, "CLA Final Report" (2009). *Collegiate Learning Assessment Instructors' Reports*. 24.  
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## **CLA Performance Task Creation and Implementation in the Classroom Report**

Spring, 2009 -Department of Performing and Fine Arts

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Narrative:

1. I administered our Performing and Fine Arts CLA performance tool to **54 students** in two courses. COURSE INFORMATION: The Performing and Fine Arts CLA, created by Dr. Phoenix-Neal and the other PFA team members, my Group A was administered 2/26/09 in Music 260-01 African American Music History-a 3 credit hour lecture /discussion.

My Performing and Fine Arts CLA Group B, (same CLA document) was administered 3/3/09 in Music 210-03 Music Appreciation-a 3 credit hour lecture.

The majority of students enrolled in these courses are at the freshman level. There are a small percentage of “non-traditional” students who are retired military or re-entry students. Also, there are a total of two graduating seniors in these courses.

2. Performance Task:

TASK: The task was to read the “scenario” related to the request by Alpo Corporation in support of NEA funding for the Arts. Students were asked to place themselves in the role of the role of a corporate President of a member agency, review and analyze supporting and non-supporting documents and answer the following two questions:

- I. Alpo (a fictitious umbrella arts organization) is asking all of its member agencies to have their members support President Obama’s stimulus

- package. In their letter, they present the case as for the American way of life. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan is the specific provision. Based on the evidence, what are the strengths and weaknesses of their case in light of current economic and social divisions? Why? What specific information in the evidence led you to this conclusion?
- II. In this call for support, Alpo quotes Bill Ivey, former chair of the NEA, WHO STATES, “a healthy arts community is important, especially during hard times”, yet the Senate Appropriations Committee has not included art jobs funding in their version of the bill, why? Based on all the information and documents and any other factors you considered, what led you to your conclusion?

#### Documents:

- A. NARRATIVE: scenario and questions
- B. Newspaper Article
- C. Letter acknowledging the contribution of sponsorship and NEA grant support
- D. Bar graph demonstrating government support levels from 1994 – 2008.
- E. Bar graph demonstrating NEA appropriations from 1966 – 2008
- F. Internet Article advocating elimination of support for the NEA
- G. Document demonstrating economic impact of the nonprofits arts industry
- H. Samples of visual artists work submitted for request to receive NEA grant awards
- I. Article on the impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation
- J. Apparent Letter from Oprah thanking Halle Barry for supporting an NEA project, BIG READ.

Our team selected diverse formats of information and represented a variety of artistic disciplines. The general opinion was that students would be more apt to respond if more visual and popular anchors were part of the documents. The

correct answers should support 1) NEA Funding and 2) Arts Job funding in the federal budget, based on the evidence provided. Other issues addressed in the answers may or may not include, Arts as an American way of life, the relationship between American excellence in the arts and funding, and censorship.

The correct answers to the two questions should include the appropriate or relevant evidence (drawn from the included sources of information, labeled DOCUMENT B – J) necessary to support their positions. They should explain the reasons for conclusions, and justify those conclusions by explicitly referring to the specific documents, data, and statement on which your conclusions are based. The answers are judged not only on the accuracy of the information provided, but also on how clearly the ideas are presented, how effectively the ideas are organized and how thoroughly the information is covered. An incorrect answer on one of the two questions earned the score of zero for the one question, averaged with the score of the correctly answered question.

3. My Department of Performing and Fine Arts CLA Performance Task , Group A was administered 2/26/09 in Music 260-01 African American Music History-a 3credit hour lecture /discussion. My second group, CLA Group B, (which received the same CLA performance task document), took the task on 3/3/09 in Music 210-03 Music Appreciation-a 3 credit hour lecture. The score was not used to calculate final grade. The student was given credit for performing the task, equal to a perfect test score at about 3% weight for the total average for the course. Students that did not appear to take the task were counted as absent which lowered the attendance grade for the course. The task was required work for attendance.
4. Consistent strengths in the performance task were that most students chose correct answer to support in their documents. Only 4 out of 54 chose the wrong answer based on evidence. Consistent weakness was the inability to correctly analyze the evidence. Many of the pieces we created were flawed or outdated on purpose, and few took notice. A weakness in the first group (A) more than the second group (B) was the quality of written expression, regardless of the opinion of the student. One student

scored "0". Less than 10 scored 5 or 6 (highest score) out of 54 students. One weakness overall was the reluctance of both groups to read all of the evidence provided, without prompting, prodding, or explaining by the instructor. Once I got them started, by talking, then they began reading and their interest peaked. Are our students more oratory and "aural" than visual or verbal? It is an important question to consider. Oral traditions may be a factor and a speech or sounds could be a trigger to help some students, rather than complete silence .

5. As I noted above, Group A scored lower, and also is the course which requires the least reading and writing on a regular basis (Music 260 African American Music. This is the traditional nature of a discussion/lecture mix. I believe the students who are weaker naturally gravitate to this kind of course. The ideal would be to make the performance tasks the same in both Music Appreciation and African American Music, but a problem persists in the lack of quality texts in Af-Am Music History to utilize. Writing more during the class could solve many problems, but I will have to come up with better texts and writing tasks than exist at present. These quality texts and learning tools are already in existence in courses like Music Appreciation and Humanities. I believe that those students that are lacking in writing and reading skills, and who gravitate to a course where less writing and reading is required, are not sufficiently challenged by their advisors or by their English Composition teachers and the students should challenge themselves to improve.

Dr. Phoenix-Neal, May 1, 2009