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CLA Report

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**Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
Instructor's Assessment Report**

**Soni Martin, Professor of Art
April 30, 2009**

1. Course information:

- a. The CLA was administered in ART 410 (Art Criticism) during spring 2009 in the Department of Performing and Fine Arts, Area of Visual Art by Soni Martin, Professor of Art.
- b. The majority of the students in the class are seniors.

2. Performance task:

- a. The task was for students to imagine themselves as part of a member agency of ALPO (Alliance of Legislative Policy Organizations). They were being asked to support increased funding for the NEA (National Endowments for the Arts). In addressing their support (or non-support) they were to address two questions: (1) Based on the evidence, what are the strengths and weaknesses of support for the NEA during this current economic and social division and why? (2) Based on the evidence, what could they conclude were the reasons the Senate Appropriations Committee did not include art job funding in their version of the stimulus bill?
- b. The students were given 14 documents. Some documents were authentic documents from the Internet and others were created. We created the below documents so students could see graphs, personal letters (emotional), the result of research and opposing arguments.
 - **Scenario** pages were developed. A member's bulletin for ALPO (Alliance of Legislative Policy Organizations) was developed that cited support of the NEA funds in the Stimulus Package and questioned the Senate Appropriation Committee not including the arts. The second page addressed several arguments stated in the above newsletter.
 - **Document A** posed the two questions for the students to answer using the evidence in all the documents (See above 2.a.).
 - **Document B** is a letter from a journalist at the Washington Post who congratulates a woman playwright in Hollywood, a recent NEA grant recipient, and includes information on the inequity of the number of and the large amount of financial support awarded to male playwrights and not females.
 - **Document C** is a letter from the Vice President of Movie City News and thanks Samuel Jackson for his participation in the Los Angeles Film Festival. In the letter, corporations are mentioned and the amount of support for the arts by those corporations; as well as the support from the NEA. This document addresses amounts of funding and the impact of funding on the arts and artists.

- **Document D** is an actual document from Americans for the Arts. Using a graph and text, it diagrams the government support for the arts (federal, state and local) between 1994 and 2008.
 - **Document E** is also from Americans for the Arts and is a graph of the amount of NEA Appropriations in history from the 1966-2008.
 - **Document F** is an actual document, written in 1997, that lists the first of ten reasons to eliminate funding for the NEA by Heritage. The article includes a graph of how the budget of the NEA does not affect the large budgets of two major museums in New York City: the Metropolitan and the Museum of Modern Art.
 - **Document G** is an actual graph from Americans for the Arts and gives an overview of the economic impact of the nonprofit arts industry on the total economy, full-time jobs supported in the arts, the total tax revenue generated and total household income generated
 - **Document H** was a page of six challenging images of works by artists who received NEA funding between 1969 and 1997.
 - **Document I** was an actual document from a journal which summarized the impact of arts education on workforce preparation in the public schools. Research was indicated, and a graph indicated the higher order thinking skills and affective skills and traits that are influenced by public school children experiencing the arts in the classroom.
 - **Document J** was a phony letter from Oprah to Halle Berry thanking her for participating in one of her programs. In the letter Oprah references an early NEA grant that was important to get the project started.
- c. Using the documents students were given the opportunity to integrate information and data in both narrative and quantitative forms due to the inclusion of graphs that related to money allocations, jobs and impact on the economy, letters (emotional), and narrative that indicated the result of research.

3. Performance Task Administration:

- a. The CLA was handed out in my class on Tuesday, March 31, 2009.
- b. The students who participated in the CLA were given 50 points on a regular exam; that exam was calculated into their total test average for the semester.

4. Student Performance:

- a. Seven students in a class of thirteen took the CLA. I think it is significant that they were seniors and we had been discussing approaches to criticism during most of the semester prior to the CLA. Therefore, they were very open to possibilities and open to new ways of judgment prior to attending this senior exit class. Those who took the most time with the assignment scored somewhat higher in their overall ability to remain in the “developing” category and/or “higher” in the evaluation of the evidence, their analysis/synthesis of evidence and drawing conclusions from their analysis. Of a total of 30 points, five students scored higher than 15, whereas 2 students scored under 15 points. They were all very eager to examine the documents since it related to their major.

- b. Although the majority of the students were moderately successful in identifying potentially useful information of each document on a table we created, I felt, in general, their overall written narrative communication could improve in their effort to write in a manner that flowed more in an “argument” and “counter argument” style. Transition between sentences and paragraphs could have been improved for all the students.
- c. In discussing the results, the students felt as if practicing a type of CLA would help prepare them for another CLA and they would be more keenly aware of how to compare various document styles.

5. Recommendation and follow up:

- a. Knowing that our students’ performance on the CLA will be part of our institutional assessment I will make an effort in both of my art theory classes (Contemporary Art and Art Criticism) to adapt a variation of the approach I used in an effort to make the students more aware of types of documents and ways to evaluate/analyze those documents. This exercise and the results has had an impact on my perception of teaching - a new way I can improve my teaching to help students use more skills in critical thinking and analytic reasoning, problem solving and written communication in the classroom before they leave Fayetteville State University.
- b. I have four recommendations:
 - (1) I recommend that faculty who participated in the CLA project should individually do a follow up assessment of the instrument they designed/rated with trained CLA facilitators to strengthen any areas that need improvement.
 - (2) Faculty who did not participate in the project should take mini-workshops at the CITL and explore ways of supporting these types of performances for their students to achieve. If it is practiced in small ways across the campus in different disciplines, then students will have a considerable amount of experience in what this exercise has been charged to accomplish – improve student successes on the above performances.
 - (3) If the university is wholly committed to improving our student’s scores on the CLA, then it could be a university-wide initiative, beginning with freshman in university studies, for all faculty to participate in the CLA, in at least one of their classes, using a simplified version, each semester. The results before and after the initiative could be evaluated to see if there were results.
 - (4) A variation of the CLA could be practiced in all critical thinking classes on campus.

**Students Who Participated in the CLA
ART 410 Art Criticism**

Student	Total Score (0-30 points)
Student 1	26
Student 2	20
Student 3	17
Student 4	14
Student 5	16
Student 6	10
Student 7	28