

# Student Learning Connections



A newsletter from the Student Learning Committee

 Fall 2008

## A Letter from Kristin

Since my cheering you on at the opening session of PPD week, I hope that you have been keeping your momentum going. As we approach the turning point of the semester, going from starting to ending, we may not feel that the uphill part of our journey is ending. Students' projects in our classes are getting longer and more complicated, both for them to complete and for faculty to grade. Just when it seemed like there was time to breathe from fall registration ending, spring registration is beginning. And I know as I walk through the administrative offices that our staff and student workers are not finding much time between projects.

However, there is an excitement in seeing our students in action. Blazer is still putting forth interesting, pertinent, and entertaining newspapers. Our students are talking about the upcoming presidential election in the hallways and as they walk together in the parking lots. Mainstreet highlighted the many areas in which our students show interest. As always, in my chats with faculty, there are both exciting moments and moments of frustration, but all are teaching moments.

As you look at what the Student Learning Committee is doing this year, you'll see some of the same accomplishments and challenges as we work together with academic departments, student services and administration. But all of our work is exciting and worthwhile. So is yours! Here's to a great downhill run to December and the cycle starting all over again!

Kristin LaTour, Student Learning Coord.

## Did You Know...

Math, science and sociology teachers are using census data to teach students about variables and statistics, demographic change, cultural shifts and research? Did you realize we are approaching a census year? If you'd like more information about using census data, you might want to look at the article "Bring the Past to Life with the Census" by Bob Coulter in the latest issue of *Connect Magazine*. It's in our EbscoHost database.

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## Academy News

You may have heard about JJC's involvement in the Higher Learning Commission's Academy and wondered what the point was and if it really would make any changes in assessment, outcomes, or student learning. Some of you may still not know what the Academy is or why we're participating. Our work will touch on everyone at JJC, and it's moving forward at a strong pace. If you're not on board, better start heading for the train!

The Academy team is made up of faculty and administrators who have a hand in student learning. Patrick Stephens from Math, Barbara Biles from Social/Behavioral Sciences, and Kristin LaTour from English and World Languages make up the faculty part of the team. Dennis Haynes and Joe Offerman make up the administrative end.

Here is our project. We have not done a general education assessment across departments at JJC, nor do we have stated general education learning outcomes, so our charge is to develop both of these. We are already at work on the outcomes. A draft has gone to several committees on campus for feedback, and

then we'll revise and bring them to whole faculty and staff during the spring PPD week. Look for open forums where you can see the outcomes, discuss them, and add your feedback. We'll revise once more, and then they will be published in the catalog, sent to the Curriculum Committee to be used in connection with course development and syllabi, and also used in CurricuNet. Our next step during the 2009-2010 academic year will be to choose one outcome to measure and develop an assessment plan across several departments. What departments are involved will depend on what outcome we assess.



## Students and Service Learning at the Early Childhood Education Center

Many students are surprised to discover that the youngest scholars attending Joliet Junior College are only three years old. The Early Childhood Center has been educating children while parents work or attend classes for over thirty years at the Main Campus. In addition to providing a quality, child focused environment the ECC also makes available a variety of Service Learning opportunities. From child observations to organizing classroom materials and direct projects with the children, the ECC Service Learning program builds a cohesive link between classroom studies and real life experiences.

In the 2007-2008 school year, over 150 students completed over 210 hours of service learning at the ECC. The majority of these students were JJC students meeting course requirements to support their knowledge of Child Development. For instance, JJC students pursuing a teaching career produced and implemented math activities appropriate for Preschool age children. Psychology students, needing to observe typical social skills and behavior took a more reflective approach as they observed children negotiate with their peers. Reading to the children was a Service Learning experience enjoyed by many JJC students as part of Speech Classes and Literature studies.

Not all Service Learning experiences involve JJC students directly interacting with the children- in fact some participants are not JJC students, yet. The ECC hosts many local high school child development classes each year. During the 2007-2008 school year the Early Childhood Center was host to seven area school groups. These students tour the program and meet with staff to in-

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## Assessment Lingo

As with any specialty, assessment of student learning has its own lingo. We have a glossary of terms on the Student Learning Committee webpage, but here are a few key terms to know

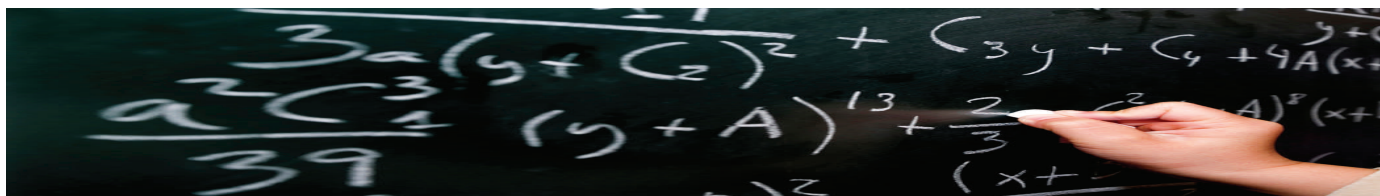
**Benchmarking:** How we measure against other institutions like JJC. We are at a good place right now. Many community colleges are figuring out how to assess general education, how to keep departments motivated in assessment planning, and how assessment of student learning fits into the greater mission of the college

**Outcome or Learning Outcome:** What we want students to know, understand or be able to do. For example, an outcome in a composition course might be for students to use correct grammar. In a math course it might be to understand how to use a calculator. There are outcomes at the course level stated in syllabi, outcomes at the program level for degrees and certificates, and general education outcomes that can cut across departments, programs and student services.

**Assessment Plan:** This is a project for measuring student learning. In the past, JJC has focused on academic assessment planning where departments would assess a learning outcome in various courses. For example, history teachers might want to assess if students can analyze a historical event's outcome. They then set about determining how to know their students learned the outcome, how many learned it and how well. The teachers analyze their findings and decide whether they need to make changes in the course, their teaching, etc. We are moving toward assessment outside of departments into areas like clubs, advising, and tutoring.

Do you have an idea for a student learning project that's a little beyond the scope of what your department is doing? Do you want to develop and innovative classroom assessment idea that could be presented at conferences? Are you excited about an idea for measuring student learning but need some money to get going? Apply for a grant from the Student Learning Committee! Grant guidelines and applications are available on our website.

[www.jjc.edu/committees/student-learning](http://www.jjc.edu/committees/student-learning)



# Save the Date for the 13th Annual Assessment Fair

Join us for the 13th Annual Community College Assessment Fair on Friday, February 13th right here at JJC! Don't be daunted by the 13th annual on Friday the 13th. All astrological, numerological and mathematical and logical signs point to a positive day!

Our theme is Assessment Fiesta: A Celebration of our Accomplishments. We'll have a keynote speaker, poster fair, concurrent sessions, food, networking, and fun. Topics will range from classroom assessment of student learning to department and student service assessment. It's on our PPD Day, so you're already free, unless your department makes big plans. We'll need help pointing people in the right directions, giving out and taking in surveys, and registering participants. If you are wary of throwing yourself into the fray, just come and learn. JJC faculty will be able to participate at no cost. This will include lunch! All you'll need to do is register.



## Faculty Attend Innovative Partnerships Conference

In September, Anne Gean in Culinary Arts and Kristin LaTour from English and World Languages attended the Innovative Partnerships in Student Learning Conference in Bloomington/Normal and hosted by Illinois State University, Heartland Community College and Illinois Wesleyan University. It was a small conference which allowed for networking with higher education faculty and staff around the Midwest. We attended sessions on a cooperative development of a homeland security certificate and major between various state colleges and universities, ideas for getting partnerships between student services and faculty to help foster student learning, and classroom ideas to foster student learning. The three host colleges planned a progressive dinner for participants where the colleges got to show off a beautiful space on their campus, highlight their students' culinary skills, and entertain us with music from students and faculty. The jazz band at Wesleyan was smoking hot!

While this was not an annual conference, there are more opportunities for you to network, learn, and bring ideas back to JJC. Visit the Student Learning Committee website for upcoming conferences, and apply to the committee for funds to attend. There are local conferences like the Higher Learning Commission's annual meeting, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Assessment Fair hosted by us here at JJC. If you have the time to travel further, there are also conferences out of state. Want to learn more? We're here to help!



## Students and Service cont. from page 2

investigate careers in Early Childhood, and learn how the ECC supports young parents as they transition from high school to JJC.

Specific service learning experiences within the ECC vary with the career goals of the JJC student, the interests of the children, and the daily activities of the program. For example, many students who are pursuing teaching will participate in small group age-appropriate pre-school activities. Other JJC students complete "behind the scenes" projects to beautify and refresh the ECC environment as a way to contribute. During the last academic year the JJC ECC was fortunate to have a number of students contribute by cleaning shelves, performing play yard maintenance and assembling educational materials allowing the teachers additional time to focus on the children.

All JJC Faculty desiring to explore the benefits of ECC Service Learning for their students should contact the ECC Coordinator, Beverly Cavanaugh at [bcavanau@jjc.edu](mailto:bcavanau@jjc.edu) or call the ECC directly at extension 2280. Many educational options exist, such as special projects and classroom observations. Student learning, retention and service learning starts with our clients' first experience with JJC.