

## **BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Assessment Report for (Department and/or Program): Social Sciences**

**Academic Chair: Dr. Laura Ochoa**

**Assessment Period: 2010-2012**

**Submitted by: Dr. Ann K. Brown**

**1. Intended Outcome (Goal):** Students will analyze and apply the scientific method as it relates to social science research.

**2. General Education Requirement(s) to which the intended outcome relates:** Scientific Knowledge and Reasoning- Students will use the scientific method of inquiry, through the acquisition of scientific knowledge.

**3. Section(s) of the Strategic Plan to which the intended outcomes relates:** Goal 1: We will improve student engagement and student success. 1.1 Take steps to increase student retention and student progression through academic programs

### **4. Means of assessment, sources of data, and desired result:**

The assessment was conducted as an ungraded classroom activity. Some professors provided extra credit for completion of the assessment. All students in attendance on the day of the activity completed the assessment. Thirty percent of Psychology 101 sections taught by full-time and part-time faculty were evaluated. Psychology 101 sections were sampled from the Paramus and Lyndhurst campuses. The sample included 378 students from 15 Psychology 101 sections taught by seven faculty members.

Measure 1: 80% of students will score satisfactory or excellent on identifying how social scientists gather and analyze data.

Measure 2: 80% of students will score satisfactory or excellent on differentiating between correlational and causal research findings.

Measure 3: 80% of students will score satisfactory or excellent on identifying the merits and limitations of research methods.

Measure 4: 80% of students will score satisfactory or excellent on selecting appropriate research methods to answer a research question.

### **5. Summary of Results:**

1. During Spring 2011, 89% of our sample of General Psychology students achieved a satisfactory or excellent score on identifying how social scientists gather and analyze data thus, exceeding the goal of 80%. The General Psychology students have demonstrated an

understanding of how psychologists gather and analyze data. This course material is sufficiently addressed as part of the curriculum in General Psychology courses.

2. During Spring 2011, 78% of our sample of General Psychology students achieved a satisfactory or excellent score on differentiating between correlational and causal research findings thus, not meeting the goal of 80%. Student performance was very close to meeting criterion (78% of the sample), thus it seems possible that instruction in this area may need additional emphasis.

3. During Spring 2011, 64% of our sample of General Psychology students achieved a satisfactory or excellent score on identifying the merits and limitations of research methods thus, not meeting the goal of 80%. The measure of identifying merits and limits of research methods may not have been met due to different instructional focus on the Research Methods material in General Psychology.

4. During Spring 2011, 95% of our sample of General Psychology students achieved a satisfactory or excellent score on applying the scientific method to a research question thus, exceeding the goal of 80%. The General Psychology students in our sample have demonstrated an understanding of how to apply the scientific method to a research question. This course material is well addressed as part of the curriculum in General Psychology courses.

## **6. Recommendations for improvement:**

1. In the General Psychology courses the measure for identifying how social scientists gather and analyze data and applying the scientific method to a research question were above the 80% criterion, thus, current instructional practices should continue.

2. Additional instruction on correlational and experimental research designs could address the deficit on this measure. This additional instruction should focus on highlighting the differences between correlational and experimental research. Student performance was very close (78% of the sample) to meeting criterion, thus it seems reasonable that additional instruction in this area would be beneficial in improving student performance. In addition to more traditional instructional practices, research method material may be addressed using a variety of instructional strategies (for example, video presentation, review of research articles, group discussions of course material).

3. Additional instruction on identifying the merits and limitation in psychological research methods is needed to improve student performance on this measure. Additional instructional strategies as described above may be beneficial in improving student performance. If an individual student is having difficulty with the research methods material in General Psychology professors should consider referring the student to the tutoring center for additional support.

4. In the General Psychology courses the measure for identifying applying the scientific method to a research question were above the 80% criterion, thus, current instructional practices should continue.

## **7. Assessment Follow-Up Social Science Division 2010-2012**

Ann K. Brown, Ph.D.- Social Science Division Assessment Liaison

During the 2010-2012 assessment period the Social Science Department measured the goal: “students will analyze and apply the scientific method as it relates to social science research.” In this project 30% of General Psychology sections were sampled. The results of our assessment demonstrated that overall student performance on, analyzing and applying the scientific method, were satisfactory. These results of the assessment project were distributed to Social Science faculty and it was discussed that current instructional practices should continue. The model that was used to assess the scientific method in General Psychology will be the basis of our next assessment project. The Sociology Department plans on assessing student performance of theoretical perspectives in Sociology during the 2012-2014 assessment period. During the Spring 2012 semester the Sociology department will begin planning and designing their assessment measure that will be used in the assessment project.