

# Global Awareness Outcomes Assessor Report, Spring 2012

Prepared by Davis Oldham for John Backes, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

## ***Executive Summary***

Interviews with eighteen faculty from various disciplines reveal four broad themes in the assessment of global awareness:

1. basic knowledge,
2. contextual understanding,
3. ability to shift perspectives, and
4. global awareness as a developmental process.

Based on the results of these interviews and a review of some of the relevant literature, I recommend several steps that the College can take to promote global awareness and assess it effectively. These steps can be grouped under four broad headings:

1. institutional support,
2. outcomes review,
3. assessment methodology and process, and
4. changes to administrative procedures.

**Institutional support** includes release time, stipends, or awards to encourage faculty work on assessment; grant writing support; making time in regularly scheduled meetings to discuss assessment, global awareness, and related issues; administrative follow-through on work already done; and streamlining of institutional procedures.

**Outcomes review** includes ongoing discussions about the form the global awareness outcome should take, organization of the outcome and performance standards in a broadly thematic framework, and consideration of the relationship between global awareness and multicultural understanding outcomes.

**Assessment methodology and process** includes drawing on earlier Shoreline assessment projects, development of “communities of judgement” or faculty work groups, use of “thick description” and “think alouds” for deeper insight into student learning, development of quantitative instruments, long-term application in longitudinal studies, college-wide discussion of assessment methods, initial inquiry into ways that extra-curricular learning might be assessed, and benefiting from the experience and insight of faculty who assess multicultural understanding.

**Changes to administrative procedures** include changes to the MCO revision process, the possibility of a temporary dual system of outcomes, linking assessment to the MCO approval process, guidance about the proper application of performance standards to MCOs, and revisions to the online MCO software.

### ***A Note on Terminology***

In this report I have tried to use the term “outcome” to refer to the general statement of what we mean by global awareness. I have used “performance standard” to refer to the list of six specific tasks that students perform to demonstrate this awareness (Shoreline Community College 127; see Appendix B for the current global awareness outcome and performance standards). However, my usage may be inconsistent in places—at times I may use the term “outcomes” where a strict usage would call for “performance standards.” This is my error, but it does reflect a wider terminological uncertainty.

### ***Introduction***

In Winter 2012 I was asked to develop a comprehensive list of courses identified in their MCOs as meeting one or more of the six global awareness general education performance standards (the specific competencies or actions listed below the outcome). From this list I selected, with input from Bob Francis (co-chair of the Campus Internationalization Leadership Team and Dean of Social Sciences), a subset of representative courses across campus that were thought to be especially effective in their approach to assessment. I was asked to meet with teachers of these courses, and with other interested faculty, to discuss how they incorporate and assess global awareness. The goal was to develop an inventory of assessment practices that might serve as models for other faculty who wish to infuse global awareness more deeply into their own courses. This work was part of the larger task outlined in the position announcement for the Global Awareness Outcomes Assessor: to “develop, implement, and analyze results of global awareness assessments.”

In Spring I met individually with eighteen different faculty members to discuss their approach to global awareness. These faculty members represented approximately fourteen different disciplines (see Appendix A: List of Faculty Interviewed). We discussed definitions, assessment methods used, ways of analyzing and interpreting assessment results, use of rubrics, and related matters.

What emerged from these conversations, and from a review of relevant literature on the assessment of global awareness, is the breadth and depth of already existing practices at Shoreline. Faculty are incorporating global awareness into their curricula in a variety of thoughtful and creative ways and assessing student learning using an impressive array of both traditional and innovative methods. At the same time, the results of this review accord with the observation that assessment is best conceived as emerging out of existing disciplinary practices (see, for example, Harris and Sansom 14-15; see also Olson, Green, and Hill 41-43). The implication is that the ability to adapt specific assessment methods from one discipline to work in another may be limited. Instead, a core set of broad principles can be identified that cross disciplinary boundaries, which can form the basis for a campus-wide conversation about assessment and global awareness.

In this report I discuss those broad principles, drawing on specific examples from my conversations with faculty, while also making recommendations for future assessment work and for the evolution of our global awareness outcome.

### ***Results of the Interviews: Principles and Methods***

I interviewed eighteen faculty members teaching courses whose MCOs indicated substantial global content. We discussed definitions of global awareness, assessment methods and tools, and the interpretation of assessment results. Disciplines represented included American Indian Studies, Biology, Communications, Economics, Education, English, English as a Second Language, Geography, Geology, History, International Studies, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology.

Speaking broadly, it seems fair to say that most of the assessment tools described by these faculty are both too general and too specific to serve as useful models for faculty in other disciplines. They are too general because they are, to a very large extent, simply the traditional assessment methods that instructors have long used to get at what students know: essays, tests, discussions, group projects, presentations, and the like. They are too specific because they are designed to discover what students know, understand, or can do within the context of a particular discipline. A test in biology that probes student knowledge of the global pathways of invasive species has little utility for a music instructor seeking to widen the scope of his or her class to include African music.

That said, certain principles or ways of thinking about assessment and global awareness do seem to crop up consistently in conversation with faculty who are deeply immersed in the teaching of global issues. They are not universal, and the relative importance assigned to each varies from instructor to instructor. But they are common enough to justify identification here. Also, while there are few specific assessment tools that easily cross disciplinary boundaries, there are some broad assessment methods or approaches associated with these themes that can be applied in different fields. I spotted four such themes:

1. basic factual knowledge,
2. contextual understanding,
3. the ability to shift perspective, and
4. global awareness as a developmental process.

I have described some representative approaches under each of these four broad headings. I have tried as well to indicate, at the end of each section, the type of tool or approach that instructors have found most appropriate. (Because awareness of context and ability to shift perspective are so closely related, I have combined the summaries for these two under the second heading.)

Besides these themes, a key understanding about the meaning of assessment emerges from these discussions. More and more in talking with colleagues I came to see that “assessment” means both the tool and the *way of looking at the results* of that tool. The tools are mostly pretty traditional, or at least familiar; where the real work of assessment happens is in the instructor’s use of that tool, and particularly in his or her reading of the results. For instance, Betty Peace-Gladstone, in response to a request that she “operationalize” her reading of student work, began by saying that the awareness she’s looking for is the result of a developmental process, so she looks for evidence of *struggle*, because struggle means they are growing. Comparable comments from many faculty reinforce the notion that assessment must be embedded in a matrix of “tacit knowledge”—the often unarticulated but deeply informing understanding that derives from years

of practice, embodied in the insight and judgment of the professional practitioner (Harris and Sansom 8, 12). It also highlights the importance of assessment embedded in “communities of judgement” (Harris and Sansom 19; see below, “Recommendations”).

### Basic Knowledge

That students require basic factual knowledge of, say, geography or geological processes may seem obvious or uncontroversial, but it bears repeating in this context for at least two reasons. First, many students are distressingly under-prepared in this respect. Teachers cannot afford to overlook the basics, as they are foundational for any further, higher-order learning we hope to promote. Second, much of the discourse of global awareness emphasizes precisely those higher-order cognitive skills, such as the ability to understand the importance of context in shaping events, or the ability to shift perspective when interpreting the significance of human behavior. It is important when emphasizing those higher-order skills not to lose sight of the factual foundation on which they rest.

Different faculty have different ways of promoting and assessing student learning at the base of Bloom’s taxonomy; predictably, they vary according to discipline and the specific focus of the knowledge being assessed. Most faculty, however, draw from the traditional tool box of quizzes, tests, essays, presentations, and discussions. Whether they are focused exclusively on the task of remembering basic information, or emphasize using that knowledge in the analysis of complex phenomena, most faculty were clear on its importance.

In Chip Dodd’s Geography classes, there is a fairly intensive assessment regime, including almost daily graded assessment activities of some kind, whether quizzes, problem-solving exercises, written notes, or other forms. As Chip puts it, they’re checking in all the time to see what they know and how they can use it. Much of this covers knowledge that is basic but essential, such as place name knowledge.

Since 2004 Chip has been collecting data on a pre- and post-class place name assessment, separate from grading. His results seem to show a significant increase in student knowledge, with an order-of-magnitude increase in number of students achieving a relatively high score (18 out of 20) on the post-class assessment.

This example highlights three important practices that can be applied in a variety of contexts:

1. assessment can simultaneously be used to reinforce knowledge (formative assessment as distinct from summative assessment);
2. ongoing, intensive, comprehensive assessment is key to cementing knowledge; and
3. successful assessment includes analysis and use of results to evaluate instructional effectiveness.

### Contextual Understanding

Contextual understanding is a nearly universal theme defining global awareness among the faculty I interviewed. One way or another, whether teaching biology or English, history or geology, instructors emphasized repeatedly that students need to see how phenomena are never isolated; salient events or behaviors are always the product of larger systems, forces, or

interactions. Global awareness is, to a very large extent, the awareness that those larger systems cross national boundaries but are inflected by culturally specific perspectives.

In teaching American history, for example, Amy Kinsel points out that it has always existed in a global context of exploration, colonialism, slavery, and so on. Colonial conflicts were necessarily global, involving, for instance, interactions among New England Puritans, French Catholics, and Native Americans, and taking place in the context of a global war for territory. Using essays as a primary assessment tool, she looks for evidence that students have grasped the significance of these larger contexts in shaping the particular events under examination.

Emma Agosta, similarly, points out that no large scale geological phenomenon can be understood without global awareness and knowledge. Some cannot be illustrated with examples from the US, but require drawing on a global range of examples. Her instruction, therefore, necessarily involves basic geographical knowledge as well as the context of regional or global systems. Assessment tools are primarily tests, using mostly short answer (for midterms) and essays (for final), as well as matching or fill-in (using a chart to show classifications, for example). When she reads exams she is looking for evidence of knowledge of the world and global and regional systems, and the ability to understand specific events or phenomena in relation to that larger context.

For Milford Muskett, in courses on environmental justice or indigenous cultures, the discussion must be comparative. Even the definition of “indigenous” changes depending on context. He is assessing students’ ability to make comparisons between situations and groups—for example, how does a given environmental issue play out similarly and/or differently in different places? He spends time on context in the US, then expands the framework. He’s looking for students’ ability to see differences and what causes them. Assessments include discussions, student presentations, and short papers on case studies.

Judy Penn’s students in Epidemics and Culture (BIOL 150) “create a graph to illustrate the effect of some aspect of culture on an epidemic (or vice versa). In addition to the graph, the students ... write the hypothesis that prompted the graph, and write a one-paragraph summary of the meaning of the graph.” Another assignment requires them to participate in an in-depth discussion of AIDS in a global context by contributing “one post that contains some information about AIDS in other countries, gained from the readings or videos.” A third calls for examination of a particular individual active in public health in another part of the world, including cultural barriers to achieving public health goals. All three require contextual understanding.

In Matt Loper’s environmental science classes, context is both physical and social. On the most basic level, as he points out, pollution does not respect national boundaries; the United States is not a closed system, and in his assessments he seeks evidence that students see it as part of a much larger, more complex system. When it comes to issues like environmental damage, context is essential for understanding whether the problem is more a matter of overconsumption, as in developed countries, or population pressures, as may be more likely in developing countries. Assessment tools include essay questions on exams, group discussions with set of questions to answer, homework providing definitions or discussing pros and cons of potential solutions, and

research papers looking more deeply at solutions to specific problems. All of these require understanding of the context to make sense of the specific issue being explored.

### The Ability to Shift Perspective

Matt's classes also illustrate how closely related to the understanding of context is the ability to shift perspectives. As he points out, priorities are different for people in agricultural economies than they are for those in industrial economies. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to environmental problems, and all solutions require the ability to see the problem from the perspective of those affected. Students must understand the priorities of someone in another country. Population growth, for example, can't be solved simply by imposing or assuming the use of birth control, because farming families need either children or government support for economic reasons. During discussions or reading student writing, Matt is looking for this ability to take on a different perspective in analyzing a given problem.

For DuValle Daniel, awareness of audience is key to successful writing, and that awareness presumes the ability to adopt a perspective different from one's own. When it comes to global awareness, this means applying knowledge of the people, culture, and history of a country when writing about that country, and not imposing Western values or criteria on other cultures inappropriately. When reading student writing for global awareness, DuValle is looking for understanding of what leads people to make choices the student might object to—not simply denunciation. More broadly, student papers must show an understanding of other points of view, even when that other perspective is foreign or uncomfortable for the student. This also means awareness of context—for example, in discussing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, students must consider whether a particular culture or religion really opposes a certain value, or is that a misconception?

Shifting perspectives is key to successful communication, and it gets a great deal of emphasis in Brooke Zimmers' communication classes. One thing that emerges in her assessments, whether homework, exams, discussions, or other technique, is the ability to *describe* behavior rather than *evaluate* it. This already implies or requires the ability to step outside one's own perspective at least far enough to see that it *is* a perspective, and not simply the truth. A challenge in assessing certain skills is that the "correct" answer, say in the case of listening skills, is not a particular conclusory interpretation or even the application of the "correct" technique, but a suite of abilities to recognize styles, contexts, perspectives and how those *might* be influencing the scenario.

In her intercultural communication class Mimi Harvey uses a portfolio project with several pieces to assess students' global awareness, including identifying one's own cultural values and beliefs. Students must pick a culture they know little about, research it and discuss. They turn in pieces of the project along the way, get a grade, revise, and re-submit in the portfolio. They must also reflect on the experience of working in multicultural groups. One main objective of the course is understanding the construction of cultural identity and the historical, social, and political forces that go into it.

Both the awareness of context and the ability to shift perspective are most readily demonstrated in complex, rich communication, whether verbal (written or spoken), visual, or otherwise. Thus,

assessment methods here tend to be long-form essays (analytical, evaluative, persuasive), discussions, in-depth presentations, research projects, and the like. But see below, “Think Alouds,” for one method that can address some of the deficiencies of these tools.

### A Developmental Process

Some instructors described coming to global awareness as a developmental process, which is to say, a matter of emotional and psychological growth as much as of acquiring skills or knowledge. While overt expressions of this idea are not as widespread as the other themes discussed here, they do seem to inform much of the work that faculty do in promoting global awareness. All learning is necessarily a developmental process, understood broadly; what sets global awareness apart is that it, like multicultural competence, requires the ability to recognize deeply held values at the core of one’s identity as contingent, neither ultimate nor universal truths. This ability, and the corollary ability to recognize others with radically different values and perspectives as one’s equal, require emotional resilience and a mature sense of self, not simply intellectual ability. Successful instruction in global awareness, then, is usually guided, implicitly or explicitly, by an awareness of this added dimension.

Two instructors who made this idea an explicit focus of discussion were Bob Thompson and Betty Peace-Gladstone. When Bob leads his study abroad program in Jamaica, he wants students to come back with a sense of “cultural humility,” the realization that their norms are a choice among many, and that others who do not meet those norms are not defective or underdeveloped. One important technique is to make them uncomfortable—create cognitive dissonance. He puts people in a position to reflect, try to fit new information into the frame—but this may require a new frame. This process often shatters beliefs, and some feel very guilty. So he tries to give them tools to understand, through readings, discussions, journals, research projects, and other methods. In reading student journals Bob looks for reflection, evidence of discomfort, and using the readings to make sense of their experience. (Other assessment tools include a topical paper, a solutions paper, and formal field observation, which he reads for basic knowledge, understanding of concepts and principles, and application of those concepts to concrete situations.)

Betty Peace-Gladstone, as noted earlier, looks for evidence of students’ struggles as a sign that they are maturing in their ability to recognize other perspectives. Much of what she does involves looking at culture not as a collection of artifacts but deeply embedded value systems. To do this successfully, students must be aware of their *own* values and culture. Especially for White students, this raises the problem of how to generalize about culture while recognizing internal differences—the difference between valid generalizations and stereotypes. This work requires self-discovery and self-knowledge. Judgementalism is a reflection of our own value systems, so she has them work on statements on the pattern, “this is what I believe,” to promote greater self-awareness.

In assessing this work, besides evidence of struggle, Betty looks for strengths and gives feedback on those strengths. For example, she takes note of the ability to identify cultural values, or to see one’s own viewpoint *as* a value (i.e. as opposed to “the” truth), or to give feedback to others in the form of questions and dialogue rather than pronouncements. She is looking for evidence of communication strategies that reveal awareness of difference.

This kind of learning is often beyond the scope of traditional academic assessments, since it requires attention to aspects of student experience not captured by tests, persuasive essays, research, and so on. Assessment methods here tend to include student journals, discussions, reflective essays, self-evaluations, and similar tools designed to encourage student self-reflection.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on these interviews and a review of some of the relevant literature, I have compiled a set of recommendations grouped into four broad categories:

1. institutional support,
2. outcomes review,
3. assessment methodology and process, and
4. changes to administrative procedures.

I discuss each in detail below.

#### **Institutional Support**

Assessment is an intensive, complicated, lengthy process. It seeks to measure or describe a complex, often tenuous or inchoate psychological state, raising thorny epistemological questions, among a shifting population that is remarkably diverse in multiple dimensions, from the usual demographic markers of age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and so on, to much less easily defined qualities such as prior educational attainment or multiple intelligences. These challenges are multiplied by the complexity of the learning to be assessed. “Global awareness,” however defined, is undoubtedly one of the most challenging such tasks. The assessment of global awareness thus requires significant institutional support to be successful (Olson, Green, and Hill 40 – 42).

At Shoreline Community College, faculty are already doing valuable, creative work in assessment. That work can form the basis of an impressive college-wide assessment regime if it is nurtured and encouraged. One example of such work is Chip Dodd’s longitudinal study of student place-name knowledge, described earlier. Another is Pam Dusenberry’s work on general education outcomes with cohorts of faculty assessing student learning in multiple disciplines, part of a larger assessment initiative at Shoreline from 1999 – 2007 (for more on that project, see below, “Assessment Methodology and Process”).

At the same time, faculty initiatives often encounter institutional roadblocks or lack of interest that prevent them from flourishing. For example, Pam Dusenberry’s reports on assessing general education outcomes have not been followed up. Bob Thompson, who regularly leads a remarkably successful study abroad program in Jamaica, must re-apply for approval of that program every time he offers it, despite a lengthy track record. The Global Pathways project, which sought to identify courses that develop global awareness, has languished in part because of institutional obstacles to formal recognition.

Institutional support can come in many forms, depending on the type of work to be done. Release time, stipends, or awards can be used to encourage or make possible faculty work on assessment

and on infusing global awareness into the curriculum, whether research on global issues, the development of new or existing courses, development of departmental internationalization plans, or other projects. The administration can provide grant writing support, for example in writing Faculty Learning Community grants, to faculty seeking outside sources of funding for assessment projects. Besides the indispensable financial support, administrators can make time in regularly scheduled meetings to discuss assessment, global awareness, and related issues.

Administrative follow-through on work already done is also crucial. Administrators can reward initiative, publicize results of prior work on campus and off, promote use of such work by others, and encourage further development by the initiators. There is already a significant body of work on assessment at Shoreline, including assessment of general education outcomes and, specifically, of global awareness, compiled in previous years, that is still relevant and useful. Making use of this work will avoid re-inventing the wheel, prevent discouragement and cynicism among faculty, and promote the development of a genuinely useful assessment regime. To quote a prescient participant in an assessment project from ten years ago, “if the ‘greater college’ conveniently ‘forgets’ the work of this project and/or doesn’t want to do the hard work of taking the suggestions seriously, this project will benefit few other than the participants and those who take the time to look at the project books” (Shoreline Community College 123).

Another key is to streamline institutional procedures to remove needless obstacles to faculty initiatives. Although it is beyond the scope of this report to address details here, I would mention in passing the anecdotal accounts I have heard from more than one instructor about difficulties in organizing off campus student activities, including study abroad programs.

### Outcomes Review

Writers on assessment consistently point out that the outcomes to be assessed must be carefully developed and subsequently revised in light of what earlier assessments reveal. They also emphasize that developing outcomes should take in as many of the affected participants as possible (see, e.g., Olson, Green, and Hill 13 – 29, and references cited there). In its April, 2012, report to PSET, Shoreline’s Campus Internationalization Leadership Team (CILT) wrote, “In order to internationalize the campus it is important that we establish a common language as much as is practical” (1). Clearly, the outcome itself is central to such a common language.

The six performance standards that define the global awareness outcome at Shoreline were developed several years ago by a relatively small group of faculty and have not been revisited since. Therefore, one important step that the college can take is to revise them, with input from the wider campus community. As writers on assessment have noted, and as a number of recent experiences at Shoreline have illustrated (I am thinking of recent efforts by divisions to articulate outcomes and the discussions about the multicultural understanding outcome), the conversation is as important as the final result, if not more so, in promoting awareness of and reflection on student learning.

This conversation can and should take place in cross-disciplinary contexts as well as within individual divisions and programs. There are advantages to letting the college-wide outcomes emerge inductively from those specific to the disciplines, and, conversely, to deciding first on a

broad set of goals and then articulating their program-specific manifestations. My inclination is to work from both directions simultaneously, but identifying broad themes at the outset.

There are, however, significant obstacles to such an endeavor. As was noted ten years ago during another assessment review project, revising general education outcomes “is nearly impossible because changing them now would mean revising hundreds of Master Course Outlines and seeing each one individually through the course change process. However, NOT making changes to the outcomes means they stay less usable. It would be useful to develop new systems by which the Gen Ed outcomes could become more fluid and flexible” (Shoreline Community College 13). See below, “Changes to Administrative Procedures,” for suggestions on how to address this problem.

#### Frameworks for Outcomes

Olson, Green, and Hill identify (29 – 31) three broad “frameworks” for global awareness outcomes, which they describe as a “general list,” a “learning domain” framework, and a “thematic” framework. The general list is “a menu without any particular categorization.” It “lends itself to engaging the campus community or members of specific committees in a process of further refinement and prioritizing” (29). The general list approach makes it easier for various groups “to take ownership of the learning outcomes and their application,” although it also risks seeming “too general or not fully coherent or developed,” and “people may question the feasibility of using and assessing for all of them” (30). These potential problems can be addressed “by working with departments to tailor these lists to their programs and by offering workshops and stipends for faculty to work on integrating [them] into their courses and assessing for them” (30). The general list framework seems to describe Shoreline’s current global awareness outcome and performance standards.

The second approach, the “learning domain” framework, organizes outcomes according to the “broad learning domains of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.” “The advantage of this approach is that it aligns the learning outcomes with commonly used categories of assessment” (30). For example, Portland State University groups its international student learning goals under these three broad headings, with lists of three to four specific items under each. Under “knowledge,” for instance, one goal is to “understand prevailing world conditions, developments, and trends associated with such world issues as world population growth, economic conditions, international conflict, human rights, and the like.” Under “attitudes,” one goal is to “have moved beyond ethnocentrism to a position approaching empathy; have developed the ability to see others as they see themselves, given their conditions and values.” Under skills, one goal is to “use maps and other geographic representations to acquire, process, and report information” (Olson, Green, and Hill 98).

Another domain-based approach is outlined in Boix Mansilla and Jackson, who list (11) four global competencies:

1. Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment, framing significant problems and conducting well-crafted and age-appropriate research.
2. Recognize perspectives, others’ and their own, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.

3. Communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.
4. Take action to improve conditions, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively.

The disadvantage with the learning domain framework is that there is considerable overlap or semantic confusion among domains, leading to a potential lack of clarity about how to categorize desired outcomes (Olson, Green, and Hill 30 – 31).

It is worth noting that the principles identified in the interviews with Shoreline faculty correspond quite closely to these three broad domains: basic knowledge and contextual understanding can be grouped under “knowledge,” ability to shift perspective under “skills,” and the developmental process under “attitudes.” It is not an exact fit—the semantic overlap is an issue here too—but the similarity is unmistakable.

The third, “thematic” framework groups outcomes according to specific themes, such as CSU-Stanislaus’s “multiple perspectives, interdependence, social justice, and sustainability” (Olson, Green, and Hill 31). The strength of such an approach is that it “encourages explicit alignment of the global learning outcomes with the language of the institution’s vision, mission, and curriculum” (31). One drawback is that the goals tend to be very broad; one solution is to develop “a descriptive rubric with specific performance indicators to indicate what students could be expected to achieve at different levels for each outcome” (31).

To reiterate, development of successful outcomes (including their ongoing use for improving instruction) requires participation by as wide a segment of the community as is feasible. So which of these approaches is best for Shoreline must be determined by the whole college. That said, my own feeling is that the school would do best to combine the learning domain framework and the thematic framework, though with an emphasis on the thematic. Kennesaw State University combines these frameworks on the grounds that doing so connects to the institution’s mission, connects the outcomes to domains familiar in assessment theory, and gives faculty maximum flexibility in their application (Olson, Green, and Hill 31).

But whereas Kennesaw links each theme with a particular learning domain (e.g. the theme of “Global Perspectives” is identified with the domain of knowledge), I would recommend that we first identify themes, then identify learning goals in each domain for each theme. Thus, if sustainability were a theme, the goals would identify knowledge needed to understand sustainability on a global scale, the skills to analyze it or communicate effectively about it, and the attitudes that facilitate successful approaches.

#### Overlap with Multicultural Understanding

However we organize the outcome, there will be considerable overlap with multicultural understanding. The emphasis on cross-cultural communication, contextual understanding, perspective-taking, and learning as engaging a maturational process, particularly with regard to matters of empathy and self-confidence when negotiating difference—all are remarkably similar, if not identical, between the two areas. What is more, the emphasis in the multicultural understanding outcome on power and privilege can serve as a model for our effort to sharpen the focus of the global awareness outcome with respect to matters of equity and social justice.

At the same time, the distinctive qualities of each must be acknowledged. In particular, the overlap should not obscure the importance of multicultural understanding within the context of the US. This is an area that is closer to home for most students, faculty, staff, and administrators, and can entail considerable self-criticism. It is all too tempting to ignore the challenges that multicultural understanding poses specifically to domestic institutions and behaviors, in favor of the exotic, the distant, the less threatening, all of which global awareness could be seen to offer. Conversely, the emphasis on issues specific to the US could encourage an all too familiar parochialism; global awareness is a necessary complement to the domestic focus of the multicultural understanding outcome.

In short, while the two outcomes address different dimensions of the same phenomena, and could be said to institutionalize an arbitrary division between the domestic and the international, that division has real consequences for student learning. It is no more arbitrary than that between, say, sociology and anthropology—that is, between any two closely related disciplines which nevertheless find value in maintaining their distinct perspectives.

### Assessment Methodology and Process

“Perhaps the best advice anyone undertaking a new assessment activity can receive—and the advice that is so rarely taken—is to use existing data before deciding to collect new forms of assessment evidence” (Swing xx). One way we might apply this advice is to look at numbers of students as a percentage of FTEs who are taking courses that include one or more of the global awareness performance standards in their MCOs, on the assumption that such courses do, in fact, lead to greater global awareness. While it would be unwise to rest on that assumption, the interviews with faculty described above suggest that it is not completely unfounded. We might also examine those students’ GPAs, both in those courses and overall, compared to the general student population.

A substantial body of assessment information was developed from 1999 – 2007, when the college funded a series of reviews in a variety of disciplines and general education outcomes. Assignments, rubrics, student work, and recommendations for further work were compiled in annual reports that are available on the college website. The 2001 – 2002 report included a focus on global awareness, with sample assignments and discussion of performance standards.

That said, we can certainly use more data related to student achievement of the global awareness outcome. Indeed, much of the work in the earlier reports describes assessment instruments and instructors’ learning about assessment and outcomes, rather than describing student learning directly. (Raw data about student learning is provided in some of the supplemental evidence included in some reports, but there is relatively little analysis.)

I have listed below some of the ways that I believe will be most useful to collect and analyze such data. The scope of such a project can be as wide as the college itself. As a practical matter, however, it makes sense to start with those courses that include the global awareness outcome, and expand from there. Although the transfer program seems to offer the most material for analysis, there are certainly areas within the prof-tech program, such as nursing, where global awareness seems to be quite relevant, to judge from the MCOs.

### Communities of Judgement

Harris and Sansom describe an approach to assessment that taps into the deep, rich, but often incompletely articulated “tacit knowledge” of professional practitioners with years or decades of experience. They advocate forming “communities of judgment” to “reflect on the interaction of their discipline’s content and structure with relevant learning and assessment theory and praxis” (17). They see this approach as a useful corrective to the dangers associated with over-emphasis on quantitative data and the prioritizing of tools and methods over the learning they are supposed to describe. These communities of judgement, grounded in disciplinary practice but informed by assessment theory and quantitative data, can, through intensive review, arrive at robust insights about student learning and the instructional practices that promote it. They point out that such work requires “multiple assessments of substantial amounts of student work” (23).

This is quite similar in spirit to the assessment projects undertaken at Shoreline from 1999 – 2007, except that the Shoreline projects were interdisciplinary. Each project, summarized in a series of annual reports, brought together a small group of faculty to reflect critically on the relevant outcomes, assignments designed to elicit student knowledge and skills, and rubrics for assessing that knowledge. Typically, participants reported that the projects increased the effectiveness of their assignments and improved their understanding of the outcomes their courses were intended to lead to. The college could do worse than to continue and build on this work.

More generally, bringing together faculty to discuss the meaning and assessment of global awareness can produce rich qualitative and quantitative data about student learning. That data can then be used for longer term longitudinal analysis and other complex, institution-wide assessments, while also promoting faculty understanding of the outcome and performance standards and encouraging ongoing improvement of instructional practices.

The “communities of judgement” approach is based on the assumption that, while it is subject to improvement, assessment by the instructor of individual students in specific classes provides reliable and useful information about student learning. This assumption should be uncontroversial, but such information can and should be supplemented by other methods.

### Thick Description

In *Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World*, Veronica Boix Mansilla and Anthony Jackson use examples of student work to illustrate principles of global competence. These examples are described in great detail, together with the assignments and instructional practices that gave rise to them. The descriptions are linked, using key terms, to the global competence outcomes, showing how the student achieved one or more of the outcomes with detailed evidence drawn directly from the student’s work. This sort of evidence-based “thick description” (Geertz 6), seems like an especially fruitful next step from the communities of judgement approach already begun at Shoreline. Faculty work groups can move from trying out rubrics to collecting, describing, and analyzing examples of student learning for evidence of global awareness as defined by the outcome and the associated performance standards. These work groups can be organized along the same lines as the earlier ones, using a request for proposals and stipends to encourage faculty participation, focusing on particular outcomes, performance standards, or disciplinary groupings.

One chief advantage of this approach is that it avoids the problems of reductionism and reifying the technique that plague quantitative methods and even some uses of rubrics. For example, Olson, Green, and Hill write, “portfolios must be scored by using rubrics, and the relevant learning processes or outcomes must be articulated in measurable terms” (34). But this is true only if knowledge is presumed to be always and only numerical. Thick description, however, articulates knowledge in other terms. Rather than attempting to measure, say, “tolerance of ambiguity” (one of the international learning goals at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis [Olson, Green, and Hill 97]), or count the number of students who “meet or exceed” some notional threshold for such tolerance (a practice, one is tempted to suggest, that itself reveals a low tolerance for ambiguity), it permits researchers simply to examine student work in context and discern, guided by experience, expressions of such tolerance unique to each individual.

One could argue that what I am calling “thick description” falls into the category of assessment types known as “criterion-referenced” assessment (Swing xvi), because it measures student learning against an independent definition of what students should know or be able to do. However, unlike the usual examples given of criterion-referenced assessment, the approach I am describing does not use a numerical “cut score” as a criterion. Instead, it uses a much more complex and organic notion of competence as expressed in the critical judgement of reflective (Harris and Sansom 17), professional practitioners. In doing so it helps avoid what Swing describes (xvi) as the major drawback of criterion-referenced methods, namely, that “they provide very limited information, if any at all, to support change or confirm which practices contributed to the outcomes.” If the assessment is expanded to include comparisons with student work produced at the outset of a course, for example, it takes on features of the “value-added” or “input-environment-outcome” model, described by some as the “gold standard” of assessment (Swing xvi).

This careful, critical examination of student work seems like one of the most useful for developing a rich body of evidence. It does have its drawbacks, however. Perhaps the biggest, aside from the amount of time and work involved, is the lack of clearly defined, objective measures. The virtue of thick description, its sensitivity to nuance, context, complexity, and meaning—precisely the things that objective, quantitative instruments tend to rule out—also makes it vulnerable to unconscious biases, and especially the tendency to find confirmation of one’s hypotheses. This danger is of course all the greater when one’s hypothesis offers an implicit affirmation of one’s professional judgement.

#### “Think Alouds”

An even more labor-intensive, but also potentially even richer source of insight into student learning, is the “think aloud” protocol described by Calder and Carlson, which combines a kind of thick description with quantitative analysis. Focusing on the discrepancy between student performance on traditional measures (particularly essays and exams) and what students say they have learned, Calder and Carlson describe a way to elicit student insight independent of the ability to express that insight in writing.

Think alouds are a research tool originally developed by cognitive psychologists for the purpose of studying how people solve problems. The basic idea behind a

think aloud is that if a subject can be trained to verbalize his/her thoughts while completing a defined task, then the introspections can be recorded and analyzed by researchers to determine what cognitive processes were employed to deal with the problem. In fields such as reading comprehension, composition, mathematics, chemistry, and history, think alouds have been used to identify what constitutes “expert knowledge” as compared to the thinking processes of non experts. ... [T]hink alouds offer a promising method of uncovering what conventional assessment methods often miss: hidden levels of student insight and/or misunderstanding (35).

In the Calder and Carlson study, a small cross-section of students were asked to read a historical essay while verbalizing their thinking; the results were then analyzed, categorized, and rated both by the researchers and an outside consultant (to avoid bias). The process was performed once at the beginning of the course and once at the end. The authors identified fifteen categories of thinking, including six types of historical thinking that the course was designed to teach, and rated them on a scale from novice to expert. “Overall, the think alouds revealed cognitive enhancements that were not as dramatic as claimed in student self-reports, but much greater than indicated by using comparisons of early and late papers” (36). The authors also report that

[u]nder-performing students struggled less with historical thinking than with reading itself. Moreover, in the second set of think alouds, we noted that some of the best insights and meaning making came from students who, in the grade book, were steady ‘C’ performers. For them, deep understandings seemed to evaporate when they tried to wrestle their thoughts to paper. This told us that we had work to do if we wanted to distinguish between assessing *understanding* and assessing *students’ ability to communicate their understanding*. The real roadblocks to learning historical thinking, we discovered, are poor reading comprehension and prose writing. (37, emphasis in original).

The implications for assessing global awareness are significant, since global awareness invokes a similarly complex suite of cognitive skills that has traditionally been evaluated using writing in some form. The usefulness of this method for revising instructional methods and focus seems equally clear.

#### Quantitative Approaches

Think alouds, as noted, help bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative analysis. Another way to address the limitations of “thick description,” at least in part, would be through a second line of analysis of the data from the faculty work groups. Rather than describing individual student work in detail, researchers could collect large samples of student scores on rubrics designed to elicit global awareness. While the original data would still be subject to some of the same potential biases, abstracting away from individual cases, looking at a large data set drawn from a large number of practitioners, and quantifying results on a common scale would contribute to a somewhat more objective picture.

Because global awareness is complex, multidisciplinary, and a relatively new target of assessment, quantitative instruments are less common and less well developed than in some fields. It is difficult to imagine, for example, an equivalent to a COMPASS test in global

awareness. However, it might be possible to develop some for specific, targeted aspects of the outcome, such as place name knowledge, or to deploy those already developed elsewhere. The college might want to consider researching some such tools to be administered outside of individual classes, as a way to capture student learning across the curriculum and/or over time. This approach does present a number of logistical difficulties, however, including making use of faculty time to research or develop the instrument, recruiting a statistically significant cohort to test, and administering the test repeatedly to procure the amount of data needed for meaningful analysis.

#### Extension and Use

All of these approaches—faculty work groups, thick description, quantification of rubric-based assessments, and quantitative tests—can form the basis of longitudinal studies. They can also be crafted to provide information about student abilities upon entering the college or a particular course, about the specific instructional practices that are likely to influence student learning, and about student abilities when leaving the course or the college. Doing so would constitute a form of value-added assessment which, as noted, is considered by many to be the “gold standard.” It would also generate a substantial body of data that could inform revisions to or reinforcement of existing pedagogy.

#### College-Wide Discussions

As much as any given assessment method, engaging faculty in conversations about assessment—including, importantly, critical or skeptical perspectives (see Olson, Green, and Hill 26 – 27)—will go a long way toward improving assessment and student learning. These conversations can be discipline-based or interdisciplinary; they can take place at meetings of existing committees or in specially constituted work groups; they can be tasked with achieving specific results or allowed to range freely without expectations. Simply having the conversation will encourage faculty to reflect critically on their own practice and learn from others. The key, again, is institutional support: time and funds must be made available, or what could be a rewarding, enriching experience for all will risk being seen as yet another thankless task imposed on an already over-burdened group.

#### Global Awareness Outside the Bounds

In my review of MCOs that list one or more global awareness performance standards, I found many where global awareness was not a major focus of the course, but it was touched on at certain points. I will use one of my own literature classes as an example. Typically in my Introduction to Literature course I include at least one text from a country other than the United States. Discussion of this text almost always involves some material on the social, cultural, political, historical, economic, and/or linguistic context. Thus, some amount of information about, say “the impact of global interdependence on local cultures” or “the origin of events that have led to contemporary global conflict, competition, and cooperation” (two of the performance standards for the global awareness outcome) are included. However, this information is not a major focus of the class and is assessed only indirectly, by looking at students’ ability to read and interpret the text successfully. Furthermore, this choice to include world literature, while encouraged, is not absolutely mandated in the Master Course Outline. To try directly to assess student learning of these things would be a distraction from the main learning objectives.

Analogous or related situations arise in other classes. In Geology, for example, where some kinds of global awareness (geographical knowledge, for example) are absolutely integral to the course, assessment is nevertheless focused elsewhere, on the technical knowledge and understanding of geologic processes. While global awareness is much more central to such a class than to introductory literature, something of the same problem arises: how to extract that dimension in an assessment tool designed to focus on another kind of knowledge. Emma Agosta agreed that it would be disruptive to use a tool designed specifically for global awareness.

Other courses take global awareness as a major focus but do so outside or “below,” so to speak, the level of the Master Course Outline, where the instructor has considerable discretion in choosing specific topics. For example, Bonnie Frunz frequently teaches English 102 with the theme of “Kids around the world,” in which global awareness is plainly one dimension of student learning. There have been many ESL classes that make international students’ life experience central and produce materials for the campus (the photo exhibit in the PUB hallway outside the Quiet Dining Room, Kathy Budway’s student-centered movies about international students and multicultural understanding). Mimi Harvey and Lauren Wilson’s recent collaboration combining ESL and Communications courses, or Mimi’s work having domestic and international students talk to each other in Intercultural Communication are other examples.

Then there are the extra-curricular opportunities for student learning: the Global Affairs Center, student clubs, One Campus One Theme, campus speakers, and so on. Even student interactions outside of all formal structures, such as conversations after class, can contribute to global awareness. This also relates to the second “pillar” of campus internationalization identified by CILT: “integration of domestic and international student communities through meaningful opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experiences.” Some of the activities described above, such as Kathy Budway’s films made with her ESL students, directly engage this aspect of student learning. A comprehensive assessment project would ideally attempt to capture and build on such work.

All of these cases—my sense is that there are many across campus—pose the same problem: how do we capture this kind of student learning? More important, how do we encourage it? How best to nurture, promote, develop such experiences—or just leave them alone? As with the quantitative measures, however, this would require a significant investment of institutional resources to develop an appropriate array of tools, find and recruit a sufficient number of students, use the tools, and analyze the data. That said, I believe it is worth the time at least to begin an inquiry into this dimension of assessment.

#### Learning from Multicultural Understanding

Most traditional assessment methods focus on knowledge and intellectual skills. As noted, however, global awareness, like multicultural understanding, typically requires a developmental process that involves other aspects of the person, in particular emotional maturity and relational wisdom that have traditionally been outside the bounds of the academy. Thus, when thinking about the kinds of assessment needed to reliably gauge student learning, we can and should learn from multicultural understanding practitioners, who have already begun to develop tools for this aspect of assessment, both formative and summative. From in-class activities that evoke and invite reflection on strongly held beliefs, to portfolios that document the student’s changing

perspective over time, there is already a wealth of materials that can be adopted for and adapted to the task of assessing global awareness.

The methods described above, in particular faculty work groups (“communities of judgement”), thick description and think alouds, readily allow for assessing this dimension of student learning.

Another way that we can and should learn from multicultural understanding is the recognition that in developing and assessing global awareness, as in every other dimension of our society, we are confronted with an unequal distribution of power and privilege. Bluntly stated, families that can afford to take their kids abroad, or even just to provide them with a globe, have an advantage over those who cannot. All the approaches to assessment described above, from thick description to quantitative longitudinal studies to campus conversations, can and should incorporate this understanding that there are unequal obstacles to the achievement of the global awareness learning outcome for certain populations. Assessment can be used to identify and address these obstacles, and the tools should be constructed with that intention.

### Changes to Administrative Procedure

As noted under “Outcomes Review,” one major obstacle to revising any general education outcome is the requirement that all the Master Course Outlines that include that outcome would have to go through a lengthy approval process. However, there may be ways to overcome this obstacle through innovative adjustments to institutional procedures. For example, the college could implement a temporary dual system of outcomes: courses could use either the old or new outcome, at least for some period of time, until faculty had had time to revise existing MCOs.

It would also be worth exploring ways to more closely integrate assessment with institutional review. If the college were willing and able to fund faculty work groups (see “Assessment Methodology and Process,” above) the Curriculum Committee might delegate them to approve, provisionally at least, courses being modified to incorporate the new outcome. Safeguards for quality could be instituted, such as requirements that the work groups be interdisciplinary, have a minimum size or represent a minimum number of academic disciplines, and review evidence of rubrics or other mechanisms used to ensure fidelity to the new outcome.

Linking assessment to MCO approval would help make the latter less of a chore, by folding it into a process that engages faculty at the core of their work and professional identities. It could, conceivably, achieve greater compliance with less resentment, burnout, and cynicism than a mandate from on high that all MCOs must be revised by a certain due date. Here, again, though, institutional support is key, for example in stipends for faculty work groups. An assessor with release time could also usher courses through the approval process in collaboration with faculty from the relevant disciplines.

Another, simpler institutional change would be to provide guidance on applying outcomes and performance standards to MCOs. As things currently stand there is little formal explanation for when a given outcome might appropriately be included in a course outline. While some cases are clear—few English faculty would consider adding quantitative reasoning outcomes to literature classes—many are not so obvious. When is it appropriate to say that students completing a particular course will be able to “demonstrate awareness and knowledge of the economic forces

that have led to the interdependence of national economies and the imbalance of distribution of wealth”? How much awareness? How much knowledge? While a precise statement is probably neither realistic nor desirable, some guidance and—perhaps even more valuable—some discussion among faculty of these issues would be helpful. This issue is reflected in the list of MCOs identifying one or more of the global awareness performance standards: some merely touch on the topic, while others examine it in depth.

An even simpler change is to have a clearer statement of the outcomes and performance standards in the online MCO fields. This is a software design issue—but the problem of letting the software determine, or prevent, curricular decisions has been pointed out before as one that Shoreline struggles with.

### ***Conclusion***

There is already a lot of good assessment work being done at the level of individual courses and instructors. This work is a valuable resource for the college in developing an institutional approach to assessment that encourages faculty to continue and develop their work while opening new avenues for understanding and improving students’ global awareness.

***Appendix A: List of Faculty Interviewed***

Emma Agosta, Geology  
Kathy Budway, English as a Second Language  
Larry Clarke, Sociology  
DuValle Daniel, English  
Chip Dodd, Geography, International Studies  
Pam Dusenberry, English  
Larry Fuell, Political Science  
Mimi Harvey, Communications  
Amy Kinsel, History  
Diana Knauf, Psychology  
Matt Loper, Biology, Environmental Science  
Milford Muskett, Multicultural Studies, Native American Studies  
Tim Payne, Economics, International Studies  
Betty Peace-Gladstone, Education, Native American Studies  
Judy Penn, Biology  
Terry Taylor, History, International Studies  
Bob Thompson, Psychology  
Brooke Zimmers, Communications

***Appendix B: Global Awareness Outcome and Performance Standards***

Students will demonstrate understanding and awareness of issues related to, and consequences of, the growing global interdependence of diverse societies by integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines. Students will describe how social, cultural, political, and economic values and norms interact.

1. Recognize the value and significance of artistic and religious expressions in various world cultures.
2. Articulate the values and beliefs that influence humans in seeking identity and meaning within their culture.
3. Describe the impact of global interdependence on local cultures including those within the United States.
4. Identify the origin of events that have led to contemporary global conflict, competition, and cooperation.
5. Demonstrate awareness and knowledge of the economic forces that have led to the interdependence of national economies and the imbalance of distribution of wealth.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of global interdependence on the natural world.

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