

**Chabot College Critical Thinking FIG/Pilot Study: Spring 2009
May 2009 meetings about results: three sessions**

Attended Session I: Aldrian Estepa, Carolyn Arnold, Dennis Chowenhill,
Desmond Chun, and Kimberlee Hunter

Attended Session II: Scott Hildreth, Michelle Sherry, Lakhbir Singh,
Raphaella Ianniello, Carolyn Arnold

Attended Session III: Wayne Pitcher, Patti Keeling, Mark Hauck,
Jason Ames, Carolyn Arnold

Discussion highlights:

The Spring 2009 faculty participants in this pilot study/FIG included those who had been in the FIG for two semesters as well as those who had just joined in Spring 2009. All of the faculty were deeply engaged in trying out a variety of ways of assessing critical thinking in their classroom, all with the same rubrics. They brought a wealth of different experiences and insights to these discussions.

Some of the observations and realizations about the results echoed the Fall 2008 discussion – that the rubrics helped clarify how the instructor had been grading and thus made grading easier, that it was very gratifying to conduct assessments early and later in the semester to see how much difference in student learning your class made, that student motivation made a big difference in learning, and that while students can be moved from beginning to developing to competent levels of critical thinking, it is hard to move students from the competent to accomplished level. As in Fall 2008, it was noted that for some disciplines and assignments, the holistic rubric worked well, and for others, the detailed one worked better, so everyone appreciated having a choice. There was also the same universal satisfaction and enjoyment expressed about having the time to talk about critical thinking with colleagues from different disciplines.

In addition, new insights appeared. In a Speech class, giving the students the steps to walk through writing a critical thinking paper before a speech worked well, but then it was unclear if they learned or were just doing what they were told. An English instructor found that assigning a personal essay about their process of researching a paper made the students more self reflective of their research process, which made them more prepared to write the research paper afterward. Another Speech instructor found that the non-native speakers, who were 1/3 of the class, could learn the skills well, but the class in general did not include problem solvers and needed more preparation to have any movement in critical thinking. Another English instructor found that parts of the detailed rubric worked great for his specialized English papers. Another Speech instructor found that those who came in more prepared and worked harder did succeed more. The question remained: can you prepare students to become good critical thinkers, or do they need to come in already knowing how to think critically? There was a consensus that in order to really learn critical thinking, students had to get engaged, and learn the tools, data, and steps in the process [Ed. - or do the instructors need to do this?]

Overall recommendation:

The faculty in this group encouraged their colleagues to get involved in a FIG and conduct assessments together with their close colleagues and discuss it as well with cross- disciplinary colleagues.

Suggested next step for this FIG to assess critical thinking at Chabot

1. Look at courses across campus and identify where critical thinking is being taught in different levels of courses – beginning, medium, advanced. Measure/assess student progress in critical thinking in these different levels of courses and see if their progress in critical thinking reflects the level of the course.

Other research ideas for IR

2. Follow students who were in the sections of this FIG. Which students took one of these courses, and were there any who took more than one? Map of their progression and progress, and how the CT courses helped.

3. Develop a profile of entering students

What GE, Eng, and Math classes do they take in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, semester?
Which have critical thinking?

Sharing the insights/experiences from this FIG:

1. Division presentations: these are injections, with a captive audience, so not so good.

2. Flex Day presentations: only if there are choices of sessions.

Introduce the rubrics, share their benefits, and also provide flexibility in their use.

3. Web site: Create a Critical Thinking Web page for faculty to share best practices.

4. Cross-campus communication and conversations

Lunch-time Brown Bags - voluntary, rather than captive audience.

Need reflective time, among who wants to come, cross disciplinary
encourage them to see changes in a long semester

Two to three meetings – Sept/Oct/Nov, with food

Format: What is changing because of what you learned? (5 mins talk/then discuss)

Measuring changes – helps to see and know - Is it happening?