Summary:
World of Architecture I AR 267 and World of Architecture II AR 268
Assessment Report

Purpose: World of Architecture I (AR 267, Fall of 2008) and World Architecture II (AR 268, Spring of 2009) were co-taught by two architecture professors and two academic writing professors for the first time in 2008/2009. In all four AR 267 sections, 58 students completed the course; in all four AR 268 sections, 51 students completed the course. The co-teaching model was adopted with improving student writing in mind. Thus, the summary that follows encapsulates the assessment of the AR 267’s and AR 268’s organization and pedagogy, and effects on student writing.

Method: The assessment plan and this report are organized mostly by three documents:
- Pre- and Post-Essays for AR 267 and 268: Direct assessment meant to measure writing ability.
- Academic Writing Professors’ Closeout Reports: Indirect assessment meant to provide a holistic appraisal of how the co-teaching and curriculum worked.
- Student Surveys: Indirect assessment meant to provide students’ perspectives into how the co-teaching and curriculum worked.

Principal Findings

Pre- and Post-Essays
For AR 267 and AR 268, students were assigned take-home essays at the beginning and at the end of each semester. In each take-home essay, students were asked to define or explain a concept via a quote that was provided in the assignment handout. These essays were read and scored by three academic writing professors as a team; however, the goal was to have each essay read twice. Then, using the the six-point SAT II scale, hopefully the two professors scores on each essay agreed. “Agreement” is defined as two scores being identical or within one ordinal of each other. Hence, a score of “3” and “4” are in agreement and create a composite of “3.5” as a final score. In the event of a “split,” a third professor determines the final score. The following results were found:

- In the fall of 2008 (AR 267), when comparing pre-essay scores (average 3.03) to post-essay scores (average 2.94), no improvement was noted in their writing.

- In the spring of 2009 (AR 268), when comparing pre-essay scores (average 2.71) to post-essay scores (average 3.24), all four sections showed marginal improvement in the writing.

Ironically, the AR 267 pre-essay score was higher or better than the AR 268 pre-essay score; the same students enrolled in AR 267 as in AR 268. Although the average AR 268 post-essay score is about .5 higher than the average AR 268 pre-essay score, the increase still places scores at around “3.” Here’s a description of a “3” on the SAT II (see http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/about/sat/essay_scoring.html):

SCORE OF 3
An essay in this category demonstrates developing mastery, and is marked by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses: 1. develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position, 2. is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in...
coherence or progression of ideas, 3. displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice, 4. lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure, and 5. contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Because the same AR 267 students enrolled in AR 268, one possible explanation for overall results is that AR 267 prepared students for the improvements in the post-essay text in AR 268. Another possibility is that the essay prompts played a significant role in why students scored as they did. Another possibility is that how professors may have or may not have integrated the pre- and post-essay assignments into the course’s overall goals may explain scores.

Academic Writing Professors’ Closeout Reports
The closeout reports were written by Academic Writing Professors: Andy McCutcheon and Elizabeth von Schiff for AR 267 and Andy McCutcheon and Laurel Digging for AR 268. The reports focus on the courses’ management, including the preparation for each course prior to the semester’s start, and the weekly planning during the semester. Next are recommendations for co-teaching:

- Encourage dialogue and a collaborative effort among teachers.
- Plan the course in advance with a clear understanding for how the lecture and discussion sessions will be integrated into examinations and writing assignments.
- The course should be defined as a writing-intensive course in the course syllabus and course catalogue.
- Create the “discussion sessions” so that they revolve around specific writing issues.
- Articulate the sequence/relationship among writing assignments in order to make writing a more integral part of the courses.
- Clarify whose responsibility (and/or to what degree) is the grading of written assignments.

These recommendations suggest, too, that during AR 267 and 268, an improvement would have occurred if professors participated more in each other’s area of expertise: Architecture professors could have participated more in writing assignments, and Academic Writing professors could have participated more in the discussions of Architecture. A re-examination is needed for “lecture” as the dominate pedagogy on Monday/Tuesday and for the meaning of “discussion sessions” on Wednesday/Thursdays.

Student Surveys
On the final examination day for each course, students were given a survey to complete. Each survey included eight closed-ended questions that asked students to rate various components of the courses and two open-ended sections that asked students to provided comments about what they like best in the course and ways to improve the course. Below is an overview of the results:

AR 267
- 45.9% overall satisfaction with the course
- Over 50% of the students indicated that the reading assignments prepared them for lectures.
- Most students were satisfied with the professors.
- The most effective writing assignments were the Guidebook and the Getty Villa assignments.
- The least effective writing assignments were the Poster Assignments and the Pre-Essay Test.

AR 268
- 72% overall satisfaction with the course
- 69% of the students indicated that the reading assignments prepared them for lectures.
- 81% of the students were satisfied with the professors.
- The most effective writing assignment was the Research Assignment II.
• The least effective writing assignment was the Pre-Essay Test.

**Conclusion:** The analysis of the pre and post essay tests, a student survey, and closeout reports indicates that the co-taught AR 267 and AR 268 courses would benefit from articulating the desired pedagogical goals. Since these courses are foundational to the architecture major, it is vital that the purpose of the course be defined.