

To: Glenda Sehested
Bob Kiner
Assessment Committee

From: Dennis Larson

Date: June 3, 2005

re: report on SDOS/CAAP workshop

Brendra Murtha and I attended a workshop for private institutions in Pierre on May 24 on the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship (SDOS) and the CAAP test (Collegiate Assessment Academic Proficiency) published by ACT. Brendra was primarily interested in the SDOS requirements and implications for our students and I was interested in learning more about the CAAP test and its possible use in our assessment program. Here is what we learned.

SDOC and the CAPP test

If we recruit and wish to retain SDOS students, we will have to become a CAAP test site (a “participating school”) or partner with another private institution that is a participating institution. All the state publics are participating institutions (including USDSU) and will be administering the test twice a year. While it is possible for private college SDSO students to take the test at one of the publics, the number is limited to no more than five per testing. This limit means that to make the test available to 75-80 of our Augie SDOS students, we will need to become a participating institution or partner with one.

Because of South Dakota’s contract with ACT, there is a discount for the test. The annual participation fee (“site license”) is \$275 which covers both yearly test administrations. The test fee per person (all five objective modules, scoring and reporting) is \$15.10. The essay test is extra at \$11.50 including scoring and reporting. Our annual cost to administer the test would be roughly as follows:

annual participation fee	\$275.00
75 (est.) students @ \$15.10	<u>1125.00</u>
Total	\$1400.00

If we were to also use the essay test, the cost would be an additional \$862.50.

It is permissible for institutions to partner with other schools thus saving the participation fee for the other partners. In that event, one college would be the participating institution. ACT allows participating institutions to offer the test to whomever they choose (e.g., other private SDOS students). Test scores, however, are only reported to the participating institution who in turn would have to give the scores to their private partners for their respective students. It is likely that the Sioux Falls area privates would be interested in a cooperative partnership and presumably share in the administrative expenses thus modestly reducing the expense for the participating institution.

SDOS students are required to take and pass the CAPP test as a condition for renewal of their scholarship (and maintain a 3.0 GPA and take 15 graded credits/semester). They must take the

exam in the semester following completion of 48 credit hours (thus the necessity of offering the test twice a year) and have only one chance to pass. (According to Brenda, Augie already has one SDOS student who has reached 48 credit hours due to AP and other college credits. However, she won't have to take the test until 2006 as the state is not set up for testing yet.) The cut-off score is one *sd* below the national test average; not a very high standard. I expect that few Augie SDOS students would have trouble passing. That being said however, it is conceivable that some of our SDOS students may have some areas that are tested (the five CAPP objective test modules are writing skills, reading, math, science and critical thinking) that are weaknesses. If that is the case, it would be well to advise them to take the appropriate general education course(s) as preparation before taking the test. The public SDOS students are actually required to take the following courses before sitting for the CAPP test: composition (3 cr hrs), social science (3), humanities and fine arts (3), math (3) and natural science (6). One way to assess possible weak areas for our SDOS students would be to examine their ACT profiles. It might be advisable to include this information in a handout for our SDOS students and their Augustana advisors.

The CAPP test as an assessment tool

An increasing number of colleges are using the CAPP test in their assessment program, something that our Assessment Committee will no doubt consider. The critical question is how well the test suits our purposes. That is, does match and measure our learning outcomes The test includes five objective modules - writing skills, reading, math, science and critical thinking, and there is an optional essay test.

The University of Sioux Falls has used the test in the past but dropped it because it did not align well with their learning outcomes. Do we want to use the CAAP test as part of our assessment program? In our case, it is doubtful that we would use the reading module. While we have students who need remedial reading, most do not. And surely reading will not be identified as a learning outcome. The math module might not be very useful as our students are highly variable in their math skills. In addition, students may elect to not take a math course, may test out of or have a math course waived, or may take a higher level course to fulfill area 2.3. If we decide to assess math competencies, it might make more sense to use an embedded assessment tool that takes into consideration that students are usually placed in a math course based on their level of previous proficiency. The writing skills module (which tests usage/mechanics and rhetorical skills but not spelling, vocabulary or grammar) may not be what we want to use to measure our students' written communication skills. It is conceivable that we might be more interested in the essay test. However, it might be better for us to develop and use our own local writing assessment tool, perhaps something embedded in a course like the capstone course. (See my report on my conversation with Paul Moes.) This issue will need to be discussed with input from our English Department. For that reason, I have asked Janet Blank-Libra to meet with the Assessment Committee. A similar consideration applies to the science module that covers biology, physics, chemistry and physical science and includes three general emphases - data representation, research summaries and conflicting viewpoints. Our science departments will need to consider whether this module might serve our purposes in assessing the outcomes of area 3.2. Val Olness of the Assessment Committee should be able to provide an initial reaction. Of the five objective modules, the critical thinking module might be of most interest to us.

However, one drawback is the one CAAP module costs \$9.45 per student compared to \$15.10 for all five objective modules. Finally, there is the practical problem, particularly with the whole test, of when we would administer it and how do we get students to sit for the exam as each module takes 50 minutes.

There is one potential use of the CAAP test as part of our assessment program that is highly practical and sensible. All of our SDOS students will have to take the test as a requirement for renewing their scholarship as noted above. We could use the CAAP test results to assess the learning of these students, albeit hardly a representative group of our students. Furthermore, their CAPP test scores can be linked to their ACT scores which allows for determination of the improvements in the areas covered by the test. This “value-added measurement” is a very useful measure of what general education is accomplishing in these areas. ACT offers this linkage report service, unfortunately at a cost of \$300. We could do it in-house but we would not have the national norms for comparison.

cc: John Bart