

# IOWA

## College of Education

### February 2023: Spotlight on Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Spotlight is published twice each semester by the [Office of Assessment and Continuous Improvement \(/office-assessment-and-continuous-improvement\)](#) in the College of Education to highlight promising practices in assessment and continuous improvement. This edition of the Spotlight examines resources for anti-racist teaching and assessment, key findings from the Iowa Performance Excellence examination in the fall of 2022, and taking a systems perspective for improving research productivity.

#### College of Education Mission, Vision & Values



##### Mission Statement

To deliver a personal, affordable, and top-ranked education for students who want to collaborate with renowned faculty to solve problems and effect change in the field of education in our community, our country, and around the world.

##### Vision Statement

A world-class college of education: leading research, engaging our communities, and preparing education and mental health professionals for innovation and impact.

##### Values

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- **Collaboration and Engagement:** We work with individuals, schools, and communities with respect, caring, and compassion.
- **Commitment to Community:** We are committed to using evidence-based practices to improve the lives of individuals, the effectiveness of our schools, and the quality of life in our communities.
- **Continuous Improvement:** We are committed to using data to continuously improve.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** We embrace the differences of others by fostering a welcoming community accessible to all.
- **Equity:** We believe in the value of each person. Everyone deserves the opportunity to meet their full potential.
- **Excellence:** We pursue world-class outcomes in all we do.
- **Innovation:** We create and implement new practices, processes, and products that improve learning, performance, productivity, and efficiency
- **Integrity:** We approach our work with honesty and empathy and hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of professional behavior and ethics.

## In This Issue

- **Classroom Assessment**

[Resources for Anti-racist Teaching and Assessment \(/node/5996#classroom\)](/node/5996#classroom)

- **College Data**

[Key Findings from the Iowa Performance Excellence Examination: Fall 2022 \(/node/5996#data\)](/node/5996#data)

- **Promising Practice**

[Taking a Systems Perspective for Improving your Research Productivity \(/node/5996#practice\)](/node/5996#practice)

- **Future Opportunities** (</node/5996#future>)

## Contributors

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To share a promising practice in a future edition of the Spotlight you are using in your classroom, in your program, or in your department, please contact [jeremy-penn@uiowa.edu](mailto:jeremy-penn@uiowa.edu) (<mailto:jeremy-penn@uiowa.edu>).

## Classroom Assessment

### *Resources for Anti-racist Teaching and Assessment*

Below is a short list of resources that may be helpful for supporting the use of anti-racist practices in teaching and assessment.

- *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future* by Asao Inoue (2015). The book was the winner of the 2017 CCCC Outstanding Book Award and the 2017 Council of Writing Program Administrators' Best Book Award. It can be downloaded for free from: <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/>

[perspectives/inoue/](https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/inoue/) (<https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/inoue/>). This ebook provides an in-depth look at creating an anti-racist writing ecology within a writing classroom.

- *Effective Teaching is Anti-racist Teaching* (<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/effective-teaching-anti-racist-teaching> (<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/effective-teaching-anti-racist-teaching>)). This site addresses learning goals, class content, classroom discussions, assessment, and knowing yourself.
- *Anti-racist pedagogy: from faculty's self-reflection to organizing within and beyond the classroom* by Kyoko Kishimoto (2016). (Download through the UI library at: [https://search.lib.uiowa.edu/permalink/f/18gddib/TN\\_cdi\\_proquest\\_journals\\_2022104203](https://search.lib.uiowa.edu/permalink/f/18gddib/TN_cdi_proquest_journals_2022104203) ([https://search.lib.uiowa.edu/permalink/f/18gddib/TN\\_cdi\\_proquest\\_journals\\_2022104203](https://search.lib.uiowa.edu/permalink/f/18gddib/TN_cdi_proquest_journals_2022104203))). This journal article summarizes some anti-racist pedagogy literature and describes the author's journey in implementing anti-racist pedagogy. Kishimoto argues that including topics of race and inequality is not sufficient, and that anti-racist pedagogical approaches are required.
- The University of Iowa College of Education's Baker Teacher Leader Center will be offering an *Anti-racism Professional Education Webinar Series* this semester and into the summer. Topics include Building the Culturally Conscious Classroom, Anti-Racist Assessment Practices in PK-12 Schools, and Racialized Trauma in the Classroom. For more information visit: <https://education.uiowa.edu/student-experience/baker-teacher-leader-center/anti-racism-professional-educator-webinar-series> (<https://education.uiowa.edu/student-experience/baker-teacher-leader-center/anti-racism-professional-educator-webinar-series>)
- The University of Iowa College of Public Health has an extensive list of anti-racism, health equity, and healing and support resources.

## College Data

### *Key Findings from the Iowa Performance Excellence Examination: Fall 2022*

The College of Education hosted examiners as part of its participation in the Iowa Performance Excellence Program. The volunteer examiners reviewed our written materials,

interviewed numerous faculty and staff, and provided written feedback based on the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria. The feedback is useful in identifying areas of high performance to celebrate, and top opportunity areas where the college may consider focusing improvement efforts. The top strengths and opportunities for improvement are summarized below.

Top strengths noted in the report included:

- The college's engagement in efforts to promote and support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The college's processes for listening to students and customers and for using what was heard from those stakeholders to develop programs and services.
- The college's visionary leadership and focus on meeting the needs of students and other stakeholders in the future.
- Good performance results in many areas of importance to the college, such as student placement and completion rates, financial performance, and students' satisfaction with the college's academic space and resources.

Top opportunities for improvement noted in the report included:

- Improving the alignment of strategic planning across the college.
- Increasing engagement in organizational learning and expanding continuous improvement initiatives.
- Ensuring all members of the workforce (e.g., faculty, staff, graduate student research and teaching assistants, etc.), are engaged in regular communication, particularly as it pertains to sharing and using best practices.
- Improving the college's emergency preparedness (such as fire drills, contingency plans, etc.).
- Identifying additional key performance indicators and comparative data in some areas of performance for the college.

The Continuous Improvement Committee is reviewing the feedback in detail and working on identifying strategies for acting on this feedback to the extent possible.

The college will be recognized by the Iowa Performance Excellence program at the

Leadership Level later this year. More details about that event are forthcoming.

Thank you to everyone who gave their time and participated in the college's Iowa Performance Excellence program! Our journey continues in 2023 as we continually seek to improve the learning of students, the quality of our research and creative activity, our engagement in diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, and our contributions to the quality of life in our communities.

## Promising Practice

### *Taking a Systems Perspective for Improving your Research Productivity*

Consider for a moment the strategies we use when we help our graduate students produce research: we organize regular team meetings, we ask students to share ideas with each other, we ask them to review and critique recent research articles and present their summaries to each other, we have them collaborate on developing research proposals, we ask them to give practice research presentations, we give them data sets to examine, we assign them to mentors who help support their work, and we collaborate on projects with them to help them improve their skills. Now, compare those activities with what is typically done at many institutions with new faculty members who are expected to do research: they are given an office key, a laptop, and a stern warning that if they do not produce research that there will be consequences.

One of the primary themes of the Baldrige Performance Excellence model (the College of Education uses this model for its continuous improvement activities) is that success depends on effective systems, not on heroic efforts from individual people. A system is an intentional, repeatable, organized, measurable process that produces a desired result. Systems can be examined, studied, and improved by learning about what works and what is not working.

Late last fall I was reminded of the difference between thinking about systems and blaming individuals. Each morning I eat breakfast with my two children (ages 10 and 5). I had noticed that after breakfast there was always a pool of milk on the table where my son's cereal bowl had been placed during the meal. Living in the mode of blaming the individual, I asked him – repeatedly on numerous days – to please be more careful about spilling milk during breakfast. But no matter how I worded this request, or how obvious I made the error to him by pointing out the amount of milk spilled each day, the milk spilling continued.

One morning, as I was preparing to participate in an external review on the performance improvement systems and processes used at another institution in Iowa, it occurred to me

that I was not using systems thinking in my own living. The next breakfast, instead of criticizing my son's apparent lack of performance in the prevention of milk spillage, I carefully examined the current system for cereal consumption. I discovered: A bowl that was too small for the cereal it contained; flat and square piece of cereal (Cinnamon Toast Crunch™) that tended to splash when milk was poured on it; a spoon that was too large for the bowl; a large jug of milk that required pouring from significant height; a placemat that did not absorb spills; and a parent (me) that was often in a hurry and poured carelessly.

To my son's credit, he was trying very hard to not spill milk on the table, but with the system we were using, this was nearly impossible. To my regret, I was focusing my attention on his actions, not on the larger environment in which those actions occurred. The system in place – a system I had created and could easily change – made it nearly impossible to prevent milk spillage. Once I began using systems thinking, the solution was obvious and simple: I put the cereal bowl on a plate. Now, with our new system, there has been no milk spilled on the table except for the day when I forgot to get out the plate (I should next examine the system for getting out breakfast in the morning to ensure the plate is remembered every time, but that's a discussion for a different article).

As you think about research productivity this semester, I encourage you to engage in systems thinking. Instead of blaming yourself for procrastination and a lack of time to engage in research, block time on your calendar for research and ask your DEO for release from an unnecessary service appointment. Instead of banging your head against the wall in anger at your lack of access to research sites, build collaborations with other faculty members to develop a long-term relationship with a research partner organization. Instead of trying to write that research grant all by yourself, go to the College's Grants and Research Services Center and work with a team of experts.

Focusing attention on the systems that are used to generate research ends the blame game – both of self and others – and opens new ways for increasing research success and productivity.

## Future Opportunities

- Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education's 2023 Assessment Conference (New Orleans, LA): June 5 – June 8.

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