ASSESSMENT WEBSITE INFORMATION

College: Sciences and Mathematics Degree Program: Physics BS & BSE

Chair/Director: William Burns

DATA SAY:

Our data says that our students' skills in effectively communicating with the written word are unsatisfactory. This has been observed in several upper-level physics courses that require a term project with a written report. Students follow established formatting guidelines well, but convey an inadequate understanding of the topics and fundamental physics beyond a cursory literature review.

SO WHAT:

In order for our graduates to be successful in their careers as research scientists, teachers, and industry professionals, a high level of competency in written communication is paramount. Whether this be peer-reviewed journal articles, industrial reports, etc., we as instructors must emphasize the importance of effective communication in general while preparing students for the field of physics.

HOW WE CHANGED:

In light of the quality of written reports in the program, several instructors have implemented a variety of specific deadlines for portions of students' projects throughout the semester. We seek to observe the effect demanding project outlines with working bibliographies, rough drafts, etc. have on the quality of our students' written works.

WHAT WE GOT:

We see a marked increase in the overall amount of content covered within student projects and a marginal increase in the overall quality of writing. These results suggest that this method does improve the project quality to a degree but that future efforts should focus more on in-class discussions of best practices in Physics writing.



