

Dear UNC System Faculty Members:

As many of you have heard, the UNC system is participating in a pilot test of a new assessment tool that is focused on critical thinking and written communication. The assessment is being developed by Educational Testing Services (ETS), the developers of the GRE, the TOEFL, the CLEP, and the AP series, among other measures. This pilot test is part of a years-long process that the UNC General Education Council (GEC) has been undertaking as part of the system-wide Strategic Directions Initiative, supported by UNC-General Administration. After surveying faculty across the system to identify critical thinking and written communication as student learning outcomes that should be prioritized, the GEC reviewed multiple approaches to assessing those outcomes, and determined that the new measure being developed by ETS was one they wanted to explore. The GEC's reasons for this decision were numerous but primarily fell into two areas: first, the test is being designed to give students and faculty feedback about the multiple "component skills" that make up the large domains of critical thinking and written communication, thus providing actionable information with regard to possible curricular revision or improvement; and second, ETS was willing to "open the hood" of the new measure and engage UNC system faculty in discussions about how the test is being developed and how UNC faculty could, if they wish, develop their own items to add to a supplemental section of the new measure.

This spring will be the first phase of the pilot test; a total of about 3200 students from all over the UNC system will complete the current measure to provide ETS the data they need to identify and remove any problematic items on the assessment and to create statistically identical "forms" for the measure. Then, in the fall, students from across the system will complete the measure and scores on this administration will be provided back to the campuses and to the GEC for review and evaluation.

While the spring's pilot testing is ongoing, ETS offered to

provide additional opportunities for UNC faculty to learn about the measure, learn more generally about how ETS develops items for its assessment protocols, and participate in the process of developing and refining UNC-specific questions for the supplemental portion of the new measure. Thus, the GEC is pleased to be hosting five workshops across the state to introduce faculty this information and to provide faculty with an opportunity to try their turn at developing test questions themselves. The dates, times, and campus locations for each workshop are listed below. Faculty at any UNC system institution are welcome to attend any one of the five workshops (they are designed to be the same content in each location). Snacks will be provided.

April 16	12:30pm – 5pm	Fayetteville State
University		
April 30	12:30pm – 5pm	UNC Charlotte
May 7	12:30pm – 5pm	UNC Greensboro
May 21	12:30pm – 5pm	NC State University
May 28	12:30pm – 5pm	Appalachian State
University		

Registration for the workshops is limited due to space considerations. Please register ASAP to have the best chance of reserving a spot on your preferred date, and please do not register unless you know you can attend. Registration must be completed via Google Forms at this link: [ETS Workshop Registration Form](#). Once you have registered and you have been confirmed for a specific workshop, you will receive an email confirmation with additional details such as the specific room location and parking information for your workshop.

Prior to attending the workshop, all participants should also view a webinar recorded by ETS staff about the development of the new measure. This webinar provides important background information about the development of the new assessments of critical

thinking and written communication (including examples of test items) and also gives you information about how to draft and submit your own assessment questions. Workshops will start with the assumption that participants have viewed the webinar. Whether or not you are able to attend a workshop, you are of course very welcome to view the webinar to learn more. The webinar is available here: [ETS Webinar for UNC](#). You may be prompted to install the WebEx add-on to your browser before the webinar opens and plays. Because the webinar includes proprietary information about ETS' new assessment, we ask that you please not share the webinar outside of the UNC faculty. *Please note: If you register for a workshop, in your registration confirmation email you will also receive the email addresses for ETS staff who will be available to receive your draft assessment questions as well as any other questions you might wish them to address during the workshop.*

I hope that this information is helpful to you and that many of you will view the webinar and attend one of the workshops.

Best,

Katharine E. Stewart

Katharine E. Stewart, PhD, MPH

Vice President for Academic Planning & Quality, [UNC General Administration](#)
and Professor of Public Health Sciences, [UNC - Charlotte](#)

910 Raleigh Rd | PO Box 2688 | Chapel Hill, NC 27514
919-962-2620 | kestewart@northcarolina.edu

Assistant: Cody Thompson | 919-962-4589 | cody@northcarolina.edu
