A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement

2013
Table of Contents

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ 10

Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments ................................................. 11

College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals
Victoria Appatova, Linsey Koeritz, Susan Riley, and Barbara Wallace,
University of Cincinnati-Clermont College ................................................................. 12

Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work: Bringing
Tinto’s Vision to Reality
Ernest I. Nolan and James O’Neill, Madonna University ............................................. 18

Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
Diane M. Reddy, Raymond Fleming, Danielle L. Jirovec, Laura E. Pedrick,
Heidi M. Pfeiffer, and Leah C. Stoiber, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee ................. 23

Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education
Linda S. Lengacher and Kathleen R. Wiles, Stark State College .................................. 27

An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation
Sandy Valensky, Baker College ...................................................................................... 31

Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
Abour H. Cherif, DeVry University; Farahnaz Movahedzadeh, City Colleges of
Chicago–Harold Washington College; Gerald E. Adams, Columbia College
Chicago; and Jeremy Dunning, Indiana University Bloomington ................................. 35

Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College
Cynthia L. Cicchelli and Cheryl Hawkins, Schoolcraft College .................................... 52

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
John Barthell, William Radke, and JeAnna Redd, University of Central Oklahoma;
Charles Abramson, Oklahoma State University; John Hranitz, Bloomsburg University;
and Harrington Wells, University of Tulsa .................................................................. 58

Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Susan DeGe and Judy Abbott, Culver-Stockton College;
and Lloyd Hammonds, Coconino County Community College .................................. 64

Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges
Denis Maier, Bruce Brorson, and Susan Brorson, University of Minnesota, Crookston ........ 67

Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
Cynthia Grant, Scott Schuth, and L. Arthur Safer, Concordia University Chicago ............. 73

Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information
Commons to a Learning Commons
Susan Richards, Renee DeChert, Carol Zawacki, and Gerald Giraud,
Northwest College ....................................................................................................... 78
Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs: A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models
Mitchell L. Springer and Mark T. Schuver, Purdue University ........................................ 83

II-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning
Karen E. Dean and Kelly A. Dagan, Illinois College .......................................................... 88

Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College
Charles A. Graessle and Linda Logan, Olivet College ......................................................... 95

Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience
Katie Strohl and Sherry Wilson, Crowder College ......................................................... 101

Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project
Claudia Hart and Anthony Plemmons, Northern Michigan University ............................. 106

Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach
Mablene Krueger and Larry Nieman, Robert Morris University; and Maria Ramos, Junior Achievement Chicago ................................................................. 111

Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment
Ryan Bartelmay, Susan Tinnish, Renee Zonka, and Paul Busceni, Kendall College .......... 114

Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership ................................................................. 117

Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance
Becky Klein-Collins and Judith Wertheim, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning ................................................................. 118

Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures
Adrienne M. Forgette and Tim Schlak, Northwestern College ........................................ 122

Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Beverly Kopper, University of Wisconsin–Whitewater; Virginia Arthur, Metropolitan State University; and Faith Hensrud, University of Wisconsin–Superior ................................................................. 126

Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation
William E. Knight, Ball State University ....................................................................... 131

The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability
David Wright and Donald R. Sprowl, Indiana Wesleyan University ............................ 136

Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities
Kristi K. Loberg and Michael Wohlfeil, Concordia College ................................................. 141

Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
C. B. Crawford and Chapman Rackaway, Fort Hays State University ........................................ 146

Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning
Stephane E. Booth and Laura L. Davis, Kent State University ........................................ 151

Cultivating Organizational Innovation
Scott Newman, Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology .......................... 156

Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Janet C. Perry, Oklahoma City Community College ......................................................... 159
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning ............................................................. 192

Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change
Donna Wood, Kevin David, and Sarah Stecher, Tulsa Community College ............... 164

Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
Marsha Watson and Kathleen Gorski, National Louis University; and
Jonathan Keiser, Columbia College Chicago ....................................................... 169

Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
Jion Liou Yen and Cathy F. Ayers, Lewis University ........................................... 175

Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process—Lessons Learned
Frank Einhellig, Tamera Jahnke, and William Cheek, Missouri State University ......... 178

Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance
and Planning
Mindy Selsor and Kim Harvey, Jefferson College ................................................. 183

Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned
from the Pilot Program
Elizabeth Kline and Pamela Kirst, Zane State College ......................................... 187

Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning ............................................................. 192

Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission
Jeremy D. Penn and John Hathcoat, Oklahoma State University ......................... 193

Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones
Joan Hawthorne, University of North Dakota; Larry R. Peterson, North Dakota State University; and Matt J. Smith, University of Saint Francis ........................................ 198

Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees
Michael E. Gress, Vincennes University; Cory Lock, St. Edward’s University; and Larry R. Peterson, North Dakota State University ......................... 202

Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success
Donna Dickson, Leslie Van Wolvelear, and Ruth Williams, Oakton Community College ................................................................. 207

From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment
Marilynn N. Butler, Ursuline College ...................................................................... 212

We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development
Theresa Castor, Kimberly Kelley, and James Robinson, University of Wisconsin–Parkside ................................................................. 219

We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)
Cheyne Bamford, Donna Chrislip, and Diane Hegeman, Arapahoe Community College ................................................................. 224

Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence
Steven Harmon Wilson, Angela Summers, and Jeanne Urie, Tulsa Community College ................................................................. 229

Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact
Lori M. Baker-Sperry and Nancy P. Parsons, Western Illinois University ............... 233
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix
Julie Weissman, Nancy Hellerud, and John Watts, Webster University .......................... 237

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
Deborah Bushway, Genevieve Feliu, and Jeff Grann, Capella University .......................... 243

Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning
Peggy Fitch, Central College; and Pamela Steinke, University of St. Francis ................. 246

Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges
Sandra Schmit and Moira Lafayette, Wisconsin Technical College System ..................... 250

Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days
Christina L. Frazier and David Starrett, Southeast Missouri State University ................. 256

Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System
Margaret A. Young, Jean L. Hill, Margot S. Geagon, Christopher Nelson, and Stephen Weatherburn, New Mexico Highlands University .................. 259

An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills
Steven K. Jones, Kathleen Harrington, and Lauren Scharff, United States Air Force Academy .............................................. 264

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
Craig Mosher, Highland Community College; Donna Chrislip, Arapahoe Community College; Gary Schenck, Blackhawk Technical College; and Cia Vershelden, University of Central Oklahoma .............................................................. 269

Chapter 4: Commission Processes for Maintaining Accreditation ............................................. 272

Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives
Ray Wallace, Brenda Mitchell, Kimberly Downing Robinson, and Rebecca Timmons, University of Arkansas–Fort Smith ......................................................... 273

The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes
Todd Drew and Dan Hanson, Peru State College ................................................................. 278

Donna K. Pearson, Joan I. Hawthorne, and Patrick O’Neill, University of North Dakota .................................................................................. 284

Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness
Judith Walker de Felix and Patricia Dolan, University of Missouri–Saint Louis .................. 290

Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond
Loretta Zost and Greg Zost, Peru State College .................................................................. 295

Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data
Andrea W. Koepke and Dale Brougher, University of Findlay ............................................. 298

Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit
Margie L. Tomsic and Marilyn Krasowski, Saint Paul College ............................................ 301
Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives
   Connie S. Wilson and Mary C. Moore, University of Indianapolis ......................... 304

Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion
   Daniel Wright, Pima County Community College District; Gary J. Burkholder,
   Walden University; and Beth Pellicciotti, Purdue University–Calumet .................. 308

Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
   Stephanie M. Dykes and Linda Prozialeck, Chamberlain College of Nursing .......... 314

Indexes ......................................................................................................................... 316
   Title Index .................................................................................................................. 317
   Author Index .............................................................................................................. 330
   Institution Index ....................................................................................................... 347
   Keyword Index ......................................................................................................... 358

Best Paper Award ......................................................................................................... 371

Disclaimer .................................................................................................................... 372
This volume marks the twenty-ninth year of publication of the *Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement* and the fourth to be produced exclusively in digital format. What began as a small collection in 1984 had grown to a sizable four-volume set by 2003. The Commission is committed to bringing more environmentally responsible practices into the Annual Conference, and paper reduction is an essential component in the success of this initiative. The flash drive provides a perfect format for achieving this goal. Not only does it feature the *Collection*, with multiple search options, it also includes a link to speaker handouts on our Web site, and has the capacity for attendees to add materials to it.

In 1984, the Annual Conference had 763 attendees and a program of approximately fifty presentations and events. Attendance at the 2013 conference will exceed 4,000; the program includes more than 400 presentations, events, roundtables, and other networking opportunities. The growth in the conference and the richness of the program and these papers are a tribute to the outstanding work being done by our member institutions, the commitment of those within our institutions to share their experiences, and the interest of our attendees in learning from each other.

This year’s program also showcases the implementation of two important Commission initiatives: the Pathways model for reaffirmation of accreditation and the new Criteria for Accreditation.

The 2013 *Collection of Papers* reflects an increased focus on student persistence, retention, and success. Presenters share learning, tools and strategies, innovations, best practice, and research. Chapter 3 contributes another set of case studies to the *Collection’s* twenty-four-year chronicle of institutional progress in “Assessing and Improving Student Learning.” As well, our members offer their recent experiences in the Commission’s accreditation processes with those just beginning those processes.

The Commission invites your comments about the *Collection of Papers* and welcomes your suggestions for future topics for the conference program. I hope that you will consider participating as a speaker in the future. I look forward to seeing you at the Hyatt.

Susan E. Van Kollenburg

Editor and Annual Conference Coordinator
Vice President for Meetings and Communications
March 1, 2013
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
On college campuses everywhere, there are students who are not prepared enough in either cognitive or affective domains to take full advantage of available educational opportunities. How do institutions of higher learning reach and help the largest educational minority—the marginally prepared college student? The College Success Program (CSP) at the University of Cincinnati Clermont College (UCCC), a regional open-access college, has made a distinct positive impact on marginally prepared students’ academic performance, course completion, persistence, and first-year retention.

History and Design of the CSP at UCCC

To improve retention of marginally prepared students, the CSP was designed in compliance with the Developmental Education Guidelines, which were unanimously approved by UCCC Faculty Senate in May 2008. The program accepted its first students in fall 2008. According to the CSP guidelines, the incoming matriculated students whose scores are below college level in two to three areas (reading, writing, and mathematics) are eligible for the program; consequently, all participating students can be traditionally termed developmental education students (Boylan 2002). These students, who need academic support and additional services while seeking certificates, an associate’s, or a bachelor’s degree, are offered the opportunity to participate in the CSP at no cost. Because it is free and voluntary, participation in the program is a privilege rather than an obligation.

CSP students are not separated from the mainstream students. They take many courses with nondevelopmental students, and neither their peers nor their professors are necessarily aware that they are CSP participants who are also taking certain developmental courses and who are supported by the CSP staff. This approach eliminates the possibility of any stigma for developmental students.

CSP participants are expected to meet regularly with an Achievement Coach (AC), with whom they build a relationship. In fact, regular meetings with the AC, who closely monitors the CSP participants’ performance and quickly responds to their academic needs, are the key component of their participation in the program. CSP staff partner with faculty to ensure an ongoing scaffolding of the participating students’ academic progress. To strengthen this partnership, two faculty members were assigned as Academic Co-Coordinators of the CSP in October 2012.

Eligible students’ participation is voluntary; therefore, staff members and faculty members coordinating the program must sustain a regular recruitment effort. Invitation letters are mailed to students before and during each term; CSP staff make presentations in reading, composition, and math classes; Blackboard announcements are posted regularly; and personal phone calls are made to encourage student participation. Participation in the program is also strongly encouraged by faculty and staff across the college. It is instrumental that the college’s faculty members, administrators, and
professional staff members be aware of the significant positive impact of the students’ participation in
the CSP in such areas as academic performance, course completion, persistence, and retention. Faculty
members and staff members of other programs should be well educated regarding the appropriate
curricular choices for at-risk students as well as suitable campus and off-campus resources and services
for this student population.

Curricular Choices for CSP Students

Because the CSP-participants are more likely than their college-ready counterparts to lack academic
survival skills and become overwhelmed with the rigor of the first-year experience (Long 2008;
McCabe 2003), they are advised to register for no more than 12 or 13 credit hours per term while in the
program. To ensure adequate course placement, all incoming UCCC students take placement tests in
reading (Electronic Version—Degrees of Reading Power Standard Test Form J-2), writing, and math (the
two latter tests were developed at UC).

If the reading score on the Degree of Reading Power test is 70 or below, a student must enroll in one
of the reading courses. Depending on the student’s immediate academic needs in other content areas,
he or she will enroll in Reading Academic Texts (paired with reading-intensive Humanities, Social
Sciences, Business, Law, Technology, Health, and Science courses); or Math Success Seminar/Effective
Reading Paired with Mathematics (to be taken concurrently with developmental math courses, such
as Prep Math or Intro Algebra I). Starting in the 2013 spring semester, the college also offers Integrated
College Reading (designed to support the reading component of both developmental and college-
level introductory English courses). All reading courses are college-level, three-credit-hour courses,
so nondevelopmental college-ready students also choose to take them to hone their reading skills.
Consequently, these classes are populated by both developmental and mainstream students.

Depending on a student’s score on the writing placement test, the student can be enrolled in
Introduction to Academic Literacy (a developmental, three-credit-hour course, which in the 2012 fall
semester replaced Preparatory Reading and Writing I and Preparatory Reading and Writing II, both
developmental, six-credit-hour courses), Preparatory Composition (a developmental, three-credit-hour
course), and English Composition (a college-level, six-credit-hour course).

Students’ math scores on the placement test determine their enrollment in one of the credit-bearing
developmental math courses (e.g., Prep Math, Intro Algebra I, Intro Algebra II, and Intermediate
Algebra) or college-level math courses (e.g., College Algebra I, Trigonometry, etc.).

Institutionally established below-college-level scores in two to three areas (reading, writing, and
mathematics) qualify a student for the voluntary participation in the CSP; however, CSP participants
are not limited to taking only developmental courses. They enroll in such content area courses as
Psychology, History, Economics, and Biology. However, depending on students’ placement scores
and demonstrated deficiencies in reading, writing, or math, the AC may advise them not to enroll in
those college-level courses that are overly challenging in their particular deficient area (e.g., freshmen
with low reading scores are not advised to take Philosophy). CSP participants, CSP non-participants
(those developmental students who qualified for the program, but chose not to participate in it) and
mainstream, college-ready students have exactly the same array of choices of developmental and
nondevelopmental courses in which they can enroll.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals

Achievement Coaching and Other Support Services for CSP Students

CSP participants are required to meet regularly with an AC, who is trained to provide triage and proactive advising specifically for this population of students. Triage is defined as provision of resources or assistance to students encountering obstacles that will have an immediate impact on their academic situation if not resolved. Triage includes, but is not limited to, such areas as problems with courses, early interventions, life stressors, major life events, mental health issues, illnesses, family issues, and career choices. A meeting with a student is defined as an event in which the student speaks with the AC about personal or academic situations that may have a positive or negative impact on their academic progress. The AC meets individually with students who complete Individual Education Plans (IEPs) wherein they set goals and plan study schedules.

One of the major goals of achievement coaching is to ensure that prospective and current CSP students enroll in the right combination of developmental and nondevelopmental courses. The AC must have a solid understanding of what these students should or should not take based on their academic preparedness, noncognitive skills, and personal circumstances. For example, the AC advises the prospective and current CSP students not to enroll in reading or writing intensive courses if they do not possess corresponding college-ready skills. To register, these students must have their schedules approved by program advisors and the AC. Furthermore, the AC assists CSP participants with registration and orientation, responds to Early Warning notifications from faculty members, tracks students’ progress, liaises with faculty members and staff members when intervention is necessary, and works closely with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness on assessment.

In addition, the AC oversees the cohort of CSP participants, providing students individually with strong academic and personal support, including advising and counseling, recommendations for specific on-campus academic assistance (e.g., the Learning Center, Disability Services, psychological counseling, financial aid, etc.), as well as referrals to off-campus social services for personal needs (e.g., food stamps, Clermont Counseling Center, YWCA, Jobs and Family Services, etc.). Thus, the AC provides advising about developmental and nondevelopmental curricula, on-campus learning assistance services, and other on- and off-campus resources and referrals (Jenkins 2006; Muraskin and Lee 2004).

Effects of Students’ Participation in the CSP

To evaluate the impact of the students’ participation in the CSP on their academic performance, course completion, persistence and first-year retention, UCCC conducted a study on the three cohorts of students first entering during the fall terms of 2009, 2010, and 2011. All cohorts in this study were defined as first-time matriculated college freshmen whose first enrolled term at UCCC was the fall quarter. The cohort excluded students who had previously attempted college and stopped out (applied for admission as transfer students). The control group included students who placed in two or three developmental courses but chose not to participate in the CSP (termed as CSP non-participants). To study the effect of CSP participation on students’ grade point averages (GPAs), course completion, persistence, and first-year retention, the test group was separated into two sub-groups: CSP-A and CSP-B. The CSP-A students worked with the AC three (3) or more times in the first term. The CSP-B students worked with the AC for one (1) or two (2) meetings in the fall term.

Figures 1 through 4 demonstrate the following trends: (a) the CSP participants studied generally had higher GPAs, course completion rates, persistence rates, and first-year retention rates than those
eligible students who had chosen not to participate in the program; and (b) CSP-A students who actively participated in the program consistently outperformed both CSP-B students and CSP non-participants in all four areas of the study (GPAs, course completion rates, persistence rates, and first-year retention rates).

Although CSP-B students showed some success during their first term, the benefits of the program were not sustained over time for this population, as reflected in the first-year (fall-to-fall) retention (Figure 4). The CSP-A students had higher fall-to-fall retention rates while the CSP-B students began to trend similarly to non-participants. This evidence indicates a stronger success rate for students who had built an ongoing relationship with the AC versus those who had used the AC’s assistance only in one or two meetings. The implication is that proactive (also known as intrusive) advising, when used with marginally prepared students, may be more effective than traditional academic advising.

Figure 1.

Figure 2.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Recommendations for Developing a Successful Program for Marginally Prepared Students

- Identify a need for a program that would effectively support marginally prepared students’ success in college
- Categorize significant components of a program for marginally prepared students
- Partner with faculty members to understand and identify appropriate curriculum choices for this student population
- Critically select and apply effective placement procedures
- Recognize the critical role of the Achievement Coach and targeted proactive advising
- Continuously assess the program effectiveness
• Educate and train faculty and staff advisors in using appropriate curriculum and support services for marginally prepared students
• Identify or provide resources within the college and community that can assist marginally prepared students to be as successful in academia as their college-ready counterparts

REFERENCES


*Victoria Appatova* is Associate Professor of Reading/English, *Linsey Koeritz* is College Success Program Achievement Coach, *Susan Riley* is Director of Institutional Forgiveness, and *Barbara Wallace* is the former Director of the College Success and Service Learning Program at University of Cincinnati-Clermont College in Cincinnati, Ohio.
Retention is intrinsically related to institutional effectiveness—all higher education institutions exist to support students as they achieve their educational goals, which, in most cases, consist of earning a degree or other credential. Although student attrition rates have caused an outcry from federal and state officials calling for greater accountability for financial aid funding, it is in the best interest of colleges and universities to give priority to student retention as those institutions struggle to maximize the human and fiscal resources needed to recruit students and maintain viable enrollments. In fact, improving student retention is in everyone’s best interest. From the student perspective, involuntary attrition or withdrawal because of academic failure or inability to cope with the demands of going to college lowers self-confidence and self-esteem and likely represents a negative lifelong economic impact. From the institutional perspective, attrition represents a waste of resources, especially in an environment of careful stewardship, and it potentially damages the reputation of an institution and erodes public trust of higher education in general. From a societal perspective, student attrition represents wasted talent, not only for the individual but also for society as a whole, which cannot derive return on its investment in this person’s aborted education.

Despite the fact that prioritizing student retention appears to be a good thing for colleges and universities to invest in, few institutions have the will to address the causes of and attendant factors leading to student attrition in a systemic way. Vincent Tinto, the guru of retention research, points to the fact that a serious focus on student retention could transform student experiences at America’s higher education institutions:

What would it mean for institutions to take student retention seriously? Among other things, institutions would stop tinkering at the margins of institutional life and make enhancing student retention the linchpin about which they organize their activities. It would mean that institutions move beyond the “adding-on” of services by recognizing that the root of attrition lies not only in their students but also in the very character of the settings in which they ask their students to learn; settings which are now taken for granted as “natural” to higher education. (Tinto 2002)

Tinto points to the necessity for institutions to rethink the way they understand the student experience of college and to abandon some generally accepted truisms about what college is all about. To understand why students become attrition statistics, it is essential to analyze preconceptions about the ways that institutions interact with students, about how institutions need to support students, and about the quality of students’ experiences in the classroom and across the full range of institutional services.

In 2009, Madonna University (MU) began a process of discernment designed to assess and address the causes of student attrition, to improve semester-to-semester and year-to-year retention, and to strengthen student persistence to a degree. At that time, its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) retention rate for first-time-in-any-college (FTIAC) students was around 76 percent—
not an egregious statistic for a primarily commuter-based campus on the perimeter of a major metropolitan area; however, it was a rate that needed to be understood and, if possible, improved. The discernment process led the university to develop and implement a comprehensive retention plan to address the needs of different cohorts of students. The plan then became the basis for a five-year Title III project that provided the funding necessary to make a real difference.

The first step was getting a better understanding of how the student moves through the college experience from application through graduation. During that process, the following chart developed:
This model illustrates the emphasis placed on two important dimensions of the student’s experience: advising and support services. The university studied the progression of typical students through this process and, based on data from the Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), and the College Student Inventory (CSI) taken by all incoming FTIAC students, identified a series of strategies to address the needs of two populations of students—FTIACS and at-risk students. These included strengthening the First-Year Experience by restructuring orientation and using the College Student Inventory (CSI) as a basis for a first-year mentoring program; improving the flow of and access to academic advising; providing additional academic support services; revising the early/mid-semester alert system for academic jeopardy, coordinated by a Student Success Coach; developing the student portal as a means of communication and providing dashboards for students to track their academic performance and progress; providing financial literacy workshops; supporting student-faculty collaborative research; improving data collection and analysis; addressing the needs of veterans and nontraditional students; and providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff members so that the retention program is transparent and on the tip of consciousness.

After three years of progressive implementation of these strategies, the university achieved an increase in its IPEDS retention rate from 76 percent to 81 percent. This improvement bolstered the university’s commitment to retention and created momentum for focusing the new Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirement of the Quality Initiative on further efforts to increase its retention and graduation rates. As the university moved forward, it sponsored two full-day workshops with a representative from Noel-Levitz, who helped the participants (many of whom were members of the university’s Retention Committee) to analyze retention data in order to identify discrete/diverse cohorts whose persistence is lower than the institutional average. The result of this initiative is the creation of a comprehensive...
Among the proposed retention strategies are further flowcharting of processes, improving course scheduling, emphasizing excellence in classroom teaching and learning, and eliminating the option of student self-advisement. The plan will be reinforced by the university’s long-term planning goals for 2020, specifically the construction of a new building (a Welcome Center, which will co-locate student services), expansion of the university’s program for African American students, and the extension of the virtual student record to faculty advisers.

The underlying message to all employees is that “It takes a village” to meaningfully address retention—and the coordination of various projects and priorities to reinforce the retention plan. The success of the comprehensive retention plan will be determined through a series of assessment activities, including analysis of the results of the university’s ongoing administration of the SSI and CSI, as well as the NSSE results. And, of course, the university will continue analyze its actual retention data, which will be segmented for the targeted cohorts of students. The university envisions a future in which all employees will understand their role in the retention effort, will feel empowered with the information and resources they need to work effectively for and with students, and will appreciate the part they play in the shared enterprise of supporting students so that they are successful in achieving their higher education goals.
REFERENCE


Ernest I. Nolan is Provost and Vice President for Academic Administration and James O’Neill is Associate Vice President for University Accreditation and Title III Project Director at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan.
Increasing student success in higher education is critical to the economic and social strength of the United States (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, and Ginder 2012). *U-Pace*, an online instructional method that integrates content mastery and Amplified Assistance in a self-paced format, was developed to personalize student learning and maximize student success. In a large, randomized controlled trial supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, *U-Pace* instruction produced greater learning and greater academic success compared to conventional face-to-face instruction and other forms of online instruction. In addition, *U-Pace* instruction produced student success in multiple disciplines. Further, these positive student outcomes were replicated at several universities with different student populations in rigorous studies supported by EDUCAUSE and funded through Next Generation Learning Challenges. Although *U-Pace* instruction is self-paced, students are expected to master the material within a semester. Consequently, *U-Pace* instruction does not require a new funding model for courses. All that is needed to implement *U-Pace* courses is a learning management system (e.g., Blackboard). Once established, *U-Pace* courses are self-sustaining.

**U-Pace Integrates Mastery-based Learning and Amplified Assistance**

**Mastery-based Learning**

In *U-Pace* instruction, students are allowed to advance to new content only after they demonstrate mastery of current material by achieving a grade of at least 90 percent on quizzes requiring a deep level of understanding (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). Developing mastery at each step in the learning process builds a strong foundation for academic success. The mastery component helps students learn the level of study required to master material in college and strengthens study skills and habits. Improving study skills diminishes the barrier of underpreparedness stemming from impoverished pre-college learning environments.

**Amplified Assistance**

Amplified Assistance consists of constructive support and tailored feedback on concepts not yet mastered. Mainly delivered through manual-assisted e-mail messages, Amplified Assistance is instructor-initiated feedback and encouragement that is provided without students having to ask for help. Using information on student behavior that is typically recorded in most learning management systems, the *U-Pace* instructor can pinpoint when a student needs Amplified Assistance and can deliver the appropriate type (e.g., study skill help, motivational support).
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction

U-Pace Instruction Reliably Produces Greater Learning and Greater Academic Success

Extensive evaluation studies conducted since 2007 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and more recently at other universities indicate that U-Pace instruction produces greater learning and greater academic success for all students compared to conventional, face-to-face instruction.

Student Academic Success

In the evaluation studies, U-Pace was compared to conventional instruction, holding the course content and textbook constant. In both the U-Pace and the conventionally taught course sections, grading was completely objective, based on the students’ performance on computer-scored multiple-choice assessments. In addition, assessment questions for U-Pace and conventionally taught sections were drawn from the same pool of equally difficult test items and were used to form either quizzes (for U-Pace students) or larger exams (for conventionally taught students). Final course grades for U-Pace students were based on the number of quizzes completed with a score of at least 90 percent, whereas final course grades for the conventionally taught students were based on the average of their four exam scores.

Differences in academic success—defined as objectively determined final course grades of A or B—between the U-Pace (n=1,734) and the conventionally taught (n = 2,874) students were evaluated. In addition, the performance of “academically underprepared” students (students with ACT composite scores of less than 19 or cumulative college grade point averages [GPA] of less than 2.00 on a 4.00 scale) was compared to the performance of “academically prepared” students under both types of instruction. The results showed that a significantly higher percentage of U-Pace students earned a final course grade of A or B compared to conventionally taught students ($\chi^2(1) = 137.13, p < .001$). More important, both the “academically underprepared” students and “academically prepared” students performed better with U-Pace instruction. In fact, the findings revealed that the “academically underprepared” U-Pace students performed as well as the “academically prepared,” conventionally taught students ($\chi^2(1) = 0.24, p > .05$). U-Pace instruction produced greater academic success for all students and empowered “academically underprepared” students to perform as well as academically prepared students in conventionally taught sections.

Student Learning

Student learning was assessed at the conclusion of the course and again six months later using two different cumulative, multiple choice exams measuring core concepts. These exams did not count toward U-Pace or conventionally taught students’ course grades. In addition, the exams were constructed so that the questions tested understanding of the material beyond recall of factual knowledge. The cumulative exams were administered in a proctored classroom to randomly selected U-Pace and conventionally taught students. Students’ motivation was maximized by requiring them to put their names on the exams, to work on the exam for a minimum of thirty minutes, and to check their answers before they could be dismissed and receive their $25 incentive. In addition, students were told that the exam was critical for the evaluation of learning and that it was important for them to do their best. The U-Pace students significantly outperformed the conventionally taught students, scoring twenty-one percentage points higher, $p < .001$. Six months after the course ended, the same U-Pace
students again performed significantly better on a second proctored cumulative exam measuring core concepts, this time scoring fifteen percentage points higher, \( p < .001 \). There were no significant differences between the U-Pace students and the conventionally taught students in ACT composite scores or cumulative college GPA that could explain the greater learning and greater retention of the material demonstrated by U-Pace students.

U-Pace instruction not only produced greater academic success and greater learning (as evidenced on proctored, cumulative exams measuring core concepts) but also resulted in statistically significant improvements in learning how to learn, a key competency critical to academic success. U-Pace students demonstrated statistically significant increases in their rate of mastering the concepts from the beginning of the semester to the end of the semester, as evidenced by requiring fewer quiz attempts to achieve a score of at least 90 percent. Consistent with this improvement in self-regulative skills, U-Pace students reported greater improvement in their study skills than conventionally taught students on an online survey at the end of the semester.

**U-Pace’s Promise for Higher Education**

The convergence of findings from student reports and performance measures, including improvements in rate of mastery revealed through information recorded in the learning management system, objectively determined final grades, and scores on challenging proctored exams measuring learning of core concepts, suggests U-Pace instruction holds promise for higher education. The proven effectiveness of U-Pace at multiple universities with different student populations, and the strong student outcomes demonstrated in a large, randomized controlled trial, also argue for U-Pace instruction as a model for higher education. In recognizing U-Pace instruction with a 2012 Distance Education Innovation Award, the National University Telecommunications Network (NUTN) commended U-Pace as a model of distance education that is scalable, well documented, and easy to implement at the campus level. More important, at a time when wide-scale adoption of learning analytics is expected within two to three years, U-Pace instruction addresses the critical question of what to do with such data once obtained. U-Pace’s Amplified Assistance e-mail message templates (found in the U-Pace manual, freely available on the U-Pace website, [www4.uwm.edu/upace/](http://www4.uwm.edu/upace/)) provide model interventions that instructors can use when analytics flag students’ behavior as at-risk for course failure. To our knowledge, the U-Pace approach provides instructors with the most comprehensive responses to students’ needs revealed by analytics basic to most, if not all, learning management systems.

**Acknowledgments**

The research reported here was supported by grants from EDUCAUSE, funded through Next Generation Learning Challenges, and the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305A110112 to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute, the U.S. Department of Education, or EDUCAUSE.
REFERENCES


*Diane M. Reddy* is Professor of Psychology, *Raymond Fleming* is Professor of Psychology, *Danielle L. Jirovec* is Project Assistant, *Laura E. Pedrick* is Special Assistant to the Provost for Strategic Initiatives, *Heidi M. Pfeiffer* is a Doctoral Student, and *Leah C. Stoiber* is Academic Research Specialist at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education
Linda S. Lengacher and Kathleen R. Wiles

The nature, the effectiveness, and even the need for academic support programs in higher education are subjects of debate and concern nationwide. With more than 50 percent of the students entering college identified as needing developmental or remedial instruction before enrolling in career-path coursework, the numbers involved are massive—and growing. Yet, the effects of such enrollments in supportive programs have been found to be negligible, or even counterproductive, as the degree or program completion rate is dramatically lower for these groups as compared with those of students who are not required to complete remedial courses. In addition, as funding in higher education increases to be a systemic issue, colleges are looking for evidence of program effect as a condition of continued support. Such dismal data on the success of students enrolled in developmental education programs have prompted a number of dramatic, and less bold, approaches to providing these essential services. The developmental reading program at Stark State College in northeastern Ohio has begun a transformation from a series of one-size-fits-all remedial courses to a more student-centered, degree-completion-focused approach.

The Problem

According to the landmark report Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere (Complete College America 2012), of the 1.7 million students who begin their college studies with required developmental courses each year, most will never graduate. In addition, the report cites the following statistic: “states and students spent more than $3 billion on remedial courses last year with very little student success to show for it” (2012, 2). Of those enrolled in developmental courses in two-year colleges, only 9.5 percent complete a degree or certificate program within three years. The disconnect between remedial courses and students’ career goals has prompted the implementation of “contextualized” developmental alternatives. As Dolores Perin (2011, 1) writes, “Contextualized basic skills instruction involves the teaching of academic skills against a backdrop of specific subject matter to which the skills need to be applied” in hopes of increasing both persistence rate and skill development. Compounding the issue further is the national funding shift from enrollment-based formulas to performance- or outcome-based models. Ohio’s new State Share of Instruction (SSI) initiative is typical of this trend. “For community colleges, 10 percent of state funding is [currently] tied to student performance. [Ohio Governor] Kasich’s plan would eventually tie all state funding for community colleges to student performance” (Bloom 2012).

The researchers are engaged in a longitudinal study of program effect in developmental reading at Stark State College (SSC). Specifically, authentic data relative to student gains in literacy and persistence rates have been gathered, analyzed, and reported over a two-year period. The findings demonstrate the effects of alternative instructional and assessment models. This overview summarizes the transitional process under way to transform these supportive services into a performance-based, data-driven, contextualized national model that addresses student needs more effectively.
The Program

The reading program at SSC began in the Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) Department housed in the General Studies Division. Due to the rapid growth of the college, a major reorganization took place. As a part of this reorganization, courses initially housed in the CAL Department (the first levels of developmental math, reading, and English) were integrated into their discipline-specific areas. In 2005 the transition moved both levels of developmental reading into a newly formed department, Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS), and the Division of Teaching and Learning was created. As a result, developmental writing branched off to the English Department and developmental math was moved to the Math Department. Developmental Education progressed from a centralized model to a decentralized model.

After further examination of the different structures in the Division of Teaching and Learning, collaborators agreed that additional renovation was in order. Administration and faculty from several departments identified textbook reading as a major problem for many students. It was then suggested that developmental reading be relocated into the regular academic departments at appropriate academic levels. Currently, developmental reading is housed in the Division of Liberal Arts because most degree programs require credits in foundational areas of study. After students complete developmental courses, their reading success is tracked through their enrollment in social science courses.

In 2006 the head of Teaching and Learning asked that two reading faculty members research literacy programs across the country in search of the highest-quality methods and/or best practices in reading that would benefit students served at SSC. The most highly recommended program, by far, was Read Right (Read Right Reading Programs 1995–2013). This individualized intervention program was reported to be highly effective for struggling readers. The only drawback to the program was the expense, but it appeared to be justified.

In spring 2009, Stark State became the first college to adopt Read Right, which the college piloted to test its effectiveness compared with traditional reading courses. (The college continued to offer the traditional courses, allowing students to choose a reading course to satisfy SSC requirements.) Each Read Right class was limited to twenty students with a ratio of one instructor to five students; thus each section required four instructors. By fall 2009, eight instructors were trained in Read Right. Students completing Read Right pilot courses demonstrated significant improvement on COMPASS posttests by an average of 13 points and 1.3 grade levels (Trumpower 2010). Although the program showed significant improvements, there were several challenges involved in fitting this model into the community college format. The main challenges were grades, make-up sessions, independent reading outside of class, and the expense of materials and personnel (four instructors per course), room availability with required materials, and student acceptance of materials. Once the program was implemented more broadly, SSC found no significant difference in student achievement in Read Right vs. traditional-format courses. By spring 2012, SSC decided to halt funding for the Read Right program. Traditional delivery models of both Technical Comprehension and Critical Analysis were reinstated as the sole instructional mode for developmental reading.

Since program inception, these two levels of reading courses have been offered at the college. Student reading placement (see the table) is based on COMPASS and ACT scores (ACT, 2013). A COMPASS reading test score of 0–65 or an ACT reading test score of 0–13 places students in the first reading level (Technical Comprehension, IDS 101). The second reading level (Critical Analysis, IDS 102) is required for those with a COMPASS score of 66–79 or a corresponding ACT score of 14–18. At SSC any student with
a COMPASS score of 80 or greater and/or an ACT score of 19 or greater meets the reading requirement. Pass rates for both courses require earning a B or higher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPASS Reading Test Score</th>
<th>ACT Reading Score</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0–65</td>
<td>0–13</td>
<td>Technical Comprehension</td>
<td>IDS 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66–79</td>
<td>14–18</td>
<td>Critical Analysis</td>
<td>IDS 102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>19+</td>
<td>Requirement Met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at SSC set out to measure completion rates of developmental students in their first attempt enrolled in one of the reading courses. Outcome 2 states that at least 70 percent of the students will complete the course based on the first attempt (Trumpower 2011, 1). Neither group of students—Technical Comprehension or Critical Analysis—met the requirement during any of the years measured.

The newest iteration of the developmental reading courses at SSC, based on the Complete College America recommendations, links remedial skill instruction with the content of students’ intended career paths. In Technical Comprehension, a new text has been selected that incorporates career-based readings for students to use in applying their reading and thinking skills. This “contextualized” approach is even more career-focused in the upper-level Critical Analysis course. These students will enroll in one of four subject-based courses (e.g., Critical Analysis for Health Sciences). In each course, texts have been developed culling sample chapters from textbooks in health sciences, business, technology, or education/social services. Data will continue to be collected from these new offerings and compared with baseline results. It is anticipated that closer linkage with career goals will positively impact both persistence and reading skill development.

The Progress

A significant first step in this transformational process was the decision to utilize authentic, objective data as the basis for program assessment. Thus, instead of previous practices involving enrollment figures, GPA, final course grades, and student course evaluation data, the reading department elected to implement objective measures of student gains in basic skills and persistence rate. The COMPASS Reading Test, used for many years as a placement test, is now administered to every student at the completion of each reading course to provide posttest comparative data. This assessment generates two data sets: average student gains (≥ 8 points is significant, according to the test’s designers) and attainment of the “threshold measure” (a score of 80 or higher) for each course offering. In addition, persistence rate is demonstrated by the percentage of students completing each course. Since spring 2011, some 1,791 students have enrolled in the lower-level reading course, IDS 101 Technical Comprehension. Of this population, 758 (42%) have completed the course. The initial persistence rate (spring 2011) was 39 percent; as of summer 2012, this rate was 60 percent. During this same period, the percentage of students gaining at least 8 points on the COMPASS test has increased from 73 percent to 76 percent. Those achieving a score of at least 80 (which excuses them from the
second semester of developmental reading instruction) continues at approximately 20 percent. The data from the higher-level course (IDS 102 Critical Analysis) have been predictably stronger. Of the 1,659 students enrolled, 59 percent complete the course. Additionally, 52 percent gain at least 8 points on the posttest, and 42 percent achieve the threshold measure by course conclusion. Aggregated data reports are shared each semester with stakeholder groups within the college community. Each semester, individual instructor reports that compare each class section with departmental averages are provided to each full-time and adjunct reading instructor and his/her program coordinator. While negotiated agreements prohibit using such data for employee evaluations, they do inform professional development initiatives both individually and collectively.

While encouraging, these data demonstrate appreciable opportunities for improved service. The newly designed “contextualized” iteration of developmental reading at Stark State College offers the best research-based alternative that has the greatest potential for significantly impacting student achievement both in basic skill development and career-path completion. With authentic baseline data and assessment protocols in place, those engaged in providing these essential services will be able to measure the effects of implemented changes, modify practices as warranted, and continue to improve the support provided to this burgeoning student population.

REFERENCES


Linda S. Lengacher and Kathleen R. Wiles are Instructors, Developmental Reading, at Stark State College in North Canton, Ohio.
Facing diminishing resources and increasing public scrutiny, many colleges and universities are at a crossroads regarding developmental education. While some are eliminating developmental education completely, many are developing alternative approaches, including mainstreaming, accelerated programs, supplemental instruction and supplemental electronic practice, summer bridge programs, and the like. Developmental education is in need of new approaches for student learning to make the learning more relevant and meaningfully connected to students’ lives, fields of study, and futures. In a 2010 study by the National Center for Postsecondary Research, four promising models were identified from a comprehensive search for developmental education interventions:

1. Interventions aimed at helping students avoid developmental education
2. Interventions designed to accelerate students’ progress through developmental education
3. Programs that provided contextualized learning opportunities
4. Programs and services to further support developmental learners’ educational advancement (Zachry and Schneider 2010, 11–12)

Along with this research, an institutional commitment to Hunter Boylan’s (2002) best practices and to furthering our continuous quality journey through AQIP projects aimed at improving student learning, Baker College investigated programs such as The City University of New York College of Staten Island’s Immersion Programs and Robert Morris University’s career management courses to inform our own AQIP Project, which we call College and Career Immersion: Improving Learning for the Emerging Student.

In particular, community colleges and other open admissions institutions are faced with addressing developmental education for highly at-risk students who need developmental interventions in all three areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. At Baker College, a hundred-year-old private, nonprofit institution with a career focus, an open admissions policy, and right-to-try approach, between 7 percent and 14 percent (or approximately 750–1,700, depending on the year) of its fall new-student population places into the highly at-risk category. Students place into the developmental education courses based on COMPASS cut scores of below 68 for reading, below 24 for writing, below 44 for the lower-level mathematics, and below 48 for higher-level mathematics. The cut scores for ACT translate into below 15 for reading, below 14 for writing, below 18 for lower-level math, and below 20 for higher-level math. Historically, our graduate cohort rate for this population of students has ranged from 11 percent to 14 percent. Although other AQIP projects and internal projects focused on the entire developmental education population have begun to improve the overall success of students, recognizing that this student population struggles with retention and persistence, Baker College committed to investing in the creation of a new model for these students. Eventually we created a new...
course: COL 115 College and Career Preparation (12 quarter hours). This new course is part of a two-year AQIP Project informed by the following goal, questions, and data indicators:

1. **Goal:** To improve the retention and persistence rates for students who place into all three developmental education areas: reading, writing, and math.

2. **Questions:**
   a. Are students more successful (pass the course requirements) in COL 115 than in the three developmental education courses?
   b. Are students in COL 115 more successful in the subsequent quarter courses (ENG 101 Composition I and MTH 099E Pre-Algebra) than those in the three developmental education courses?
   c. Do students in COL 115 persist at a greater rate than the students in the past who took the three developmental education courses?

3. **Data indicators:** Comparative pass rates for three developmental education courses and for College and Career Preparation.
   a. Comparative quarter-to-quarter retention rates for these populations
   b. Comparative year-to-year (fall-to-fall) persistence rates for these populations
   c. Comparative graduation rates for these populations

**Collaboration with Programs and Curriculum Development**

Baker College, a multi-campus system with nine Michigan campuses and an online college, serves a population of about 34,000 students. Its mission is “to provide quality higher education and training which enable our graduates to be successful throughout challenging and rewarding careers.” As a career college, an important part of our mission is to engage our students early in their programs and careers that span four major areas: business, health, computer information systems/technology, and education/human services. This project provides a unique opportunity for program champions/faculty to interact with developmental education champions/faculty members.

We began the journey with a subcommittee to envision the possibilities of improving student learning in basic skills while immersing students in their general program areas of study. We eventually identified faculty/champions and administrators along with instructional designers to create the course using our backward-design curriculum model. We brought together the developmental education deans and developmental education faculty from each of the campuses to go through a process to define the goals, to outline what these students should know and understand, and to write student learning outcomes for the course. From this baseline, we convened a team of faculty members representing business, health, computer/technology, and education/human services from each campus, as well as other academic administrators, to work in teams to create assessments and project-based learning activities for the new course.

The resulting course, COL 115, meets twelve hours a week during our ten-week quarter. It is team-taught by a lead developmental education faculty member, who is with the students at all class sessions throughout the entire quarter, and by four program faculty members representing business, health, computer/technology, and education/human services areas, who are with the course for
two weeks each (twenty-four hours). The course is designed to provide students with a version of the outcomes of our College Success Strategies course as well as the basic skills in the context of the college’s four major program areas. In other words, students study reading, writing, and math as they relate to an introductory approach to the various fields of interest. This serves to immerse the students earlier into the field as well as to stress the importance of basic skills in every field. Authentic experiences, field trips, guest speakers, focus on professionalism, and use of realistic situations and documents are all an important part of the curriculum, which is anchored in real-world opportunities.

Implementation and Professional Development

Recognizing the particular challenges that team teaching, teaching highly at-risk students, and working with an unfamiliar population each present, we created comprehensive selection, professional development, and feedback processes to support the implementation of the course. Two campuses piloted the course during the first quarter, with additional campuses offering the opportunity in subsequent quarters. Institutional commitment of support, resources, and consultation were all in place for the lead and program faculty members as well as the developmental education administrators. Feedback loops for deans, faculty members, and students are all available through surveys, with students’ surveys collected three times per quarter. The main challenge, so far, has been scheduling both for students and for the team of faculty members, but since representatives from the campuses have met to work on scheduling strategies, this is becoming less of a strain. Another challenge for some campuses has been an insufficient number of eligible students to warrant running sections every quarter. In the past year we have seen some declining enrollment, which has also affected the numbers of students who place into developmental education in all three areas. The process used to create this opportunity may be replicated at other institutions to assist the at-risk student. This ongoing AQIP Project is also informing our academic community about possible models for use in other courses and programs for working collaboratively with the students’ end goals in mind and for creating more authentic, field-of-study, project-based assignments and assessments.

Preliminary Data and Results, Winter 2012 Through Fall 2012

We are collecting data throughout this project, tracking students not only in the COL 115 course but also in their subsequent courses. Students pass COL 115 through a series of three exit exams based on the outcomes and the context-driven format. Students who pass all three areas of reading, writing, and math are then enrolled in ENG 101 Composition I and MTH 099E Pre-Algebra, the next levels of writing and math. Students who are not successful in a specific area enroll in the traditional developmental class. Students who are not able to demonstrate competency in any of the three areas fail the course and are academically dismissed. Data are also being compared to the past three years for students who were required to take three individual courses. Almost across the board, the retention and pass rates are significantly higher for COL 115. At this point, our preliminary data indicate the following:

- Students enrolled: 582
- Students finished/retention (not withdrawn and receive a grade D- or above): 412 (71 percent)
- Students passed (successful in demonstrating competency through exit exam): 351 (85 percent)
- Students passed all three areas (reading, writing, math): 147 (36 percent)
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation

- Students passed reading: 393 (95 percent)
- Students passed writing: 363 (88 percent)
- Students passed math: 251 (61 percent)
- Students withdrawn: 157 (27 percent)

Baker College is committed to this project through the end of fall quarter 2014. We are on track with the milestones and data collection for this project; continue to work with administrators and faculty members; and continue to monitor student, faculty, and administrator feedback. At the halfway point, the end of winter quarter in March 2013, we will use data analysis to inform any changes for the second year of implementation. We also intend to apply for National Association of Developmental Education certification through the use of this project and our developmental self-study.

REFERENCES


Sandy Valensky is System Director for General and Developmental Education at Baker College in Flint, Michigan.
Introduction

Regardless of the effort and support colleges and universities provide to help all students succeed, in the United States alone more than 370,000 students flunk out of college every year for various reasons. As reported by the University of Alabama’s Center for Academic Success, “The impact of college failure can cause lasting damage to self-esteem, and the consequences can influence an entire lifetime” (University of Alabama Center for Academic Success n.d.). This high failure rate is a national tragedy, and it contributes to the low graduation rates of U.S. colleges and universities. In 2009, only 29.2 percent of students graduating with an associate’s degree had earned it within three years, and 55.5 percent of those graduating with a bachelor’s degree had taken up to six years to finish (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2009). The issue of students failing college is a concern both for students and for the instructors who teach them. Therefore, it is important to determine the factors that contribute to student failure.

All too often, instructors feel frustrated or feel a sense of personal failure and blame their own teaching for the failure of students in their classes (Tennen and Hagar 2007; Dawley 2011). While helping failing students find a way to succeed is part of the instructor’s responsibility, there are multiple factors that contribute to student failure; the instructor’s pedagogical instruction and materials are only two of many. Students themselves are more responsible for their own learning success and failure than their instructors are. In What the Best College Teachers Do, Ken Bain (2004) argues that there is no better way to find out if students think that something has helped and encouraged them to learn than to ask them.

The Study

In a study we conducted with 739 students from two-year (212) and four-year (527) colleges, we asked the subjects to provide their own perspectives on why students fail college courses at the undergraduate level. We organized the results into seven categories: academic preparedness, attitudes, external factors, instruction and instructional materials, motivation, relevancy, and study habits. The analysis of the study revealed surprising outcomes; in this paper we share the results and discuss the implications of the findings for students, instructors, curriculum, and academic leaders. We propose that being aware of how students themselves perceive the causes of student failure in academic settings is a necessary first step in clinically analyzing the complexity of the problem and in finding workable solutions that could lead to helping students productively.
Methodology

The methodological research strategy used in this study consists of four main integrated stages:

1. Constructing, distributing, and collecting the survey for the study
2. Preparing the raw data of the survey for study and analysis
3. Analyzing the data
4. Interpreting the results and making sense of the findings

Stage I: Constructing, Distributing, and Collecting the Survey for the Study

As shown in Table 1, we prepared a survey containing one open-ended question: “From your own perspective, why do you think students fail classes?” Additional personal questions—related to college level, academic majors, and gender—were included as optional. While the data generated from the use of open-ended questions are not easy to compile and quantify, they are often the best way to find out what is needed. Such questions can provide substantial and detail-rich information, especially when constructed in a way to obtain usable answers and elicit further explanation.

Initially, we surveyed ten students and used their answers as the basis for a survey that contained multiple-choice options from which students could select, but we decided that this would not work, simply because students’ answers about why students fail classes cover a wide range of reasons. We were concerned about the objectivity of the outcomes and decided against this approach to ensure that we did not limit students’ options and thus miss important reasons. In addition, we did not want to give any suggestions to the students. Thus we agreed on the single open-ended question shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. The Question of the Study and How It Was Presented to Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear Student: We are working on a study to identify what we can do to help students succeed in class. We would like your help in answering the following single question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a student, and from your own perspective, why do you think students fail classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage II: Preparing the Raw Data of the Survey for Study and Analysis

We distributed copies of the final survey to 900 students from two-year (300) and four-year (600) colleges located in the midwestern United States. Of these 900, 739 surveys (212 + 527), or 82.1 percent, were completed and returned.

After the surveys were collected, a copy of each survey was distributed to three independent reviewers. Each reviewer read and identified key words, phrases, and/or sentences that indicated
answers to the posed question. Upon completion, the three reviewers shared and compared findings. Table 2 shows the methodological strategy and mechanism that the reviewers followed and applied for accepting a given answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Condition</th>
<th>This means:</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>An answer selected by the three reviewers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The answer was accepted with no further analysis to use in the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All three reviewers agreed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2                 | An answer selected by two of the three reviewers. | Two of the three reviewers agreed. | The answer was critically discussed, but the one who disagreed with the answer had to convince at least one of the two who selected the given answer.
|                   |                                                 |        |                      |
|                   |                                                 |        | a. If at least one of those who selected the answer agreed with the one who did not, then the answer was rejected and is not included in the analysis. |
|                   |                                                 |        | b. If neither of the two who selected the answer agreed with the one who did not, then the answer was selected and is included in the analysis. |
| 3                 | An answer selected by only one of the three of the reviewers. | Two reviewers disagreed with the third reviewer. | The reviewer who selected the given answer had to convince the other two with the reason for selecting the answer.
|                   |                                                 |        |                      |
|                   |                                                 |        | a. If at least one of the two agreed with the answer, the answer was selected and is included in the analysis. |
|                   |                                                 |        | b. If neither of the two who disagreed changed his or her mind, the answer was rejected and is not included in the analysis. |
| 4                 | The answer was not selected by any of the reviewers.   | There was no agreement among the three reviewers. | The words, phrases, and sentences that were not selected by any of the reviewers were revisited and discussed. Then:
|                   |                                                 |        |                      |
|                   |                                                 |        | a. If one of them was selected by the three reviewers, then it is included. |
|                   |                                                 |        | b. If one was not selected by the three reviewers, then it was rejected. |

After the reviewers agreed on the key words, phrases, and sentences that indicated answers to the posed question, those were compiled into a list with the number of times each answer was mentioned or identified. The final list from the two-year college student surveys contained eighty-four different types of answers, with a total of 596 identified given answers. The final list from the four-year college surveys contained 109 different types of answers, with a total of 2,088 identified given answers. The total of identified answers from all participants in the study was 2,684 (596 + 2088).

**Stage III: Analyzing the Data**

We gave copies of the final list of key words, phrases, and sentences that indicated answers to the posed question, which were listed with the number of times each was mentioned, to six independent colleagues, three of whom have Ph.D.s and three of whom have master’s degrees. We asked each of
the six to read the list independently. Then we gave each a copy of Table 3 and asked each to group the key words, phrases, and sentences on the list into categories, subcategories, and specific reason.

When all six had finished this task, we collected their tables and then sat with them and discussed how they congregated the students’ answers into categories, subcategories, and specific reasons. Then collectively, we agreed on using the categories, subcategories, and specific reasons to group the students’ answers. Based on the survey answers given, we divided the reasons for student failure into seven main categories and fifteen subcategories. As seen in Table 4, the categories included motivation, study habits, instruction, external factors, academic preparedness, attitudes, and relevancy issues. The subcategories included (but were not limited to) level of interest, lack of conscientiousness, laziness, study habits, managing time, instructor’s interaction and materials, counseling and tutoring, perceptions of the class, outside influences, cost of education, academic challenges, stress, course rigor, pride, attitudinal concerns, and disconnect of course work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Example of a Table That Was Given to Independent Colleagues to Sort Students’ Answers into Categories, Subcategories, and Specific Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4. Identified Categories and Subcategories of Students’ Answers to the Posed Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Notices and Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Motivation</td>
<td>Level of interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of conscientiousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laziness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Study Habits</td>
<td>Study habits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managing time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Instruction</td>
<td>Instructor’s instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceptions of the class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Academic Preparation</td>
<td>Academic challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course rigor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V External Factors</td>
<td>Outside influences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Attitudes</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudinal concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Relevancy Issues</td>
<td>Disconnect of course work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, we asked ten additional colleagues to help us during the process whenever we encountered a phrase or sentence in a given student’s answer that did not directly fit into any of the identified categories or subcategories.

### Results

#### I. Participants’ Personal Portfolio

Out of 900 surveys distributed to students, 739 completed surveys were collected, an 82.1 percent rate of return (see Table 5). As shown in Tables 6 and 7, a slightly higher number of females (52.2%) participated than males (35.6%). The number of participants majoring in science (46.4%) was nearly equal to those in non-science majors (47.6%). There were more four-year college students (527 or 71.3%) than two-year college students (212 or 28.7%). While there were more non-science majors (302) than science majors (196) from the four-year colleges, there were more science majors (147) than non-science majors (50) from the two-year colleges. Finally, a total of 2,088 responses were identified from answers provided by the four-year college participants, and a total of 596 responses were identified from the two-year college participants (see Table 8).
Table 5. Distributed and Collected Surveys for the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>Distributed Surveys</th>
<th>Collected Surveys</th>
<th>Total Collected</th>
<th>Rate of Return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No Reply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Year</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Participants’ Information Portfolio I (Gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>Student Participants (n = 739)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Year</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Participants’ Information Portfolio II (Academic Major)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>Student Participants (n = 739)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Non-science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Year</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Participants’ Provided Total Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>Participants (n = 739)</th>
<th>Participants’ Provided Answers (n = 2684)</th>
<th>Provided</th>
<th>Used in Study</th>
<th>Not Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Year</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Year</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>2088</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
<td>2088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2684</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Participants’ Responses to Inquiry Question

General results
Based on analysis of the students’ answers, the reasons for student failure were grouped into seven main categories and fifteen subcategories. All responses fell under one of the fifteen identified
subcategories. While the category or subcategory in which some responses belong could be disputed, distinctions could generally be made for the seven categories and the fifteen subcategories. Table 9 shows a summary of students’ answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2-year College</th>
<th>4-year College</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Motivation</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Study habits</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Instruction</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Academic Preparation</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V External Factors</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Attitudes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Relevancy Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>2088</td>
<td>2684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 9, Category I deals with motivation and related issues, which were mentioned a total of 929 times (34.6% of responses). It includes reasons that pertain to students’ level of interest, laziness, and lack of conscientiousness. Category II deals with study habits and related issues, which were mentioned a total of 465 times (17.3% of responses). This category pertains to students’ study skills and learning and work habits, including taking many classes.

Category III lies entirely with instruction and related issues, mentioned 275 times (10.2% of responses). It deals with the instructor’s interaction with the class and the students as well as with the students’ perceptions of the class. Category IV includes the student’s academic preparedness, which was mentioned a total of 314 times (11.6% of responses). It deals with academic challenges, stress, and course rigor.

Category V includes external factors that students have nothing to do with, which were mentioned a total of 299 times (11.1% of responses). It included outside influences and the cost of education. Category VI, which deals with students’ attitudes, was mentioned a total of 288 times (10.5% of responses). This category includes one’s own pride and attitudinal concerns. Finally, Category VII deals with all of the other relevancy issues related to students’ disconnecting with course work, which was mentioned a total of 119 times (4.4% of responses).

**Analysis and discussion**

The participants provided us with many reasons for why some students fail at college work. Based on analysis of the answers provided, the reasons for student failure were grouped into seven categories and fifteen subcategories. All responses from the students surveyed fell under one of the specific fifteen identified subcategories. To get a sense of the results and what they meant to students, after we completed compiling the results, we discussed our findings with two separate groups of students. One group was from a two-year college and the other group was from a four-year college. The feedback
from the face-to-face in-depth discussion with the students helped us in our analysis of the results. Furthermore, using the “root-cause analysis” mechanism to facilitate the analysis, we found out that all of the categories could be tied to one or more of the following general areas (see Figure 1 and Table 10):

- Individual students’ abilities and efforts (1991 or 74.2%)
- Individual students’ abilities and efforts but with strong influence from outside factors (119 or 4.4%)
- Class learning materials, instruction, instructors, and school environment (275 or 10.2%)
- Factors outside students’ control (299 or 11.2%)

![Figure 1. Graphical Portrayal of Root Cause Analysis](image)

**Table 10. Using Root-Cause Analysis, All the Categories Can Be Tied to One or More of Four Areas (n = 2684)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Tied into</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Students’ Abilities and Efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Students’ Abilities and Efforts but with Strong Influence from Outside Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class Instruction, Instructors, and Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factors Outside Students’ Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I  Motivation</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Study Habits</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Instruction</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Academic Preparation</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V  External Factors</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Attitudes</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII Relevancy Issues</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Root cause analysis
In analyzing students’ responses to posed questions, we found that students mention multiple factors and see the issue of failure from multiple angles. In addition, when some students mentioned the same key words or phrases, such as motivation, study habits, and academic preparedness, in their answers, the explanations sometimes led to different roots. Table 11 provides two examples of these tendencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failing is related to the fact that students are not motivated because:</td>
<td>Instructors failed to make classes interesting to capture students’ attention.</td>
<td>Instructor Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are not interested in education.</td>
<td>Students are not interested in education.</td>
<td>Motivational Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes are not interesting, especially those that have nothing to do with their majors and planned careers.</td>
<td>Classes are not interesting, especially those that have nothing to do with their majors and planned careers.</td>
<td>Relevancy Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students think they are smarter than instructors and could easily pull grades up, as in high school.</td>
<td>Students think they are smarter than instructors and could easily pull grades up, as in high school.</td>
<td>Attitude Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ efforts cause students to fail because</td>
<td>Instructors failed to see that students’ efforts were not enough and did not provide the right advice and assistance.</td>
<td>Instructor Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student did not put enough effort into attending classes and doing their schoolwork.</td>
<td>Student did not put enough effort into attending classes and doing their schoolwork.</td>
<td>Motivational Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor refused to count students’ efforts in class as worth a grade, like quizzes and exams.</td>
<td>Instructor refused to count students’ efforts in class as worth a grade, like quizzes and exams.</td>
<td>Instructor Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor refused to count students’ efforts in class as worth a grade regardless of failing to complete homework or pass the exam.</td>
<td>Instructor refused to count students’ efforts in class as worth a grade regardless of failing to complete homework or pass the exam.</td>
<td>Academic Preparedness Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students did not accept that college needs more effort than high school if students are to succeed.</td>
<td>Students did not accept that college needs more effort than high school if students are to succeed.</td>
<td>Attitude Factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students had not yet realized college life and work are different from high school and require different types of efforts to succeed.</td>
<td>Students had not yet realized college life and work are different from high school and require different types of efforts to succeed.</td>
<td>Attitude Factor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivation
Students most frequently mentioned lack of motivation and related matters (929 times, or 34.6% of responses) as the reason why students fail classes. If a student does not have the self-drive to succeed, or see the benefit from successfully finishing a given course, then he or she will not try to invest in the class and thus not succeed. Realizing why he or she needs to succeed becomes the key to making a decision to invest in a given course, and that key is needed to unlock the door to success. Self-motivation also helps to empower students to be in control of their own education and keeps them from giving up when they are faced with academic, social, and personal difficulties.

There is also a correlation between lack of self-motivation and lack of perseverance. Students with strong self-motivation apply their perseverance, mental capability, and energy to do everything in their power to learn the required knowledge and skills needed to succeed in new courses and programs, no
mater how hard a task is. As one student said, “If you don’t understand it, memorize it; the bottom line is, you have to own it and deliver it when needed.” Motivated students invest time and energy to work through every task and repeat things over and over until they master those things and go forward. When these students realize that they need help, they do not become timid about getting appropriate assistance but go for it aggressively.

Whether students come to class disinterested or lose interest in the subject during the class, lack of interest in the subject discourages students from staying in the class and/or working hard to achieve a good grade. In addition, lack of interest prevents students from being enthusiastic and taking the class seriously. If students have low self-esteem, do not care how well they do, and/or do not care about their own education, then their classes will not be a priority for them. With this attitude, students plant the seed for failure in their current and future courses.

Laziness was also reported as one of the main contributing factors for student failure. Participants explained that when students are lazy, they do not exert much effort in a class and simply give up when they encounter the first obstacle. Some participants stated that students do not exert enough effort and do not bother to find out—either from the instructor or fellow students—how much work is needed to pass a given class. This is a form of unconscious laziness that students do not realize is part of their own character and behavior.

Finally, under the category of Motivation, participants reported a lack of conscientiousness as a factor for student failure. They stated that most students who fall behind tend to give up easily and find it very hard to catch up, and thus go for the easy way out: run away and give up the whole thing.

To succeed, then, students need good reasons for taking a given course and for being in school. Students also need to care about themselves and their education by setting expectations and achievable goals for themselves. Those who do care seek help and ask questions when needed. By doing so, they ensure their own success and that their education meets their individual needs. Students in this study did realize that motivation is essential for success, but they also realized that they need help in becoming and staying motivated in classes and education. In short, we can conclude that academic success is not governed by a student’s cognitive abilities alone. Students need to be motivated to want to learn and work hard to make faster gains and learn better than those who are bright but less motivated (Blue 2012).

**Study habits**

All too often, faculty members feel frustrated to see their students struggle with course content simply because of poor study habits and time management skills (Tennen and Hagar 2007). In our study, study habits and managing time are combined in one category, Study Habits, and were mentioned 465 times (17.3% of responses) as factors contributing to student failure. There is a connection between poor study habits—including poor study skills, poor time management, and an inability to identify and establish priorities—and the increased potential rate of academic failure among students. These days, many students do not seem to know how to study or just do not study or do homework regularly. Participants thought this was due to students’ lack of concentration and/or not paying attention to schoolwork simply because of the lack of experience or too many outside distractions that compete for students’ attention.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective

Furthermore, as some participants reported, many students are not accustomed to managing their time because they have no idea how much time and energy college work demands. Many of them become stressed when they discover that their college work requires much more time and effort than their high schoolwork did or when they realize that what was acceptable in high school is not acceptable in college.

They so often overcommit themselves, either by taking too many courses or by waiting till the last minute to do their work. As a result of poor time management, a number of students lose sense of time and suffer from a procrastination syndrome. When they realize that, it is often too late for them to catch up or they do not know how to catch up. They end up feeling stressed out, produce substandard schoolwork, and perform poorly on quizzes and exams. Typical responses from students include that there is “too much schoolwork,” “not enough time to study,” and/or “too much reading and written work.”

Everyone would agree that instructors want students to succeed and that students with good study habits achieve better grades and are more successful in their classes than those who do not have those habits. Poor study habits, time management, and study skills are among the impediments that stand in the way of learning for many students (Tennen and Hagar 2007).

When the unconscious inclination to perform a process and an act of pursuing knowledge becomes an established trend of a given student’s mind or character, then the student can be characterized as having productive study habits. In this sense, study habits and time management are connected to self-motivation, because it is the student’s motivation that keeps him or her from giving up when faced with difficulties. Unfortunately, however:

Most students are not aware of the value of good study skills to their success. Unless they’re among the fortunate few who have taken a study skills course, note taking and studying are at best a haphazard collection of habits that have been developed over time. The first thing students must recognize is the benefit of good study habits. You can help by taking a few minutes of class time to encourage students to improve their study skills and by giving them compelling reasons why it’s worth their time and effort. (Tennen and Hagar 2007)

Academic preparedness

We all know that one of the major differences between college and high school academic work is that college work requires all types of thinking (critical, analytical, creative) and in-depth readings other than just rote memory and shallow reading. It is also a well-known fact that every day, in many colleges and universities, faculty members enter classes full of students with a wide range of learning needs, levels of preparedness, and social and cultural backgrounds. This range of capabilities in the classroom is a frustrating phenomenon that drives faculty members to feel overwhelmed and drives some students to feel lost in the classroom environment.

In terms of frequency of mention by study participants, academic challenges came in third on the list of reasons students fail in college. It was repeated 314 times (11.6% of responses). The overall message is that a number of students fail simply because they were not capable mentally and/or not prepared academically (or both) for college-level schoolwork. Those types of students take difficult classes without realizing that they do not have the background that enables them to understand the subject and successfully complete course requirements. Possibly they have no idea of the amount and
quality of work demanded by college or that the time and energy required by typical college work is much greater than those demanded by even the toughest high schools. As reported by the Center for Academic Success of the University of Alabama, in college, “students may actually work harder than they have ever worked before and still find that their efforts are not sufficient” (University of Alabama Center for Academic Success n.d.). This leads students to feel overwhelmed and stressed and to blame the rigor of the course as the reason for their failing. Furthermore, stress as a result of an overwhelming schedule also contributes to student failure. It is important to note that many students do not “really understand the importance of studying in college and if they let other activities get in the way, chances are they will not do very well in college” (University of Alabama Center for Academic Success n.d.).

Lack of academic preparedness does not always mean that students are not intelligent, bright, and/or hard workers. Often, students are not prepared academically because they have poor language, communication, and writing skills that they need to comprehend what they learned and communicate what they understood to others. We all could easily agree that the success or failure of a student at college is directly related to his or her ability to read, write, speak, and listen with comprehension. Many college instructors believe that it is not their job to teach language and communication skills in their courses. But while these skills might not be the responsibility of colleges to teach, and even though students should learn them at the K–12 levels, most students come to college without mastering these skills to the degree that would enable them to succeed at the college level (Blackboard Institute 2011; Casner-Lotto 2006; Cherif and Wideen 1992).

External factors

External factors included outside influences, such as the need to work while going to school and the cost of education, which are outside of the control of students. This category was mentioned the fourth most frequently as a factor contributing to students failing courses at the college level. It was mentioned a total of 299 times (11.1% of responses). Participants reported that unforeseen circumstances, including illnesses and family tragedies, are outside influences that affect students’ performances, and they have no power over them. But they also reported factors such as drugs and alcohol, which are factors that are under their own control.

Cost of education and the fact that some school supplies are very expensive were also mentioned as a factor for failing classes. Some students said that because of the cost of education, they maximize the number of courses they take to save money. These students were aware that they might end up dropping some of the courses if they felt overwhelmed. These students rely on the possibility of dropping a course if they find themselves in a bad situation. On the other hand, some participants perceived this situation as bad time management and study habits. Taking more classes than what they can handle is an unwise decision because it will lead to worrying, stress, and, in turn, undesirable academic performance. So it is more an issue of management than of an education cost.

Cost of education, however, has been on the rise in the last ten years in the United States, and recently, many states have cut budgets for education significantly. This of course forces colleges and universities not only to raise tuition but also to cut the scholarships that they could offer incoming students. Clearly, it forces students who desire a higher education and cannot afford it to go to college and work at the same time.
Student attitudes

A student’s state of mind controls not only how he or she feels and perceives the world but also how to behave in an evaluative manner toward schoolwork, course learning materials, class policies, instruction, instructional materials, and instructors. Because of this, a student’s state of mind has a major effect on how he or she performs and in turn succeeds in a given class. This means that there is a positive correlation between a student’s state of mind, which we call attitude, and academic achievement (Russell and Hollander 1975). Thus, a student’s attitude is an extremely important factor in learning (Blake and Hanley 1995) because it directs his or her aspirations and ambitions. For example, students who are not willing to ask questions and/or are not ready to say that they need help have a greater tendency to fail than those who do ask for help. By asking questions and asking for help when they need it, students help maximize their rate of success.

In terms of frequency of mention, student attitudes was fifth in the study; it was mentioned as a contributing factor to student’s failure in college a total of 283 times (10.5% of responses). Student attitudes can take various forms. For example, being overly proud to the point that one is unwilling to ask for help when it is really needed can strongly contribute to the failure of some students. Another example of attitudinal factors was that some students developed a bad or negative attitude toward school and schoolwork, which prevented them from engaging in schoolwork. This usually happened as a result of an unpleasant learning experience and/or bad communication or a misunderstanding with an instructor, staff member, administrator, or even fellow students. Furthermore:

**Negative Thinking.** This one bad habit can wipe out all the student’s good study habits. I mean if the student perennially thinks he or she does not understand the subject or that the subject is just too hard for him or her, no amount of studying or copying notes or doing assignments can really make up for this one bad habit. It will just simply block everything because the student is setting himself or herself up for failure. Accounting [for example] is already a difficult subject as it is, adding to this one’s resistance to learning and everything will just really be for nothing. I’m a strong believer of mind over matter when it comes to this subject and if the student thinks he or she cannot understand the subject, chances are, he or she will never understand it. This is what one of my students did and she, needless to say, failed my subject. (Emievil 2012)

A student’s negative attitude toward a subject, such as science, could also be the result of how that subject is taught. For example, the way science has been taught, both at the high school and college levels, plays a major role in shaping students’ attitudes toward science (Cherif and Wideen 1992). Often, students in high school are being presented with selected aspects of scientific dogma rather than being taught the innovative and visionary character of science and the value that such knowledge has to the educational process. When they go to college, some of these students could easily become confused because the information they learn in college contradicts the information they gained in their high school science classes. This dogmatic approach to teaching science, coupled with the drastic cultural changes that students undergo as they transition from high school to college, affect students’ attitudes toward and performance in college-level science courses. Though the development of desirable attitudes toward science is not the primary goal of introductory science courses, instructors usually recognize that attitude formation is one of the important aspects of instruction (Cherif and Wideen 1992; Garcia and McFeeley 1978). This is simply because there is substantial evidence that students who possess positive attitudes toward science will perform better academically (Movahedzadeh 2012; Russell and Hollander 1975); the same can be said about any subject.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective

Instruction
Factors contributing to student failure related to instruction are mentioned 275 times (10.2% of responses), which make it the sixth largest number of mentions. In this subcategory, reasons included that classes are boring and/or students are not challenged, so they do not invest time in the courses nor make any effort and thus end up failing. Some participants attributed failure to insensitive instructors or faculty members who do not engage students in active learning by moving too quickly through the materials and with no chapter reviews. In addition, some students do not get along with an instructor, which results in students’ failure. Instructors who are not clear in presenting information cause students to misunderstand, sometimes resulting in failure. Furthermore, some students develop the belief that the instructor would pass them regardless and thus end up doing nothing, resulting in failing the class.

Just as instructors feel frustrated when students fail, students feel frustrated too. Some students feel that the content of some instructors’ final exams is purposely more rigorous and does not line up with the course content taught. It is a fact that some instructors, especially at the graduate level, have a tendency to teach what they like regardless of the course content and policies. But the question still remains: If the majority of students are able to successfully complete an exam, why is it that certain students cannot? Is the student complaining because he or she could not pass the exam and using the content as an excuse for the failure? Or did the exam really not cover what the students learned in the class, or what they were supposed to learn?

Relevancy issues
The least repeated root cause for students’ failing classes at the college level was the feeling of disconnect with the course work or that the subject being taught does not apply to their fields or major. It was mentioned 119 times (4.4% of responses). Many students coming out of high school are not able to see the value in doing well in college if they cannot see the relevancy of the learning materials to their lives. When students do see the relevancy of the learned topics to their majors, careers, and daily lives, they are motivated to become involved in the learning activities rather than to be passive receivers of information.

There is growing evidence that “courses with learner-centered approaches—those approaches that use active learning strategies to engage students directly in learning processes—enhance academic achievement and promote the development of important learning skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and the ability to cooperatively work with others” (Weimer 2012). Derting and Ebert-May (2010, 471) found that “the benefits of learner-centered teaching may extend far beyond the class(es) in which such teaching occurs.”

Some argue that there is really no direct relationship between learner-centered instruction and making the learning materials relevant to students. They argue that while it helps to see the connection, it does not matter whether or not the materials are relevant; if certain concepts or course materials are required to be learned, then it is the student’s responsibility to learn them. Students need to assume responsibility, and the failure to do so can transcend into failure in college and maybe in life. Unfortunately though, many students need to see the relevancy to stay engaged and motivated.
Conclusion

Retention, which is one of the most critical issues facing colleges and universities today, is directly related to students’ success and failure in schoolwork. Students who fail most often leave colleges either on their own or because they are forced to do so by school policy and regulations of not meeting course passing requirements. In both cases, it is a loss for the students and the college. From the results of this study, we can conclude that participants held themselves accountable for their own success or failure. After all, each classroom with its instructor, students, learning materials, and learning environment represents a dynamically active ecosystem in which “learning from instruction requires the learner to play an active role in order to acquire new knowledge successfully” (Shuell 1988, 276).

Motivation and study habits are mentioned most frequently as the root cause behind student failure at the college level. These two factors, as well as academic readiness and student attitudes (which are mentioned third and fifth most frequently) are fundamentally under the control of the students. The instruction, instructional materials, and instructors, over which we as faculty members, educators, and college administrators have power, came a distant sixth. This means that students are aware that the reason why students fail courses most often resides within them and is under their own power. For faculty members and administration to say that students are unmotivated and unprepared academically and mentally for college education is perceived as an unsupported indictment. But for students themselves to say that students often fail because they are unmotivated and unprepared academically is perceived as admitting self-facts and a loud cry for help.

While students do not blame us—the faculty members, educators, and college administrators—directly, and though we have only limited power over students’ attitudes, academic readiness, and study habits, in the classroom setting we control the learning materials, learning environment, and pedagogy through which we can influence students’ motivation, study habits, and attitudes and help them see the relevancy of what they learn to their life and future careers. But this is a new challenge for both faculty members and college administrators who have been holding the belief that they are there to teach certain topics and skills, based on a signed contract between the college and given students, that leads to specific academic degrees. Helping students to become motivated, influencing their study habits, improving their attitudes, and making the teaching materials relevant to students’ lives is rarely a part of what faculty members and other educators at the college level think of when they design their courses, teaching approaches, and assessment strategies. For many instructors, if students become motivated in their classes and develop a better attitude toward learning, this is a by-product of what they mainly do with their teaching materials and approaches. However, students in this study are telling us that even though colleges and faculty are not required to teach students how to be motivated or study better, these factors often cause them to fail courses. Thus colleges and their faculty members need to help students to become motivated, to be more academically prepared, to develop better attitudes toward learning and education, and to develop better study habits. So, as faculty members, educators, and college administrators, what can we do with our curriculum, teaching approaches and strategies, and learning environment to help students become more motivated to learn and become interested in education? Do we need to do things differently than the way we have been doing them all these years? It is a fact that today’s students are different from those who were in college when we were college students. It is also a fact that the challenges and the opportunities they face today are different from those that students faced only ten to fifteen years ago.
In short, lack of motivation is the leading cause behind students’ failure or success in completing schoolwork. Motivation influences students’ attitudes, study habits, academic readiness, and so on. Through the college learning environment, learning materials, and instructional pedagogy, faculty members, educators, and college administrators can help students invest in their courses and, in turn, succeed. Students who have a good understanding of the content being taught are generally more motivated and have a more positive attitude and thus have a greater chance of doing well in their schoolwork. And to ensure that students have a good understanding, instructors should provide students with learning opportunities that are engaging, pique their interest, and allow them to reconstruct their own knowledge. Students know it is their responsibility to do well, but many students need extra support from their college and instructors to help keep them interested and on track.

Finally, as Professor James Ricky Cox from Murray State University recently stated:

I have realized that students truly struggling with the material often need a new way of approaching problem solving and concept mastery. One successful approach has been to encourage students to draw diagrams and sketches (external representations) to help organize information and ideas. This allows them to apply their creativity and right-brained skills to tackle more analytical tasks. The most rewarding and meaningful experiences of my teaching career have been the success of students who once struggled but ultimately overcame their difficulties. In my mind, a student’s journey from failure to mastery (or struggle to success) is what higher education is all about, and the only way we can make this work is by setting the academic bar high, but not beyond reach, and then providing the necessary support and motivation. If I had to establish a marketing campaign around this idea, it would sound like the Home Depot slogan: You can do it (succeed in a demanding course) and we can help (by providing a supportive and instructionally diverse environment). (Cox 2011, 6)

Readers who are interested in detailed response patterns among the various demographic groups included in this study, or in the authors’ specific recommendations for strategies that might be employed by instructors, advisors, and administrators to address the issues raised here, are encouraged to communicate with one of the authors or visit our Web site: www.abourcherif.com.

REFERENCES


Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective


Abour H. Cherif is National Associate Dean at DeVry University in Downers Grove, Illinois; Farahnaz Movahedzadeh is Assistant Professor of Biology at City Colleges of Chicago— Harold Washington College; Gerald E. Adams is Professor of Geology and Earth Science at Columbia College Chicago; and Jeremy Dunning is Professor of Geophysics/Dean Emeritus at Indiana University Bloomington.
Introduction

In an era of increasing student and organizational performance and accountability, Schoolcraft College has recently undertaken a large transformation of its curricula and moved toward a model of performance-based learning. During this transformational process, as faculty members have mapped the curriculum, the focus has moved toward ensuring that students are prepared as they enter each course. Mapping fosters alignment and enhances the opportunities for student success.

This paper offers a glimpse into a process that has provided rich analysis and fostered curricular revision. It is not intended to report research, but rather to share ideas that may create organizational shift and clarity that enables learning. The adjoining session will allow participants to engage in a real-time example of mapping curriculum outcomes to reveal the process, insights, and opportunities for improvement.

The Challenge

Anecdotes abound regarding student preparedness and success. For many years Schoolcraft College faculty members have complained that students are not ready to handle content in a particular course and that they are faced with the need for too broad a spectrum of skills in each classroom. Faculty members believe that “students just aren’t what they used to be” and find themselves facing an uphill battle while teaching in the classroom.

On the other side of this issue, many students have expressed how difficult it is to move from one course to another. While they may have done well in an introductory or foundation class, they might find later coursework to be challenging. Students often blame a teacher for being “too hard,” or worse, students begin to think that they are just not cut out for college.

Perpetuating the challenge, counselors and advisers use the college catalog and students’ placement scores to help students select courses for their program of study. These staff members rely on the catalog’s program layout pages or each course’s listed prerequisites to guide them in the sequence of courses to be accomplished and use “degree audits” to see what courses might be left on the “list.” When a student is not able to progress successfully, counselors and advisers may come to the conclusion that the student is academically challenged.

Many processes and policies are involved in preparing students for college coursework. Admissions, registration, and other services all attempt to provide students opportunities for success; however, many of those same professionals think that students lack something, and the lack inhibits success. In many cases, faculty and staff members and administrators insist that, “If we would only enforce
prerequisites, then many of our problems would be over.” There is no doubt that all of these scenarios and concerns could be correct. However, there may be more to this story.

The Foundation for Change

In 2007, Schoolcraft College, a mid-sized community college in Livonia, Michigan, adopted a performance-based learning (PBL) model of curriculum development and assessment. Within the first eighteen months of the PBL initiative, faculty members rewrote course outcomes for more than 740 courses to represent the students’ intended capabilities or competencies in place of the teacher’s objectives for instruction. The focus of this transformation was to ensure that students’ performance could then be measured using authentic assessment methods.

One Approach to Improving Preparedness

Not only was the PBL initiative important in setting up authentic outcomes assessment, this shift to examining students’ performance has also laid the groundwork for an analysis of addressing student preparedness in each course in a series.

As many educators know, the ways in which a curriculum is built and presented is as important to students’ success as students’ own abilities. Much literature exists that extols the virtue of using pedagogical and andragogical methods for engaging learners. This is fostered through professional development initiatives. However, mapping curriculum from one level of learning to another may not have been considered at some postsecondary institutions.

Aligning learning between courses simply makes sense. Without alignment between courses, students are less likely to be able to succeed. Only when the curriculum takes students from one skill set to the next in a thorough and effective manner are they given the opportunity to be prepared for the next course.

Based on these observations, Schoolcraft College administration decided to engage faculty in an interactive and informative method of ensuring course alignment. Using a simple process of discovery, every discipline area has undergone or is undergoing a four-step evaluation and mapping process of course competencies and course alignment.

The Analysis and Mapping Process

Step 1: Gain Faculty Buy-in

Faculty members are the subject matter experts; therefore, engaging them in this process is necessary for the development and analysis of the curricula. Building faculty collaboration is also essential for creating a culture of competency-based learning using a systematic approach. Most importantly, it is the faculty who will be presenting the material. Their buy-in and understanding allows change to occur directly in the classroom.

Step 2: Identify Performance-Based Competencies

During the building of the PBL curriculum model, Schoolcraft’s faculty members were trained in the basic theories and methods of writing competencies. This training was essential for the goals of rewriting the curriculum, as well as for building understanding for future analysis and curricular management.
Using the application level or higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy, faculty members identified competencies that would be appropriate for each course in their subject areas. As well, faculty members worked to identify each course’s role or function in their particular program. Program-specific courses were the starting point for the development of these performance standards.

**Step 3: Analyze the Series of Prerequisites and Co-requisites**

After identifying all of the competencies, faculty members were given documents that illustrated the prerequisites and co-requisites for every course. These documents showed the series of courses that were required for each student to complete, in a way that made obvious the number of courses needed to complete each series.

**Figure 1. Example of Office Information Systems (OIS) Prereq of the Prereq**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>PRE-REQ</th>
<th>PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ</th>
<th>PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ</th>
<th>PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ OF PRE-REQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OIS 100</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 102</td>
<td>OIS 100 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 100 - none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 195</td>
<td>none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 105</td>
<td>A skill level of ENG 050 or higher on the placement test. OIS 102 strongly recommended</td>
<td>ENG 050 - none</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 255</td>
<td>OIS 100 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 102 - OIS 100 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 100 - none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 165</td>
<td>OIS 105 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 105 - A skill level of ENG 050 or higher on the placement test. OIS 102 strongly recommended</td>
<td>ENG 050 - none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 260</td>
<td>OIS 255 recommended</td>
<td>OIS 255 - OIS 100 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 100 - none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 185</td>
<td>OIS 105 recommended</td>
<td>OIS 185 - OIS 105 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 105 - A skill level of ENG 050 or higher on the placement test. OIS 102 strongly recommended</td>
<td>ENG 050 - none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIS 105</td>
<td>A skill level of ENG 050 or higher</td>
<td>OIS 102 - OIS 100 or equivalent</td>
<td>OIS 100 - none</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty members were asked to analyze if the series of course prerequisites and co-requisites made sense in the progress of students’ learning needs. Was every course necessary? How did the course competencies prepare students for subsequent course competencies? How did faculty members perceive that each course fostered the learning requirements of the next course? Had some courses been designated as prerequisites to compel other elements of student behavior that were outside of the immediate needs for success in this content area? What or who were the drivers of the decisions to make these courses required? And finally, were there competencies missing that are necessary for student success?
Step 4: Align Competencies Between Every Course

After faculty discussed the series of prerequisites for each of their program-specific courses, they were presented with a chart showing each course’s competencies aligned next to the subsequent courses in adjacent columns. The belief was that each course’s competencies should support the next course’s competencies in a concise and effective manner. This could easily be illustrated by aligning / mapping the competencies from one course to the next. By drawing arrows from one competency to another, faculty members identified the alignment that was necessary for the introduced, practiced, and assessed supported flow of learning from course to course.

Faculty members aligned competencies in their specific disciplines as well as courses that had been identified as prerequisites or co-requisites outside of their disciplines. When one department’s decision about a prerequisite didn’t seem to meet the direct needs of another department, the faculty of both departments met to discuss the prerequisite. The overall goal is that there be no gaps in the opportunity for student learning, but rather a consistent flow of increased levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for student success. This is the foundation of student preparedness for every course, as well as the foundation for a final achievement of measurable outcomes.
Impact on Curriculum

To date, this process has brought about an awareness that had not existed. Many faculty members have been surprised at some of the required prerequisites, as they may not necessarily have paid close attention to this element of students’ experience. They soon discovered that the prerequisites could also have prerequisites, and those prerequisites could have prerequisites. For example, even though Schoolcraft is considered a two-year college, some course prerequisite series required students to complete up to nine semesters of college-level coursework before taking the final course.

Faculty members’ new awareness of what was required for students to complete a course of study has been essential to an understanding of the consequences to students, as well as an impetus to take a closer look at prerequisites and co-requisites. After careful analysis, faculty identified weak links between courses, missing or inaccurately written competencies that did not support the intended goal of achieving continuity between courses. Whereas in the past instructors of higher-level courses might have presumed that foundational skills were being taught in lower-level courses, in fact, some of those necessary concepts were either absent or weakly represented in the lower levels. Faculty members realized that only by collaborating could they write competencies that would transition students through a well-sequenced set of learning goals.

This competency gap-analysis and alignment has resulted in widespread changes to the curriculum. To date, 301 courses in all twenty-seven liberal arts, science, and learning support disciplines have aligned their competencies.

Impact on Students

This competency mapping initiative is a part of a larger project to examine elements of student retention and success. Aligning the curriculum lessens the likelihood that students are not prepared as they complete a series of courses; therefore, it is presumed that students who are capable of successfully completing the first course in a series will be better prepared to successfully complete subsequent courses. Specific student data were not collected before this initiative and may be impacted by other initiatives; however, because the curriculum is competency-based, it stands to reason that students will now have the competence to move forward in every course. Thus, we provide students concrete pathways as they work toward their educational goals. This, then, increases students’ opportunities for success and retention.

Next Steps

Faculty from the occupational areas will soon begin their curriculum mapping analysis project. Many of these subject areas, such as nursing or welding, have external requirements or standards that may impact the competencies needed for those specific disciplines. Demonstrating the progression of learning will be crucial for students not only to be successful in each course but also to be successful in achieving the outcomes of their particular program and standard.
Conclusion

Mapping the curriculum has provided Schoolcraft’s faculty members an opportunity to offer courses in a logical and sequential manner that fosters student success. The alignment of learning skills, knowledge, and attitudes is essential for preparing students for each level of learning. It also fosters the culture of collaboration and a performance-based systems thinking that is necessary for Schoolcraft to be effective in its goals of providing a transformational learning experience for its students. It prepares the Schoolcraft faculty and staff members to face the era of increasing student and organizational performance and accountability with a well-developed curriculum that is fluid and effective in a manner that reinforces the purpose of higher education: learning for preparedness in the twenty-first century.

*Cynthia L. Cicchelli* is Director, Curriculum and Assessment, and *Cheryl Hawkins* is Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences, at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Michigan.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
John Barthell, William Radke, JeAnna Redd, Charles Abramson, John Hranitz, and Harrington Wells

Introduction

One of the most noteworthy aspects of undergraduate research is the discernible increase in student retention and professionalism associated with this learning activity (Lopatto 2004; Seymour et al. 2004; Crowe and Brakke 2008), including for students from underrepresented groups or underserved populations (Nagda et al. 1998). Although the effects of international research are less studied (but see Redden 2010 for commentary on study abroad programs), it stands to reason that such experiences would also promote student retention and development of career goals. International experiences encourage networking and communication skills, develop a sense of autonomy and confidence, and teach practical skills in language and the logistics of traveling abroad. Nonetheless, the synergistic effects of these kinds of experiences remain to be fully documented.

The University of Central Oklahoma seeks both to enhance the educational experience of its students and to increase retention of those students toward graduation. Indeed, as part of the Complete College America initiative (2011), University of Central Oklahoma and other institutions across Oklahoma and around the nation have developed explicit goals for the next decade to encourage just this outcome. This effort includes retention in disciplines relating to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (commonly referred to as STEM), which is of particular importance to the University of Central Oklahoma: the state was recently ranked sixteenth in the country for growth in STEM jobs (Oklahoma Employment Security Commission 2012). This paper provides an overview of a seven-year program, centered at the University of Central Oklahoma, that has led to increased retention of student participants in their degree programs and that may serve as a model for achieving this retention on other campuses, as well as encouraging postgraduate studies in STEM.

Transformative Learning and High-Impact Educational Practices

The University of Central Oklahoma is a metropolitan university that incorporates the “Central Six” practices of an initiative called Transformative Learning: (1) disciplinary knowledge; (2) leadership; (3) research, scholarly and creative activities; (4) service learning and civic engagement; (5) global and cultural competencies; and (6) health and wellness. These six practices mirror Kuh’s ten High-Impact Learning Practices (2008), especially undergraduate research and diversity/global learning. Several efforts on campus have been initiated to support these practices, including the development of the Office of Research and Grants as well as the Centre for Global Competency (Barthell et al. 2010), both of which ultimately support the integration of research with international experiences.

The implementation of Transformative Learning elements began to be more formally supported in the College of Mathematics and Science in 2008, when measures were taken to facilitate participation
in student-centered research, culminating in the establishment of the university’s Center for Undergraduate Research and Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics or CURE-STEM (Barthell 2012b; Barthell et al., forthcoming). A National Science Foundation–funded program, Research Experiences for Undergraduates, emerged from this process at the university and now includes senior personnel at several collaborating institutions: Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, Oklahoma State University, and the University of Tulsa. Two consecutive Research Experiences for Undergraduates grants have been funded during the last seven years, with the University of Central Oklahoma serving as the principal investigator institution.

The Program

The University of Central Oklahoma’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates program focuses on biological research pertaining to the honey bee (Apis mellifera L.), a model research organism that can be used to answer questions that have both basic and applied perspectives. Variants of this species (sometimes termed subspecies) originate from regions across Africa, Europe, and parts of Asia and have now spread to all continents except Antarctica. Initially introduced to the United States for its wax and honey (Crosby 1986), the honey bee’s role has expanded to include the commercial pollination of billions of dollars’ worth of crops across North America (Whynott 2004). The honey bee’s critical role in North American agriculture has been highlighted in recent years through the phenomenon known as Colony Collapse Disorder, the presumed result of accumulating pathogens and natural enemies over time in a new American ecosystem (Barthell and Wells 2007).

The scientific objectives of the Research Experiences for Undergraduates program include an integrative approach to studying biological aspects of this most well known of insect species (Wake 2008). This includes introducing students to traditional and modern molecular approaches to studying honey bee biology. Because of the honey bee’s role as an invasive organism, students also gain an important perspective on the relationship between geographic regions of the world, including our interdependence on resources (agricultural) and the agents of disease and ecological competition that threaten those resources (Barthell and Wells 2007). International travel (including a week in the Republic of Turkey and Greece at the outset of the program) provides important experience in conducting science in diverse cultural settings, which illustrates differences and similarities in the modern, globalized economic context of STEM disciplines (Friedman 2005).

Amidst the scientific research opportunities, the University of Central Oklahoma’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates program strives to integrate cultural enrichment opportunities for its students wherever possible. Thus, on arriving in Istanbul, students are immediately immersed in Turkish language and culture. They visit architectural wonders, such as the Hagia Sophia, the Cistern Basilica, and the Hippodrome, before departing to see one of the most strategically significant regions of the world at Çanakkale, Turkey, near the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Hellespont (Dardanelles). Once in this region, they visit Hisarlik, the presumed site of the ancient city of Troy and place of Homeric legend. Nearby, on the Gallipoli Peninsula, students tour the battleground that has come to define Turkey’s modern autonomy as well as representing the site for the historical emergence of its modern founding father, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While conducting field experiments on the nearby island of Lesvos (Greece), students gather near the ancient city of Pyrrha along the Kalloni Bay shoreline. It was here that the scientific method arguably was born through the marine biological studies of Aristotle (Tipton 2006).
Students are continuously reminded of the historical contributions of the regions they visit to our own intellectual history, and they learn to respect and understand the characteristics of each host country.

**Student Participants**

A total of forty-three students (out of 426 applicants) have participated in the program during the last seven years. Of these, thirty-three (77 percent) are from minority groups, while thirty (70 percent) are from underrepresented minority groups. The latter number exceeds levels measured for other Research Experiences for Undergraduates programs during 2006–2009 (Beninson et al. 2011). Of past student participants, nine (21 percent) are American Indians, nine (21 percent) are Hispanic, eight (19 percent) are African Americans, four (9 percent) are Pacific Islanders, and three (7 percent) are Asian Americans; thirty of forty-three (70 percent) are women. These student participants originated from universities from across the United States, but nearly half (20) of these came from Oklahoma universities, reflecting focused recruitment efforts of American Indians. Of the nineteen underrepresented minority group students known to have completed undergraduate school, eleven (58 percent) have been accepted into postgraduate programs. Indeed, previous student participants of the program are on track to attain the STEM graduate enrollment level (38 percent) described for the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation program (Clewell et al. 2006).

**Publications and Presentations**

As of the last summer cycle of the program, the University of Central Oklahoma’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates program had generated thirty-three manuscripts that were either published or forthcoming in journals, and twenty of these (61 percent) included student-participant co-authors. In addition, at least forty-five poster or oral presentations referencing the program have been given at scientific conferences and other academic venues, such as the annual conference of the American Association of Colleges and Universities; forty-one of these (91 percent) included student co-authors. All students who have participated in the program give at least two poster presentations within one year of the end of their research cycle, including at Oklahoma Research Day and the annual conference of the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology. The latter experience is often the first exposure students have to a national scientific conference and has given at least two former students opportunities to meet their future doctoral advisers while at poster sessions or oral presentations.

**Results**

Although well documented for undergraduate research and other activities that engage students with peers and faculty members (Tinto 1994; Crowe and Brakke 2008), the effects of international experience remain more elusive in the context of student success. However, a study reported by Redden (2010) indicated a higher retention rate among the thirty-five institutions of the University System of Georgia for students who participate in study abroad programs versus those who do not participate in such programs. Even though the evidence supports better retention among underrepresented group members through participation in undergraduate research, there are few findings from which to draw conclusions about such students participating in study abroad programs (Redden 2007).

The results of our program represent one of the few indications of the effects of hybridizing research with international experience. Indeed, however preliminary, the results of integrating undergraduate
research and international study through the National Science Foundation’s Research Experiences for Undergraduates program are fully consistent with the expectations of the High-Impact Educational Practices (Kuh 2008) known as Transformative Learning at the University of Central Oklahoma (Barthell 2012a and b). Not only have all undergraduate students involved continued on or completed their undergraduate degrees, but a high percentage of those have gone on to postgraduate programs, including those at leading STEM graduate programs throughout the United States. In addition, signed agreements creating opportunities for faculty and student exchanges now exist between the University of Central Oklahoma and the host institutions that have collaborated with the university during the Research Experiences for Undergraduates program.

In an increasingly globalized economy, and with the innumerable connections of STEM disciplines among communities abroad, the practice of conducting undergraduate research with international partners will undoubtedly increase in relevance; the increase in study abroad programs and international agreements on our own campus clearly reflects this national trend. Although it may be unreasonable to think that all students at a given university will have the opportunity to experience multiple High-Impact Educational Practices during their undergraduate careers, the trend toward this type of intersection of practices ought to be explored further. Such circumstances will likely create increased student success in their career pursuits, especially for students from underrepresented groups that may have low persistence rates toward both undergraduate and graduate degrees in STEM disciplines.

Notes

In addition to faculty members, staff members, and administration on the University of Central Oklahoma campus, we are indebted to our many colleagues at institutions abroad who have served our students during the course of the program. Among these are T. Petanidou (University of the Aegean near Mytilene, Lesvos, Greece) and I. and S. Çakmak (Uludağ University near Bursa, Turkey). The numerous staff members and faculty colleagues who have assisted in the operation of the program include T. Baughman, K. Clare, S. Clement, B. Endicott, V. Hatton, C. Simmons, S. Spencer, and P. Washington. The National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program has funded two consecutive programs (DBI #0552717 and #0851651), and we acknowledge this support and the efforts of program officers, including S. O’Connor.

REFERENCES


Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School


Complete College America. 2011. Time is the enemy: The surprising truth about why today’s college students aren’t graduating and what needs to change. Washington, DC: Complete College America.


Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School

John Barthell is the Dean of the College of Mathematics and Science, William Radke is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and JeAnna Redd is a graduate student at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond; Charles Abramson is Regents Professor in the Department of Psychology at Oklahoma State University–Stillwater; John Hranitz is Professor of Biological and Allied Health and Director of Sponsored Research at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania; and Harrington Wells is Professor of Biological Science at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Susan Deege, Judy Abbott, and Lloyd Hammonds

Multidisciplinary learning activities can be effective in promoting students’ problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills. A small, liberal arts–tradition college uses a “town hall meeting” simulation to effectively engage students in experiential learning. The simulation encourages prior student preparation in a “flipped” classroom style (Berrett 2012). The use of current events discussed in popular culture circles can provide the basis for student interest and involvement. In this way, textbook concepts are more easily understood and applied by students. A factory moving offshore or Casey Anthony’s intention to move into a gated community are among the scenarios that provide the opportunity for students to assume the roles of neighbors, politicians, police officers, unions, attorneys, displaced workers, and other individuals and groups with conflicting needs and beliefs. In a town hall meeting, these groups come together and present varying viewpoints (based on prior research and background information) with the goal of reaching consensus and resolution.

Town hall meeting events have been scheduled as part of campus Ethics Week and Constitution Day. Offering students, administrators, and faculty members the opportunity to assume various roles has been very effective in getting the entire campus involved. Encountering the conflicting stances provided by controversial scenarios has moved this campus beyond passive learning methods. It offers the disorienting dilemma that Mezirow (2000) purports as meaningful and necessary in experiential learning. Mezirow first introduced the concept of transformative learning in 1978, and experiential learning advocates have continued to refine and apply the concepts ever since, particularly in light of changing student characteristics in the Internet age.

Before the event, classroom preparation requires that students identify the key issues and determine the disciplinary concepts or rules involved in resolving the issue. For example, students majoring in pre-law, business, criminal justice, religion and ethics, or other majors will likely approach the scenarios, at least initially, in very different manners. Faculty members encourage students to confidently assume the roles of future “employee” positions but prepare them for the inevitability of discourse at the town hall meeting. Often, students do not expect face-to-face differences of opinion, particularly among a seemingly homogenous, small-campus community. By design, the town hall model gives “clout” to the differing opinions and offers students the opportunity to recognize opinions other than their own as legitimate and real.

As more town hall events have taken place, faculty members have continued to enhance and improve on the reflection process to deepen the learning experience. Involvement with the National Society for Experiential Education and a campus commitment to follow that organization’s eight standards of practice have been helpful for curriculum development (www.nsee.org/standards-and-practice). Tracking onto the eight standards, following is a summary of our experience:
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model

1. Intention is the initial standard, representing the purposefulness that enables experience to become knowledge. The town hall events cannot simply be gimmicks or crowd-pleasers but must include intended learning goals.

2. Preparedness and planning for these events has proven to be time-consuming, and generally represents an “in-progress” state in terms of getting them exactly where they need to be. The college has committed time and resources to faculty development to expand experiential learning opportunities in an intentional manner. In-service training has brought to campus Dr. Patrick Green, director of the Center for Experiential Education at Loyola University, and Dr. Brad Garner, director of Faculty Enrichment at Indiana Wesleyan University. Among the Web site resources that Culver faculty members have used is The Toolbox, an online teaching and learning resource for the faculty of Indiana Wesleyan University, Dr. Garner’s institution. Current and archival content is offered at [www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox/](http://www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox/).

3. Authenticity requires that the experience must have a real-world context. Actual current events offer a welcome change from contrived classroom activities.

4. Reflection, acknowledged as a key component to learning, has been a major discussion point. Early on, the town hall meetings were left to stand on their own, without much follow-up or reflection. Faculty members have intentionally moved beyond the simple reflection pieces that ask “How did you feel?” to more concrete questions about what was learned.

5. Orientation and training must be an integral part of the town hall meetings or any meaningful experiential learning. Information about the context and environment in which the experience will operate is crucial. Planning meetings with all disciplines involved have pointed out gaps in knowledge as well as inappropriate assumptions about others’ disciplines among the faculty. Working out those issues in advance eliminates uncomfortable or uncertain situations.

6. The sixth standard calls for monitoring. A faculty facilitator offers feedback, and the structure of the town hall meetings allows for changes in student responses based on this feedback. This provides a “correction” mechanism if inaccurate information or procedures are interjected into the event.

7. Assessment and evaluation are required for experiential learning. Key student “actors” are given guidelines and expectations about their roles in the event itself. There is still work to be done in terms of developing assessment for the more general participants. The level of participation in pre-event research is one category for scoring.

8. A final component among the standards of practice is acknowledgement. NSEE emphasizes that all parties and individuals involved in the experience should be included in the recognition of progress and accomplishment. The college posted pictures of the events on the Web site, and various departments prepared bulletin boards or other celebratory artifacts.

We have found the town hall meeting model to be effective and exciting in this small-campus setting. It validates our belief that it is possible for various disciplines and departments to collaborate in a manner conducive to student engagement and learning. It has offered a welcome pedagogical change to a campus community committed to experiential learning. In addition, it is transferable to other institutions interested in doing the same.
REFERENCES


Susan Degee is Senior Lecturer/Assessment Chair and Judy Abbott is Senior Lecturer at Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri. Lloyd Hammonds is Governing Board Member at Coconino County Community College in Page, Arizona.
The Evolution of Online Education and Quality Management at UMC

The University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC), one of five campuses of the University of Minnesota, is situated in rural northwestern Minnesota. UMC offers undergraduate degrees in a broad range of fields, and business is one of the largest areas of study. Bachelor’s programs in business are available as majors and minors in marketing, management, accounting, manufacturing/quality, and sports and recreation management. All programs, with the exception of sports and recreation management, are available both on campus and completely online.

It was clear from the beginning that to be successful, online education had to be managed differently. Online education is inherently mobile, and therefore students have a much higher propensity to change universities if they are not satisfied with their learning experience. Online students have additional expectations due to their specific demographics. Typical online students are usually at least ten years older than traditional students on campus, and most of them have a family and at least a part-time, if not full-time, job. In principle, they expect the same unique experience at the same quality level as on-campus students. To balance their work, family, and education responsibilities, online students need flexibility. Some students might have time available to study only in the evening or on weekends, while others might have time blocks of several days. Another key expectation is timely responses from faculty. Online students cannot ask clarifying questions in class or after class or even stop by an instructor’s office. They have to use other means, such as discussion forums, e-mail, Skype, and phone to communicate with an instructor. Quick response and fast grading provide students with the necessary feedback for them to progress in an off-campus environment.

These requirements might sound simple, but it is important that they are incorporated into the course design and course delivery to provide an exceptional learning experience for online students. This can be very different from a setup for an on-campus class, and there are various ways to achieve this, depending on the nature of the course. Just as in an on-campus class, not every student likes how the instructor teaches the material and interacts with the students. Some students like more discussions, while others like more lectures with explanation of the material. This is even more critical for an online course, because the question is not so much what individual students prefer but what works for the majority of the online students so they can be successful. Based on these critical requirements for online courses, course design and course delivery need to be actively managed to achieve the same level of student satisfaction as that of on-campus courses.

In UMC’s Business Department, the quality efforts began in 2006 with the introduction of online programs, and those efforts have been complemented by initiatives like the Quality Matters Program (Maryland Online 2010). For the first four years, the focus was on course design, with Moodle used as the
learning platform. Since 2011, the focus has been on course delivery, and the individual quality activities have been expanded and consolidated into a more integrated quality system for online education.

**Pillars of the UMC Business Department Online Course Quality System**

Many institutions of higher education have established systems to measure student satisfaction at the end of a semester. This is no different from measuring customer satisfaction in any business, retail, service, or manufacturing industry—but this is where the commonality ends. Higher education has a very different level of sophistication in terms of Quality Management. Quality Management has evolved in several phases mainly over the last century, with Total Quality Management (TQM) and then subsequently Lean Six Sigma as the last two that provided a significant number of state-of-the-art methods and tools for achieving excellence in quality (Purdue University Manufacturing Extension Partnership 2012). Because of intense competition, the automotive sector has always led the way in search of new methods of quality improvement. At the other end of the spectrum are sectors such as education. Many colleges and universities have achieved improvements with Lean activities, but mainly in administrative areas, whereas academic areas are still relatively untouched (Emiliani 2012).

The UMC Business Department’s approach to quality can best be described by an often-quoted statement by quality guru W. Edwards Deming: “It is not enough to do your best; you must know what to do and then do your best.” The quality movement in industry has identified key quality principles that higher education can adopt and adjust to fit its particular needs. The UMC Business Department’s approach is based on the following four Lean quality principles (Womack, Jones, and Roos 1990):

- Standards and Best Practices
- Employee Empowerment and Supplier Development
- Visual Management
- Continuous Improvement

These principles have led to the following pillars of the Business Department’s Online Quality Management System (see Figure 1).
**Best Practices**

The UMC Business Department Quality Assurance in Online Learning Committee began its work in 2006 with a careful review of literature on its first pillar, Best Practices (Grandzol and Grandzol 2006), and the committee has continued this process over the past six years. Committee members frequently share from their professional reading and are often eager to implement innovations that have worked at other institutions.

As the department has made progress, faculty members have accepted a number of best practices and implemented those in department-level policies. Two basic course design decisions have been important in meeting the department’s quality expectations:

1. Online and on-campus courses use the same textbook and are frequently led by the same faculty member. This has allowed faculty members to assure that learning outcomes are identical and that student learning experiences are similar.

2. Each course design begins from a common template that defines expectations for students, promises from faculty, and services available to enhance the learning experience. This template has also accelerated course design and assured that students have a comfort level in navigating through the course information and learning activities.

Online courses can be set up in different ways, and each course can look theoretically very different. At the same time, there is a common set of information, like a syllabus and textbook, that every course entails and every student needs to access. Over time, there have also evolved ways to set up certain sections in the course like the grade book that many instructors have been recognizing as best practice and copying into their courses (e.g., “course unit based” vs. “course assignment based” grade book). The department has decided to consolidate these standards into a course overview template to harmonize the course design. The template still leaves enough room to customize course-specific requirements, such as the use of additional course software, but the core structure is always the same—the approach is similar to Systems Engineering when designing a product (Ross, Rhodes, and Hastings, 2007). All online courses have to be ready and reviewed six weeks before a semester begins to leave enough time for any changes required to meet the standards.

As mentioned, two of the key requirements for online students are enough flexibility to complete assignments and a timely response. This can be reflected in time related standards for course delivery according to an often-quoted statement by management guru Peter F. Drucker: “What gets measured gets managed.” One of the time-sensitive parameters is the amount of time a student has to complete an assignment. Many online instructors already divide their courses into several units, with assignments that need to be completed within three to five weeks instead of weekly assignments. That allows for the necessary flexibility that online students need to balance their various responsibilities. To ensure achievement of this across all courses regardless of the individual setup, the department has defined a minimum window of seven days that assignments need to be open for students. There is also a set maximum response time of forty-eight hours for questions from students and a maximum grading time of five days after the deadline of an assignment. Full-time faculty members, especially, are able to respond more quickly to students and to stay within hours to get back to students; whereas adjunct faculty members are not always able to achieve this and, therefore, probably respond closer to twenty-four to forty-eight hours. There are sometimes conflicts with the five-day grading time for an
Students are very sympathetic if they are notified instead of having to wait and wonder what’s going on. The response and grading standards are also part of the template for the course design.

**Instructor Support**

To achieve consistency based on the standards defined above, instructors need to be trained and supported. Thus, Instructor Support is the second pillar of the UMC Business Department’s online Quality Management System. Together with the UMC Center for Learning, Teaching and Technology, the department has developed an Online Teaching Readiness Course that each new online instructor has to take before he or she is allowed to teach an online course. The readiness course is set up completely online in Moodle, a Learning Content Management System (LCMS), and ensures that instructors are able to develop and teach their courses accordingly. In addition, each adjunct faculty member is assigned a full-time faculty member in his or her respective academic discipline to set up the course and to provide the necessary assistance throughout the semester.

The ultimate goal of achieving excellence is “self-inspection” as a quality excellence principle in industry where instructors follow the established policies. This requires a certain achievement level of the defined quality targets through monitoring and mentoring the courses and instructors. The department has introduced quality mentors for at least one year before transitioning to self-inspection/-monitoring. Quality mentors have access to the online courses and evaluate the courses in the second half of a semester based on a form that reflects the policies. Every instructor has a quality mentor so all courses are covered.

**Monitoring System**

The third pillar is a quality Monitoring System to create transparency and to identify any gaps that in teaching performance. The questions in the end-of-semester student evaluation address all critical issues for course design and course delivery and allow faculty members to review quality level and quality consistency. The department has defined overall quality targets for course design and course delivery according to the scale used in the student ratings. The larger challenge, however, is consistency, and that’s why the committee has also defined variance goals. The department would like to see all courses at a minimum level of quality instead of significant variations between courses. The department has implemented a “red/yellow/green” system, which is common in industry, to visualize the actual target achievement. The department has reached the average quality targets but has some work to do regarding variance. The courses that do not achieve these minimum levels are either reviewed regarding the design and/or the department head reviews the course delivery with the respective instructor, depending on the issues that led to a red status for the course.

**Quality Committee**

The fourth and final pillar is the driver for continuous improvement of the department’s quality system. A small Quality Committee consisting of faculty in the Business Department and additional online learning-related members from administrative areas is responsible for implementing and monitoring the approved quality measures as described. In addition, the committee is responsible for taking any required corrective actions and additional proposals to further refine the quality system.

The online quality system described here has been formulated in a Business Department Online Course Quality Policy Document that is binding for all faculty members teaching online courses.
Reflection and Lessons Learned

Looking at some of the quality-related performance indicators, the department can see that its quality efforts have paid off. Significant online student enrollment growth, high student satisfaction, and external recognition in the form of several awards encourage the department to continue on this quality path.

Every implementation of improvement measures has its own challenges, and this one is no different. What is different from similar projects in other industries is the specific situation in academia. Compared to all implementation challenges, buy-in of faculty members is by far the largest and probably the only critical one. Faculty members are accustomed to acting independently to set up and teach courses. Suddenly instructors are told to follow procedures and be measured in ways other than the student rating. So it was not a surprise that some faculty members reacted with the following statements:

“We have academic freedom.”
“This is education, not business.”
“I don’t need to be micromanaged.”
“We are professionals; we do our best.”

How is it possible to implement such a quality system if it interferes with what has been common practice in teaching until now? As in other industries with similar undertakings, the answer requires thoughtful leadership—leadership on all levels with a commitment to excellence, not only on an individual level, but excellence and consistency in quality across the board. Universities and colleges do not attract and keep online students based on individual performance of instructors and their specific setup, but based on programs that can be delivered consistently according to online student requirements.

In the UMC Business Department, the first step was a candid and clarifying discussion about the concerns that develop. In general, the biggest issue is the perception of limiting an instructor’s personal space. Quality management has nothing to do with academic freedom (American Association of University Professors 1940); academic freedom remains untouched. Instructors can still determine content and assignments but have to follow certain guidelines in how the course is set up and delivered so that it works for online students. Students as well as employers are customers of higher education, and they ultimately define an institution’s success and growth—whether it is a public or private university or college. Especially in online education, there is significant competition. In this sense, education is business, and if an institution wants to be successful, it has to apply certain business principles, with quality management as one the highest priorities. Quality procedures that are common in industry are still foreign to academia. Measuring quality at the end of a process is not sufficient anymore. Student ratings are important and provide a good sense of the overall quality, but these come too late to influence quality. Other checkpoints at the front end and throughout the course allow for any corrective actions to ensure high student satisfaction with low variance among courses and instructors. Faculty members can perceive this as being micromanaged and a lack of trust.

That does not mean that these discussions convince every instructor to buy in; some skepticism and resistance will always remain. The question is whether there is a core faculty group that is convinced about the direction and willing to move forward or if the concerns prevail and prevent progress. The Business Department has dedicated faculty members who are willing to drive the quality efforts.
Many worked in industry and have seen and experienced what quality management can accomplish. They bring proposals to department meetings, and everyone votes as a department. So far, an overwhelming majority of faculty members have approved of the quality measures. Besides faculty members, it also takes leadership from the department head to enable the improvement process to move forward and to support and facilitate the implementation. Most of the UMC online programs are in Business, but other departments are adding online programs. UMC has moved its accreditation process toward the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), which is based more on the philosophy of continuous improvement of quality. The AQIP leadership at UMC, together with the chancellor, act as advocates and catalysts for excellence and quality, and AQIP is the key lever for implementing quality measures across the campus. The Business Department has traditionally played the lead role in online education, and quality initiatives have been transferred to other departments via AQIP Action Projects. The key success factor for having an effective quality management system is committed and unwavering leadership on all levels—faculty, department, and campus leadership level. The UMC Business Department has begun by focusing on online education, but it will transfer this program and approach to on-campus teaching.

REFERENCES


Denis Maier is Assistant Professor for Management, Bruce Brorson is Associate Professor for Management, and Susan Brorson is Professor and Business Department Head at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects

Cynthia Grant, Scott Schuth, and L. Arthur Safer

Students often engage in their first experience with independent research at the graduate or doctoral level. Some students participate in an individual or group research project as part of their undergraduate experience as well. Many are unprepared to make the transition to research (Lovitts 2008). Faculty members assigned to supervise and mentor students who design and conduct research for the first time often have knowledge of diverse research methods, yet they may have difficulty explaining all the nuances required to successfully conduct an academic research project. In institutional settings that emphasize teaching and service, faculty members may have limited experience writing and presenting research other than their own dissertations and theses (National Council of Professors of Educational Administration 2007). Despite this, professors are presumed to hold the skills, knowledge, and resources to serve as research mentors and advisers with limited to no support from the institution. The use of a cloud-computing model can serve as a resource to mediate and support faculty and student engagement in research.

Rationale and Origins of the Use of Cloud-Computing for Academic Research Project Collaboration

Because students experience difficulty in conducting independent research and faculty members face challenges in supervising these students, there is a need for a collaborative space from which students and faculty can receive assistance on both general and specific topics related to resources and the knowledge required to conduct and complete research. The use of a cloud-computing model (Mell and Grance 2011) for resource management and communication offers an opportunity to link a collection of materials, processes, and samples that can be beneficial to both faculty members and students.

In January 2012, Concordia University Chicago received approval from the Higher Learning Commission to offer the Ph.D. in addition to our Ed.D. degree. As a teaching university, we saw an urgent need to provide resources to faculty members who had limited experience supervising dissertations or conducting independent research. The idea for a cloud-based resource tool available to engage, guide, and support students and faculty members was conceived as one approach to meet the needs of our growing number of students engaging in research and the increased demands on faculty members.

Most important, our experiences with large numbers of students conducting research indicated a need for uniform policies and procedures at Concordia University Chicago in regard to research activity and expectations. We knew that faculty members, students, and others involved in research endeavors within our institution could come together to share resources in one collegial place.

Concordia University Chicago created and implemented a cloud-based resource called the “Collegial Cloud” within the existing learning management system to support students and faculty members
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects

engaged in research projects. The Collegial Cloud was designed to be an on-demand self-service pool of resources relevant to the research process that can be accessed through the online learning management platform.

**What Is a Cloud?**

A “cloud” is a metaphor used in information technology to refer to the virtual connection and delivery of information through the World Wide Web. Clouds can be private or internal (when they are password-protected, such as intranet-based university portals) or public and external (such as a general, public-access Web site for a university).

A cloud-based community refers to a social network of people who are connected virtually through the World Wide Web. Blogs, wikis, Google Drive, and sites such as Facebook and Pinterest are all examples of cloud-based communities. Cloud services are changing the way the Internet is used by making resources and access to information available “anywhere, anytime”—a wonderful benefit to those in higher education. One of the great benefits of developing a cloud-based community is the ability to filter relevant, timely, and useful information that can be shared among faculty and candidates in one collegial place.

In addition, because most cloud-based resources are culled from the Web, a large amount of data can be included without impacting the institution’s server, storage, or user capacity. Cloud service providers that provide the service include well-known platforms such as Google Apps for Education, Apple, and Microsoft. Learning management systems (LMS) such as Blackboard, Moodle, Sakai, Desire2Learn, and eCollege are now standard provisions in higher education. As of 2009, 91 percent of American universities had adopted an LMS to enable the delivery of course material to candidates (Smith, Salaway, and Borreson Caruso 2009).

**Building a Private Cloud Community**

**Step One: Identify technological supports available from the institution.**

Each LMS requires a systems administrator to be the lead developer, designer, and supervisor of the system. In most cases, the systems administrator will be the point of contact and gatekeeper for building a cloud community. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a relationship with this person prior to moving forward with discussions at the institutional level.

A systems administrator is responsible for providing technical leadership and operational support for the LMS, including system configuration, content migration, and end-user support. The administrator interfaces directly with the LMS’s parent company (i.e., Blackboard, Sakai, Moodle) and campus stakeholders to define and ensure successful technical implementation and delivery of information to candidates and faculty.

**Step Two: Identify costs (if any) to establish a cloud community in the LMS.**

There is a fair amount of diversity in the availability, performance, and reliability of course- and learning-management systems used in higher education. Yet regardless of the system in use at a particular institution, LMS platforms are universally flexible, customizable to the needs of the institution, and affordable. LMSs operate using a secure, password-protected Internet connection.
Similarly, a private cloud could be designed specifically within an institution and made available only to designated users (PC Today 2013). This would require no hardware or server maintenance costs, making cloud-based communities a sound, strategic pedagogical investment for institutions to adopt. A cost-benefit analysis may be helpful, as shown in the following table.

### Cost-benefit Analysis of Private Cloud-based Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct tangible</td>
<td>1. Equipment (hardware, software)</td>
<td>1. Reduced costs of leadership time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Communication to candidates and faculty members</td>
<td>2. Better coordination of dissertation experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Project development</td>
<td>3. Reduced operating costs (e.g., decreased time spent by administrative offices providing forms and explaining procedures)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Internal staff members</td>
<td>4. Expanded pedagogical coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Consultants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Expenses for data entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect tangible</td>
<td>1. Anxiety related to use of information technology</td>
<td>1. Improved institutional identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Faculty time spent providing resources to build cloud community</td>
<td>2. Greater clarity for candidates and faculty members regarding the dissertation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Necessary updates to cloud-based resource database</td>
<td>3. Increased communication across institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Nurturance of relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Expanded development of independent scholar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Universal dissemination of information to all candidates and faculty members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Step Three: Develop an organizational plan for the cloud.

A cloud for research collaboration should start with a home page. The home page should ground the audience and set the tone and identity for the research community at the institution. Suggested items on the home page might include a video welcome, faculty profiles (including photographs), and contact information. Documents containing frequently asked questions (FAQs) are helpful. For example, FAQ information sheets for hot topics, such as how to find a research mentor, research project requirements, and institutional deadlines for submission of assignments, could be posted here.

Next, faculty members, students, and program staff members involved in the research study should work together to develop a list of overarching categories of information to include in the cloud-based community. In most LMS platforms, these categories will serve as a table of contents or navigation page for the user. Sample categorical tabs for research projects might include the following:

- Institutional Review Board Resources
- Sample Recruitment
- Quantitative Inquiry
- Instructions for Writing Research Questions
- Instructions for Writing Hypotheses
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects

- Qualitative Inquiry
- Best Practices in Survey Research
- Mixed Methods Design Help
- Support with Analysis
- Tutorials
- Instructions for Writing up Results
- Instructions for Resources

Experienced faculty members know all too well the repeated questions and confusion experienced by students conducting research for the first time. Thus, the importance of developing a strong organizational plan of information to be included on the cloud is intended to decrease the burden placed on faculty advisers so that a large amount of reliable, useful information can be disseminated and shared with others.

**Step Four: Gather materials for the cloud.**

A rich pool of information exists on the Web, waiting to be found. However, students engaged in research are often unaware of these resources and need assistance in determining their reliability and relevance. Thus, faculty who are asked to provide materials for the cloud can guide students toward scholarly resources relevant to the design, analysis, and writing of a research report.

Current research students are an excellent source for sharing timely resources and materials that have been useful for their own journey—some of which may be unexpected and could possibly expand the predetermined categories. In the development of our Collegial Cloud, students recommended sites for reference management software, such as Mendeley, End Note, and Zotero, that we had not previously thought to include.

Our Collegial Cloud includes topics such as writing the literature review, formatting the research report, research strategies for various methodological approaches, processes involved with research approvals, and other areas that help students complete their research projects. The use of webinars, content links, Rich Site Summary (RSS) feeds, institutional forms, and ways to psychologically support students in the research process are also included. These resources have been screened and selected by program leaders as a way to support faculty members in fostering students’ successful transition to conducting independent research and completing their degrees.

The database of information to be placed on the cloud community will encompass a compendium of resources gathered by faculty, staff, and students—most of which will be directly linked to the resource itself, rather than copying it to the cloud community, to avoid copyright infringement.

**Step Five: Build and provide access to the Collegial Cloud.**

Once resources have been gathered, organized, and cataloged, those who gathered materials will need to reestablish contact with the institution’s systems administrator so that the technological aspect of building a cloud may begin. In most cases, the systems administrator will be responsible for the technology and structural framework of the cloud, while the individual responsible for the content will have the access and training to maintain the information available on the cloud site.
It is imperative that there be collaboration between the two parties to ensure that the desired pedagogical and academic purpose of the cloud community aligns with the availability of technology in the learning management platform. Once the cloud has been built, it can be made available to intended users within the institution’s LMS.

**Implementation**

The initial implementation process includes the collection and culling of appropriate Web-based resources and documents. In fact, it becomes an ongoing activity as the cloud expands and contracts, predicated on the needs at the time, an updating of the links and webinars, and a periodic “cleaning” of the existing cloud framework. Once the managed institutional networks and resources are in place, a cloud community can go “live” to students and faculty within sixty days. This needs to be followed by a series of live or virtual sessions with faculty members to acquaint them with the cloud and its content. Similar applications through detailed instructions and announcements to the student population are a must in infusing the positive attributes of the cloud and its essential components for academic research. Thus, it is imperative that an ongoing assessment of its use (or non-use) and specific academic content be shared across the interested academic partners—faculty members, students, the cloud administrator—for ease of accessibility, content improvement and validity, and assessment of whether or not it has made a difference in the academic lives of its intended audience.

**REFERENCES**


*Cynthia Grant* is Chair, Department of Research, *Scott Schuth* is Assistant Professor, Instructional Design and Technology, and *L. Arthur Safer* is Executive Director, Division of Research and Doctoral Programs, at Concordia University Chicago in River Forest, Illinois.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Exploring the Learning Commons:
Tutoring Moves In!
Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons

Susan Richards, Renee Dechert, Carol Zawacki, and Gerald Giraud

Northwest College is a largely residential community college located in Powell, Wyoming, with a population of roughly two thousand students. In fall 2009, Northwest College began a significant renovation and expansion of its thirty-year-old campus library, Hinckley Library. Library staff and academic vice president Sher Hruska envisioned physical expansion as an opportunity also to expand the library’s role as a focal point for student learning. As the plan took form, two components would transform the library from an information center to a learning commons: (1) physical remodeling allowed library staff to reimagine the library’s physical collection, consolidating some holdings and transitioning others to electronic only; (2) a technology-infused classroom and an area for late-night study increased available student study space and provided additional instructional facilities. The 5,316-square-foot addition also permitted relocation of both Peer Tutoring Services and the Writing Center from separate areas of the campus to a centralized learning commons within the library. This paper describes the process that the college followed, details immediate impacts of the project, and outlines future changes as Hinckley Library transitions from being an information center to being a learning commons.¹

The Changing College Library: The Information Commons and the Learning Commons

The college library has seen a radical and ongoing shift since the advent of the Internet. Those who work in libraries are familiar with the question: Are libraries necessary given the availability of Google and similar search engines? As a first-semester freshman at Northwest College observed, “When I first came to college, I had the mind-set that I would never even need to go to the library and that I could just use Google to do all of my work” (Interview with ENGL 1010 student, December 15, 2012).²

College librarians and faculty members work hard to teach students information literacy and encourage them to question the information they find in the Internet. In that sense, Northwest’s library is no different from other college libraries. Each semester, librarians offer a range of library instruction, collaborating with faculty members in providing specialized workshops and classes. For example, in 2011–2012, librarians delivered 157 sessions to 2,272 students, both face-to-face and in online classes, a 54 percent increase in research instruction from 2008–2009, the year before the building project. In many cases, their work is successful. As one first-semester freshman observed, “After one class in the library, I realized that I was completely wrong and that the library could be very useful to me. Initially, I was just scared of the library because I didn’t know how to use it. The librarians did a good job of
teaching me, along with other students, how to navigate the library and how useful it really could be.” (Interview with an ENGL 1010 student, December 15, 2012).

However, such training is only a fraction of what happens in college libraries. For the past decade, library and higher education professionals have discussed the merits of transforming libraries into “information commons” and “learning commons.” Scott Bennett makes a crucial distinction between the two: “Information commons emphasize the interdisciplinary character of information. . . . In effect, [they] marry the best offerings of information technology staff and of librarians” (2003, 37). Bennett goes on to observe:

The core activity of a learning commons would not be the manipulation and mastery of information, as in an information commons, but the collaborative learning by which students turn information into knowledge and sometimes into wisdom. A learning commons would be built around the social dimensions of learning and knowledge and would be managed by students themselves for learning purposes that vary greatly and change frequently. (2003, 38)

In “The Information or the Learning Commons: Which Will We Have?,” Bennett (2008) points to the importance of faculty members’ involvement: “Properly understood, librarians and academic computing staff cannot alone create a learning commons, as they serve but do not define institutional mission. Other academic units do that and must join librarians and technologists in creating a learning commons. The fundamental difference between the information and the learning commons is that the former supports institutional mission while the latter enacts it” (183).

In fall 2010, when the new space was ready, Northwest College began the library’s transition from information commons to learning commons, bringing into play the elements Bennett outlines, by merging information, technology, services, and faculty.

Hinckley Library

Although a small college library in physical size and scope, Hinckley Library provides big-time service to Northwest College students. Four professional librarians are available more than forty-five hours each week, providing drop-in, telephone, electronic, and appointments to students, faculty members, staff members, and community members who seek help with their information needs. The library is open seven days a week, with research assistance provided by two well-trained library assistants when professional librarians are not available. Librarians also provide onsite research assistance four hours each week at the college’s teaching center in Cody, Wyoming. The library’s physical collection is small (approximately sixty thousand volumes), but through significant state funding, students are able to use more than a hundred subscription databases that cover the breadth of the college’s curriculum. These resources include full-text periodical articles, electronic books (both nonfiction and fiction), streaming music and video, digital images, and interactive learning modules. Patrons perform approximately 124,500 searches per year in these resources.

Tutoring at Northwest College

After the renovation, the Writing Center and Peer Tutoring Services moved to the centralized location of the library. Peer Tutoring Services, which employs between twenty and thirty peer tutors each semester, provides free tutoring services for all students, offering individual and drop-in tutoring
as well as study groups. According to Carol Zawacki, peer tutoring services specialist, relocating Peer Tutoring to the library had a significant impact on student use of tutoring. After moving to the library, Peer Tutoring saw a 40 percent increase in the number of students using the service. She adds, “I was excited for the relocation of Peer Tutoring Services from the Student Success Center to Hinckley Library and had every confidence that it would increase the number of students utilizing our tutoring services.”

Zawacki did have two concerns: she was worried about the size of the allocated space and about putting Peer Tutoring and the Writing Center in such close quarters. Both concerns were quickly allayed. While the small office area was allocated for administering Peer Tutoring and the Writing Center, actual tutoring is held in the library itself and in small student study rooms. Ultimately, Peer Tutoring and the Writing Center proved a natural fit. Zawacki notes, “This union has definitely strengthened both programs. We are able to use the same resources, as well as hire and train tutors and work studies, to support our students. Our focus is to provide excellent student service by eagerly assisting each student who visits our office.”

The Northwest College Writing Center

When the Writing Center was moved from the English Department to Hinckley Library, it was given a faculty office in Peer Tutoring. Renee Dechert, an English professor who directed the center, received additional financial resources as well, which allowed her to expand the center’s hours of operation. She also employed three members of the English and English as a Second Language faculty, who received stipends for tutoring in addition to teaching, and three peer tutors. The move had a very positive impact on the Writing Center. First, students and consultants had immediate access to the resources of the library, including its staff. Second, as noted above, the center began a highly collaborative relationship with Peer Tutoring. Third, the center formally left the English Department to begin its own existence in the library and began to re-brand itself as an institutional, rather than a departmental resource. The Writing Center has seen more traffic since moving to the library, averaging 297 tutoring sessions per semester, a significant increase.

Assignment of Faculty Offices at Northwest College

Like many colleges and universities, Northwest College relies on an expediency model for assigning faculty offices, with preference given to senior faculty members. For example, when, Dechert became the director of the Writing Center in fall 2011, her office was moved to the library—not to put her closer to the Writing Center but because the Humanities Division, located in another building, lacked office space. Dechert remembers the experience as surprising:

At first, I was annoyed, but that quickly changed. I found that being away from a traditional faculty office radically altered my status. After I finished classes, I returned not to my department but rather to Peer Tutoring, a busy, student-centered place. They weren’t interested in the conversations I’d typically had with my colleagues (“You won’t believe what happened in class today . . .”), and I found it was a constant—and positive—reminder of what my job was really about. I would also encounter my students in the library, who often had questions. In addition, I could much more easily collaborate with the librarians. Similarly, I found myself assuming a new role in Peer Tutoring. I became a resource for students, not just a faculty member. I am convinced that being removed from the “place” of the faculty caused students to see me differently. I had become a part of the learning commons.
**Accomplishments**

Hinckley Library’s transition into a learning commons has had a significant impact on students. Obviously, it led to complementary services being housed in one building, including more integrated library instruction, and increased traffic for the library, Peer Tutoring, and the Writing Center. Tutors were more accessible to their peers, and faculty members, especially those who worked in the Writing Center, were more visible to students using their services, as well as to students in their classes. Humanities and social sciences faculty members bring students to the library with much more frequency to provide these students with laboratory (research) time. The number of students using the services of librarians and tutors has increased significantly since fall 2009.

**Future Plans**

We are continuing to pursue the library’s transition to a learning commons. At this point, we have outlined three main objectives for the coming year. First, now that each unit (Library, Peer Tutoring, Writing Center) has created learning outcomes, we plan in the next year to develop joint learning outcomes in conjunction with several academic departments (English, History, Nursing, and Art). Along with developing a common set of learning outcomes, we plan to create a more unified and helpful assessment program. Currently, each unit conducts separate assessments, and while some of that work will continue, it will be essential to develop a methodology for evaluating these integrated services as they exist in the learning commons.

Second, recognizing that tutors are often “graduates” of classes that teach students to conduct college-level research, we want to train them more specifically to use library resources when providing tutoring. And finally, because we know that faculty members affiliated with the Writing Center have found their informal interactions with students in the library to be extremely beneficial, we plan to target other faculty members and ask them to spend some of their office hours in the library.

With desire and hard work, we will build an environment where that “magical moment when students . . . take responsibility for and control over their own learning” (Bennett 2008, 184) occurs.

**Notes**

1. Donald Beagle puts it well: “What begins as the reconfiguration of an academic library ultimately becomes a reconfiguration of the learning environment” (2002, 289).
2. All interviews were confidential; the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

**REFERENCES**

Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In!
Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons


Susan Richards is Hinckley Library Director, Renee Dechert is Professor of English, Carol Zawacki is Tutoring Specialist, and Gerald Giraud is Vice President of Academic Affairs at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming.
In higher education, courses and curricula are purportedly the intellectual property of either the academic departments that provide teaching faculty or of the faculty themselves. This directly implies that there needs to exist some level of financial incentive for the home department of those faculty, as well as direct incentive for the faculty who are involved in teaching. After all expenses are accounted for, then, what model for faculty and faculty home department incentive is most applicable and will provide maximum incentive to participate in professional studies?

This paper focuses on the impact of numerous compensation models used over a ten-year period that have most incentivized department and faculty participation. The longitudinal study described here comes from the perspective of nearly four hundred working professional adult learners from business and industry who graduated from Purdue University’s Center for Professional Studies in Technology and Applied Research (ProSTAR) programs. This cohort-based set of programs employs a hybrid classroom and distance-supported, innovatively delivered master’s in science degree in technology. Over the period of this study, nearly 4,400 courses were offered by faculty spanning numerous departments within Purdue University’s College of Technology.

**ProSTAR Overview**

On June 11, 1998, the College of Technology initiated the process for university and, subsequently, Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE) approval of a nontraditional, fee-based weekend alternative to Purdue’s traditional campus tuition-based master’s program in technology. In a memo to Robert L. Ringle, the university’s executive vice president for academic affairs, Dean D. K. Gentry wrote:

> Technology is transforming all aspects of our life, both at home and at work. Therefore, it is important that we consider the future of those individuals completing undergraduate degree programs in technology and engineering technology. . . . The demand for graduate technology education opportunities is a growing population that will continue to increase. Also, as this demand continues to grow, the need for greater flexibility in delivery will also expand. Competition for this potential customer base will encourage higher education administrators and faculty to evaluate new and innovative delivery systems to serve the educational needs of these customers. . . . This is not a new degree program, just a different delivery approach to an existing one. Technology and engineering technology programs continue to change and evolve in striving to meet society’s technological expectations and needs. It is imperative that graduate education be considered as an important element. A survey study conducted at Purdue University reported that 92% of the alumni and faculty indicated that graduate education in technology is important for the professional development of individuals working in industry and that there exist a perceived demand for graduate education in technology and engineering technology.
On October 13, 2000, ICHE approved the university’s request for delivering a hybrid distance-based alternative to traditional classroom-only programs. The entire process from conceptualization to final approval took two years and four months. As the proposal excerpt shows, the concept of evaluation was integral to the program concept from the beginning.

In fall 1998, the COT’s Department of Industrial Technology took a lead role in implementing, pursuant to authorization, the first weekend master’s program (WMP) in technology on Purdue’s campus in West Lafayette, Indiana. The original offering was cohort-based, and it employed a weekend format, meeting from Friday through Sunday. The cohort met three times a semester and twice in the summer semester, for a total of five semesters (fall, spring, summer, fall, and spring). After twenty-two months, all members of the initial cohort format graduated in the May 2000 ceremony. Because of the program’s nontraditional approach, the state’s authorization established a different fee structure than that used for normal classes, which resulted in a higher cost than conventional campus-based instruction.

The program incorporated other innovations beyond its delivery system, schedule, and fee structure. To be consistent with its goal of developing practical skills and knowledge immediately, or at least quickly, applicable to business and industry, its plan of study (Springer, Bertoline, and Schuver 2011) incorporates a base of essential core studies, flexible and easily tailored courses to ensure relevance to emerging technologies, and a guided, industry-focused applied research and development project called, simply, the Directed Project. The latter was deliberately designed to require work commensurate to what is typically expected of a master’s degree thesis (Springer, Schuver, and Dyrenfurth 2011). ProSTAR is entirely self-funded from fee-based programs. It offered its first 100-percent distance program in fall 2010.

**Alternative Models**

During the period in which alternative faculty/instructor compensation models were being evaluated, department incentive models were also employed. The following table shows the combination of department-specific incentive models and which of the many faculty/instructor incentive models were simultaneously employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department Model</th>
<th>Faculty Compensation Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%-50%</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Department Incentive Models

Through the evolution of ProSTAR, three department incentive models have been employed:

1. **Push**: The departments receive no residual (profit) from the fee-based programs in which their faculty/instructors were involved.
2. **Split**: Each participating academic department received a 50–50 split of net residual, with the Dean’s Office of the college receiving the remaining 50-percent.
3. **Pull**: Each participating department received 100 percent of the net residual from participating programs.

The push model required a mandate from the dean of the College of Technology, issued November 4, 2009, which said that each department would participate in professional fee-based programs and the programs would be run through ProSTAR as the sole fee-based administering organization. Following are the elements of that mandate:

*CoT Faculty and Staff,*

With the creation of ProSTAR, the College of Technology now has an academic center that can provide planning, marketing, management, and delivery assistance for any professional education programs, including degree programs, certificate programs, workshops, and training and other related educational events. Faculty and staff must contact ProSTAR when considering offering professional programs to determine if ProSTAR is a viable entity to assist with any professional education program.

[ProSTAR personnel] can review the proposed program and recommend how best to proceed given their understanding and experience in professional education.

While the mandate was required for a push-type of model and focused heavily on what was good for the college, the department response and willingness to participate in fee-based programs was marginal.

The push model relied heavily on the efficiencies gained from centralization of fee-based programs. In this scenario, centralization provided common policies, practices, methodologies, and procedures, as well as common interfaces to cross-college academic and administrative units.

The split model, in which each participating department received 50 percent of the net residual and the Dean’s Office received the remaining 50 percent of the net residual, was met with greater interest and increased departmental participation. The underlying connotation of the split model was that there were administrative expenses that had to be covered by residual generating activities and initiatives, including fee-based program offerings. On the surface, support of administrative activities was expected and generally provided for. As is generally the case, however, benefits quickly became entitlements and questions arose as to why the remaining 50 percent was being used for administrative purposes or support. This mind-set ignored the roles and responsibilities of each participating organization, assuming differentiation truly existed.

The current model is a pull model, in which the participating departments receive 100 percent of the net residual. This model evolved from ProSTAR’s past experience in creating corporate universities. The underlying mind-set of this model is to create a pull effect by returning essentially 100 percent of the net residuals to the participating academic departments, therefore creating maximum incentive...
to participate. The use of a residual maximizing model not only returns funds outside of general state fund allocations, but, over time, it also becomes a source of revenue for funding student activities, faculty participation in research, and related initiatives. As with any budget line item with uncertainty, there should be minimal dependence on variable funds; participation in fee-based programs, however, becomes more pronounced using this model.

Faculty/Instructor Incentive Models

The faculty/instructor incentive (compensation) models evolved from models that were rubric-based, flat rate, and determined by the department. Initially, ProSTAR held the responsibility for incentivizing faculty through compensation. The first model was rubric-based. It utilized a weighted-factor set of criteria that was determined to be reflective of an increasingly greater ability to deliver successful professional, fee-based programs.

Criteria of this model included such elements as years of applicable experience, academic rank, quantity of scholarship, quality of scholarship, and years of teaching. As one might expect, participating faculty/instructors disagreed on many of these aspects—for example, one journal article being more reputable than another, or the papers from conference X being equal in value to those from conference Y. In the end, this model proved less effective in determining fair and equitable compensation and, in some cases actually acted as a disincentive.

Subsequent to the rubric model to incentivize participation, the flat rate model came into being. This model took the average of all compensation paid to participating faculty/instructors and used it as a compensation incentive. While, on the surface, fairness appears to underlie this model, those making more in the previous model did not think they were treated fairly. This model, too, acted as a disincentive, and in some cases, it limited the pool of available talent to deliver professional, fee-based programs.

At present, and currently employed, is a department-determined model for incentivizing faculty/instructor participation. In this model, the total net residual is handed over to participating departments, from which the department heads determine through individual negotiation how best to compensate their respective faculty/instructors. This model pushes responsibility back to the department level, where compensation can be considered with other variable incentives on an individual basis.

While this model appears to serve its purpose by removing compensation issues from the ProSTAR administering organization, it has caused yet another wrinkle, not surprisingly attendant to the issue of fairness. Departments use one of four basic compensation models to incentivize faculty/instructors:

1. **No compensation:** The participation in fee-based professional programs is considered in-load, or part of the normal teaching load.

2. **Full overload compensation:** This approach assumes the faculty/instructor participating in fee-based programs is “fully” loaded in teaching other courses and this fee-based course is in addition to regularly defined duties.
3. **A variable contribution to a faculty/instructor’s expense account:** This account allows the faculty member or instructor to spend accumulated funds for whatever purposes the individual wishes within the constraints of research, scholarship, or teaching.

4. **A fixed amount:** The amount is determined by the department head and added to a faculty/instructor’s expense account.

As expected, one department’s faculty/instructors are not necessarily compensated in the same way as those in another department. To this end, ProSTAR has been asked to work with the dean to evolve yet another model.

**Future Model**

Currently, at the request of some of the participating departments, ProSTAR is working to define a common model to be employed across all participating departments. This effort will have to proceed with department heads, the dean, and the Business Office participating. While this model is young, development of a successful model is contingent on many factors, such as fairness, equitability, the need to incentivize maximum participation from most applicable talent, and the need to allow consideration of the compromising realities of normalizing a model. In the end, residual from fee-based non-general fund sources is required for the sustenance and growth of ongoing concerns. It will be imperative to find mechanisms to provide maximum incentive to those most qualified to teach in programs that target working adult professional-level learners.

**REFERENCES**


*Mitchell L. Springer* is Executive Director, College of Technology, and *Mark T. Schuver* is Director of Professional Education, Center for Professional Studies in Technology and Applied Research, at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.
The National Context

The calls for developing a sense of civic responsibility in college and university students have become so ubiquitous that it might not be surprising that the Lumina Foundation included in its Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) a specific learning objective dedicated to civic learning. In its many statements and publications, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) regularly makes reference to the need for “connected and public-spirited forms of learning if [students] were to reap the full benefits of college” (see, for example, Schneider 2005). Yet AAC&U’s president, Carol Geary Schneider, reports that “civic learning about diversity and democracy still remains on the margins rather than at the center of undergraduate learning in the American academy.” “Civic learning,” she continues, “remains optional rather than essential for the majority of faculty, students, and employers” (2007, 1). Somehow, according to the Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) National Leadership Council Report, we must “reclaim the connections between liberal education and democratic freedom” on the grounds that such attention is important to both our economic and our political futures; indeed, the report continues, any educational program “indifferent to democratic aspirations, principles, and values will ultimately deplete them” (2007, 9). This is no hyperbole to Andrew Delbanco. It is this concern for the future of democracy that motivated him to write College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be (2012) and call attention to the historical role that higher education has played in the protection of democracy and the slippery slope that now confronts it. Indeed, Delbanco only emphasizes this concern when he shares the position of former Harvard president Derek Bok, who wrote that colleges and universities “currently display scant interest in preparing undergraduates to be democratic citizens, a task once regarded as the principal purpose of a liberal education and one urgently needed at this moment in the United States” (quoted in Delbanco 2012, 149). Schneider challenges higher education even more directly: “The apparent disconnect between the goals of college learning and democratic principles is an ominous sign,” she asserts. “If our institutions of higher education are to prepare students for principled engagement in a diverse society, they must foster—explicitly, intentionally, and enthusiastically—pedagogies geared toward civic engagement and democratic action” (2007, 2). We believe that it is in this spirit of national concern that the Lumina Foundation chose to include a civic learning objective in its DQP project, and the work that colleges and universities will undertake to meet it is essential.

The Institutional Context

The mission of Illinois College calls us to prepare students to “live meaningful lives of leadership and service.” Certainly, its emphasis on civic engagement is not unique to Illinois College: many colleges and universities have similar statements in their own missions. However, as Colby and Sullivan (2009, 22) point out, many institutions are not working to meet these goals in an “effective way,” instead “hoping”
that “these outcomes will be achieved as by-products of a college education.” It was important to
the Illinois College faculty that the recent revision of our general education program, the BLUEprint,
be mission driven and that our commitment to civic engagement be far more than an educational
happenstance. The BLUEprint includes requirements for civic engagement, including opportunities for
civic reflection as well as action, and it makes room for these to occur both in and out of the classroom.

At the same time that the faculty was revising the general education program, the college’s board of
trustees directed the cabinet to identify the most important aspects of the college’s strategic plan with
recommendations for the specific investments necessary to achieve them in a five-year period. The
resulting document, “Realizing the Vision,” placed the development of students in terms of leadership
and service at its very heart. It provided for the development of an interdisciplinary academic program
in leadership, positions in service-learning, and civic engagement—and budgets to support them. So,
just when the faculty needed assistance to make the most out of the BLUEprint’s civic engagement
requirements, the college’s administration and trustees had already moved to provide the necessary
support.

Enter Lumina and the Higher Learning Commission

When the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) invited Illinois College to join the group of twenty-
three institutions as a part of its Cohort 3 Pioneer Institutions Pathways Project to assess the Lumina
Foundation’s DQP, it was hard for us to imagine better timing. Lumina imagines this project as “a
tool that can help transform U.S. higher education . . . [by the clear identification of] what students
should be expected to know and be able to do once they earn their degrees” (2011, 1). This was exactly
the thinking that had guided us in the design of the BLUEprint. In addition, the DQP recognized
that twenty-first-century students need this knowledge and these skills to succeed, not just in the
workplace, but in the greater societal and political spheres as well.

The DQP identifies five basic areas of learning: (1) broad, integrative knowledge; (2) specialized
knowledge; (3) intellectual skills; (4) applied learning; and (5) civic learning. However, Lumina made
clear that it had no intention of prescribing “what” should be taught or “how instructors should
 teach it” in any of these five general areas, recognizing that such decisions belong at the local level
as directed by institutional mission.

As a part of the Cohort 3 project, both Lumina and the HLC gave each participating institution great
flexibility to design its own particular focus, inviting us to choose work that served our own institutional
priorities in addition to engaging in a meaningful project that allowed each of us to assess the DQP in
some way as well. Overall, then, each college or university sought to speak to its own individual needs or
interests, but in a way that could also serve other institutions as they were introduced to the DQP by the
Higher Learning Commission and the reaffirmation of accreditation process.

From the outset, the Illinois College team decided that an important part of our work should focus
on the civic learning objective of the DQP (see Figure 1). We saw several advantages to this. First, it
would give us the opportunity to be directed and intentional in our assessment of student learning in
the civic engagement requirements of the BLUEprint, our new general education program. Second, it
would similarly provide outcomes data that the board of trustees expected in the strategic investment
(i.e., “Realizing the Vision”) it was making in the Illinois College curriculum and our enhanced
emphasis on leadership and service. Third, this focus would ensure our project would be mission
driven (e.g., Illinois College intends students “to live meaningful lives of leadership and service”). Finally, it would be useful to the many other institutions whose missions also include attention to civic responsibilities and institutions that would be considering just what the DQP’s civic learning objective might mean for them.

The Civic Learning objective has six learning outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DQP-1</th>
<th>A student can describe his/her own civic and cultural background, including origins, development, assumptions, and predispositions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DQP-2</td>
<td>A student can describe historical and contemporary positions on democratic values and practices, and presents his/her position on a related problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQP-3</td>
<td>A student can take an active role in the community (work, service, cocurricular activities) and examine civic issues encountered and insights gained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQP-4</td>
<td>A student can explain diverse perspectives on a contested issue and evaluate insights gained from different kinds of evidence reflecting scholarly and community perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQP-5</td>
<td>A student can develop and justify a position on a public issue and relate this position to alternative views within the community or policy environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQP-6</td>
<td>A student can collaborate in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluate the process, and, where applicable, weigh the result.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase One: Focusing on Civic Learning in Phases

To begin our work, we identified several phases that would guide us. In phase one, we sought assessment rubrics that would allow us to determine the extent to which each student met the six outcomes. It seemed obvious to begin with the rubrics created as a part of the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Initiative sponsored by AAC&U. One of those rubrics addressed civic engagement, and we hoped that, with modest adaptations, a single rubric might line up easily to start our work (see the Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric at www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/civicengagement.cfm). We also developed an assessment worksheet that would allow any faculty member to conduct assessment in a straightforward way.

It was important to us that we not start from scratch and develop purely local assessment rubrics. We believed this to be a critical part of our responsibilities to the Lumina Foundation and the HLC. We wanted to find a tool that had already (1) involved many prominent actors in higher education; (2) been carefully considered, developed, and presented to the higher education community; (3) was readily available to the higher education community; and (4) offered a common set of standards that could be used by many (if not all) higher education institutions and avoided, as much as was practicable, any institution-specific approach. Nevertheless, having made this decision, we also recognized that the two objectives (i.e., Lumina’s Civic Learning and AAC&U’s Civic Engagement) were not exactly the same. Civic learning is broader in scope than is civic engagement. Therefore, we knew from the outset that a certain amount of modification would be necessary to integrate both approaches as our project continued. To guide us in any modification, we determined we would always tilt in favor of the Lumina objectives because that is what we had been called on to evaluate.

In the first phase, we also chose to focus on Illinois College students’ civic learning in two 200-level courses: Meaningful Leadership in a Democracy, the interdisciplinary foundational course for the
college’s new Leadership Program, and Social Stratification, a wholly dedicated service-learning course in sociology. The leadership course was designed to incorporate as many of the civic learning objectives as possible, while the sociology course addressed only certain designated objectives. In both courses we gathered and compiled assessment data based on student learning outcomes.

**Phase Two: What Did We Learn?**

In phase two, we evaluated both the data and the assessment tool that we had used in the first part of our work. We also expanded the number of faculty members to consider both the Lumina goals and the (slightly modified) AAC&U VALUE Rubric. Our initial evaluations of the assessment tool several insights.

Particular classes/activities do not need to attempt to meet all of the civic learning objectives, and this is critical to communicate to faculty members and staff members who might feel overwhelmed otherwise, especially dealing with this DQP objective. Neither course evaluated included DQP Civic Learning Objective 6: “A student can collaborate in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluate the process, and, where applicable, weigh the result.” However, student comments and anecdotal reports did allow us to conclude that students felt more prepared to take on the goals of Objective 6, which we feel is a good place for students to be at the conclusion of a 200-level course.

There is much common ground between Lumina’s civic learning objectives (especially objectives 1–3 and 6) and AAC&U’s civic engagement rubric objectives. Objectives 4 and 5, however, do not fit so neatly with AAC&U’s rubric items “civic communication” and “civic action and reflection.” Therefore, we realized that the outcome levels of these two Lumina objectives needed to be clarified and the assessment worksheets changed to reflect these clarifications.

We found the Lumina civic learning objectives to be superior to AAC&U’s civic engagement objectives in that they are stated in such a way that faculty members across a wide range of disciplines or programs can easily conceive of a variety of discipline-specific assignments and activities for students that clearly can be tied to each objective and its assessment.

We see the AAC&U’s objectives regarding civic identity and commitment, civic communication, and civic action and reflection as a part of the developmental continuum/process that speaks to civic engagement. Early approaches to civic engagement posited that students asked to engage in service or civic activities would translate to students wanting to engage in more service and civic activities. Instead, we find that students benefit more from engaging in activities that ask them to reflect on the importance of civic engagement, encourage them to develop a sense of civic duty or obligation, and lead them to engage in the community in ways that are tied directly or indirectly to coursework or organizational purposes, leading to greater and greater levels of reflection.

We recognize that the cocurricular program has much to contribute to meeting the civic learning objective and recommend that appropriate evidence-based assessment tools be developed or used to allow student affairs offices and administrators to demonstrate how they contribute to student learning in this regard.

Complicated or long-term assignments, such as journals, do not lend themselves readily to ease-of-use assessments, yet they can provide valuable evidence of student learning. Journals as a whole often address multiple objectives, they are often collected at several points in a semester, and entries
may be based variously on assigned or unassigned topics. However, because journals can often be
evidence-rich treasure troves of student learning, we recommend providing faculty members with
strategies so that they do not simply abandon journaling assignments rather than find themselves
overwhelmed with assessment chores. For example, faculty members might identify specific—but not
all—journal entries as assessment activities for a selected objective. The journal itself might be focused
on one of the objectives (for example, in DQP Civic Learning Objective 3, which calls on students to
take an active role in the community). If the course includes a service-learning activity, the journal
might focus entirely on that. In courses or programs that seek to develop a student learning portfolio,
the student themselves can select journal entries that address the objective(s).

Phase Three: Developing Assessment Rubrics

In phase 3, the larger working group then turned to the development of civic learning assessment
rubrics and worksheets. These were still based on the AAC&U’s VALUE Rubrics but were not bounded
by the single civic engagement rubric and were explicitly modified to reflect the several aspects
of civic learning called for by the Lumina DQP. The resulting document is available at the HLC
presentation or by emailing either of the presenters/authors (dean@mail.ic.edu or kdagan@mail.ic.edu).
Faculty members utilizing the expanded and modified rubrics and worksheets report that this has led
to far more useful assessment of student learning outcomes and the recognition that the Lumina civic
learning objective does indeed take place in courses not traditionally associated with those that seem
more obviously linked to civic engagement activities.

Civic Learning Across the Curriculum: A Few Examples

Illinois College’s orientation program has long included a “service-blitz” as a part of its activities for all
new students, although it was simply a “stand-alone” event. The introduction of the BLUEprint, and
its requirement that all Illinois College students participate in civic engagement at least twice in the
general education program, enabled us to shift this experience from service-alone to a service-learning
activity. Instructors in all of the first-year seminars linked the service event to common readings (e.g.,
Adam Davis’s “What Don’t We Talk About When We Talk About Service?” and Ursula K. LeGuin’s “The
Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”) and class and personal reflection discussion and assignments that
considered service-learning in particular and civic engagement more generally.

The interdisciplinary leadership course Meaningful Leadership in a Democracy requires students to
participate in a reading program, linking college students to at-risk elementary students in the school
with the highest level of poverty in the community. The program is designed to be about much more
than improving reading skills. Course assignments ask the college students to read widely about the
knowledge and skills necessary for individuals to participate effectively in both the economic and
political roles of twenty-first-century citizenship, the inequities associated with the American education
system, and the associated challenges of poverty that can limit both the dreams and accomplishments
of poor children. In this context, then, the college students fully understand their purpose as helping
to prepare these young students for citizenship and a chance at the American dream. Assessment data
confirms that Illinois College students identify with this purpose and value it so highly that as many as
90 percent of the students continue in the program beyond the semester of the course.
In the humanities, art students now have a civic engagement activity in almost every class in the art curriculum, largely because of the success of one event. When a homeless shelter opened in Jacksonville, its director included on her list of needs something to decorate the facility. One of our art professors invited his students to create pieces for the shelter, emphasizing the importance of beauty in the lives of all human beings. The students described their work at the shelter’s formal opening, including one evolving piece that invites those who stay at the shelter to add their own marks. Assessment of this project indicated that the students considered this connection to the community as the most important thing that had taken place in that course.

The sociology course Social Stratification is wholly designed to be based on service-learning. Students choose a local nonprofit organization or agency, serving at least forty hours over the course each semester. Students have reported that not only has their understanding of the policy issues increased, but they also now recognize that single remedies for human needs remain elusive and that service itself is just as complex. Their individual efforts, as valuable as they may be, may do little to aid in long-term solutions to the issues they faced. However, they also reported a greater likelihood to think creatively about how such solutions might be found and a greater identification and appreciation of their own civic efficacy.

While these brief examples are meant to be just that and we could have selected from among a wide variety of civic engagement assignments and activities that now occur with far more regularity and intentionality across humanities and social science classes, we have found few faculty members in the sciences and math who see the development of civic learning in our students as a shared responsibility. The research in this area indicates that this is certainly not unique to Illinois College. Nationally, those who teach science and math are far less likely to make room in their courses for anything but content. Given the importance of science and technology issues in the public arena, this is more than slightly ironic.

Challenges and Conclusions

We appreciate the many changes that have occurred at Illinois College, and we have found that more faculty members are now willing to take on these civic engagement activities because we have helped to make the assessment of these nontraditional assignments straightforward. Our work for the Lumina DQP project is directly responsible for that. However, we continue to struggle with the others’ belief that the responsibility for civic engagement belongs throughout the curriculum. There are still large groups of faculty members who maintain that civic engagement, leadership, and service are more properly associated with certain disciplines or parts of the college, despite the fact that the mission is a college-wide statement. We must continue to work to integrate the commitment to civic learning throughout the curriculum and that our new requirements are not simply boxes to be checked but are student learning goals that are truly at the heart of an Illinois College education. Faculty members continue to resist this, often asking what is in it for them, especially if they have never considered how to include such a learning goal in their classes.

We have also found that our revision of general education to include civic engagement and obvious institutional support (i.e., support personnel, faculty development opportunities, and even significant financial resources) did not have quite the effect that we thought it should. Instead, many faculty members observed this and said simply, “Well, then, civic learning is now their job—let them do it.”
Thus we now recognize that we need one other aspect of administrative support and it must be ongoing: we need to build faculty and staff accountability into professional reviews, asking all members of our community how they contribute to our goals of leadership and service (i.e., our mission) in an ongoing way. It will be interesting to reexamine our curriculum with this aspect added.

REFERENCES


Karen E. Dean is Director, Illinois College Leadership Program, and Kelly A. Dagan is Director, Service-Learning, and Professor of Sociology at Illinois College in Jacksonville.
The Community Life Assessment Initiative (CLAI) at Olivet College arose to address three problems affecting assessment systems for small colleges. First, like an increasing number of colleges (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2012), we are tuition-dependent and challenged by the expense of scientifically based assessments of residence life. Second, the national environment calls for an assessment system whose priorities are outcomes that include student learning, graduation, and retention (U.S. Department of Education 2006). And third, the college needs to make decisions using feedback that is related to its mission and is accessible to the abilities of varied constituents, from trustees to the leaders in community life.

These demands led us to create the CLAI as a scientific tool. This paper describes the CLAI and illustrates how it aided community life’s response to two issues: freshman alcohol use and values-based education among the Greek organizations.

**Designing Measures and Outcomes**

Outcomes related to the college’s mission began with prior work developing a compact consistent with Education for Individual and Social Responsibility®. Adopted by the campus as a whole, the compact articulates several affirmations that students have responsibility for their own and others’ learning and development, for service to the college and the larger community, and for treating everyone with respect and integrity. As shown in Table 1, this formed the basis of the CLAI, which was developed three years ago.

**Table 1. Brief Outcomes Matrix for Community Life Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Responsibility Indicator</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For own learning: GPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club adviser ratings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rated outcome achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For others: Club adviser ratings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Ethics: Violations of rules, alcohol visitation, academic honesty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Responsibility Indicator</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to Wider Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club adviser ratings Self-rated outcome achieved Social motives (respect, integrity, and inclusion of others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club adviser ratings Service participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Ethics: Fighting, harassment, threats altercations, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicators for the CLAI are global summaries or averages of one or more indexes, both of which are intended for the highest-level reports to trustees or administrators. In turn, each index in Table 1
rests on multiple measures identified and used by the community life professionals who design and evaluate programs.

Eight years ago, survey measures were developed from ideas first submitted by an administratively appointed campus-wide committee. These were normed and validated over the next four years. These included a students’ social motives index, measured by social groups they would prefer to avoid, valuing of service, and personal civic responsibility. Graduating seniors also evaluate—looking at six learning outcomes developed by faculty members—how much they learned from the college. Two of these learning outcomes are indexes of individual and social responsibility in the Community Life Assessment Matrix. In Table 1, the index of achievement motivation under Individual Responsibility is calculated from eight measures of adaptation to disruptions (such as illness, family, and depression) and internal control. One of the most important of these is an external locus of control, which is interpreted as a measure of personal responsibility (Basgall and Snyder 1988). This is the tendency to attribute success or failure to forces outside one’s control or to express helplessness (this is discussed further in one of the examples below).

Four years ago, measures were added that allow advisers of student organizations to directly evaluate members’ participation related to the college’s mission. A simple and secure Student Outcomes Database (Graessle 2010) was created to give advisers short rubrics to use in rating what, through the club’s activity, members learned or helped others to learn. Using a 1–3 scale, members are evaluated on five elements (shown in Table 3). The same scale can be used to rate students on two aspects of social responsibility as a result of club-related service to the wider community or to the college. The process encourages trust and support among advisers because they choose the most appropriate rubric and are cautioned to evaluate only those members whose work they know.

**Cause-and-Effect Explanations**

The final selection of indexes resulted from a four-year process of data mining that identified the measures that best predicted grade-point average (GPA), retention, and graduation. This intentional and patient approach helped community life professionals move from defensive to scientific interpretations in two ways. First, having multiple measures of outcomes encourages decision makers to see a “big picture” with varied ways to improve quality. Second, community life professionals can avoid personalizing success or failure (e.g., “Here’s what I did this term. . . .”) and explain outcomes in terms of policies, procedures, personnel, and facilities common in cause-and-effect analyses (e.g., Ishikawa 1990). Our measures of these include residence capacity; finances and student aid; number of speakers or events; involvement; equity by gender and race; and satisfaction with personnel, services, and facilities.

While not avoiding qualitative data, the CLAI is an objective system that minimizes sampling biases inherent in anecdote-only decision making. By using indexes that are known to predict major outcomes, the CLAI avoids biases that stem from measures created to confirm an idea or view of a specific field or course. By using multivariate analyses, indirect measures can be identified and redundant items eliminated. And by measuring a few good, relatively general concepts, the CLAI avoids errors of overspecification. These can occur, for example, in “shotgun” surveys of a hundred questions that result in significant findings but may waste precious resources on an initiative that has minimal or unknown impact on an outcome.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College

The CLAI recently completed its first cycle of data collection and reporting, which allows a critical test of its functional validity or usability. Following are two examples of how traditional statistics were used at the lowest level to identify issues and to design community life services. We use the first example to show how indicators and indexes are reported at the highest level. As simple averages of percentages, they can be judged by Pareto’s rule (i.e., scores above 80 percent are good while those far below should be priorities for attention). The indexes, in turn, are calculated from the raw data as the percentage that provided the highest score on their measures (e.g., those whose GPAs are above 2.5 choose 4s or 5s on a 1–5 satisfaction scale). Table 2 shows that these general indexes are reported at the highest level in the CLAI in a way that preserves effects seen at lower levels. Without adding more numbers, the indicators and indexes are reported along with a brief explanation of the reason for the index score and the action that is planned.

Table 2. External Locus of Control and Freshman Alcohol and Substance Use Impact on Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Cause/s</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Responsibility</td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>High only if internal motivation &amp; no alcohol interference</td>
<td>Enforcement and early educational programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Own Learning</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>.....</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1st Semester GPA reported at lowest level for Community Life professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Locus of Control</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If NO substance/alcohol interference</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE interference from alcohol/substances</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 1: Alcohol Use and GPA

Olivet College experienced alcohol-related issues that have been noted nationwide (e.g., Danielson, Taylor, and Hartford 2001). Specifically, our freshmen women drank less than freshmen men, but by the senior year they consumed the same amount. While this includes binge drinking, seniors said that it did not affect their studies. In fact, as seen in Table 2, only those low in both drinking’s impact and external locus of control had higher GPAs in their first semester.

This pattern led to an initiative based on an environmental perspective of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (Task Force for the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism 2002), whose 3-in-1 framework addresses students’ identities, beliefs, and expectations about drinking by focusing simultaneously on individuals, the student body, the college, and the surrounding community. This initiative was funded by the Michigan Prevention Network. The goals emphasized enforcement and education about alcohol and one’s self. All campus constituents were involved, as well as a community task force with college personnel, high school educators, and the local police. Beyond basic facts about alcohol, educational programming included alternative ways to be more proactive and responsible about drinking.

This programming involved AlcoholEdu, an online two- to three-hour alcohol prevention education course founded on empirical research, which was required of all freshmen, those involved in Greek life, and athletes. Research studying the effects of AlcoholEdu on alcohol-related problems among...
freshmen indicated that the program had short-term benefits and recommended an environmental prevention strategy for longer-term effects (Paschall, Antin, Ringwalt, and Saltz 2011). With that in mind, we implemented four projects. First, we improved enforcement efforts with a campus-wide committee that reviewed and recommended policies, implemented staff training, and publicized results. Second, we reduced social access to alcohol by minors on and off campus by publicizing a major collaboration effort among campus safety, the Olivet Police Department, and the Eaton County Sheriff’s office. This group developed a plan to enforce the “social host and minor in possession laws” in on- and off-campus drinking settings. The college also collaborated with the Eaton County Substance Abuse Advisory Group to provide Training for Intervention Procedures from all Campus Safety and Residence Life personnel. Third, we advanced a health-promoting environment with a task force that used the American College Health Association-National College Health Association’s alcohol assessment data to market social norms focused on health and wellness opportunities. Finally, we incorporated data from these projects and existing data sources into the CLAI to ensure continual evaluation of efforts and review of prevention plans. Early results indicate that those completing this program performed better academically and binged less.

Example 2: Greek Societies and Responsibility

Our second example illustrates how data from the CLAI on student organizations affected current strategies for dealing with Greek organizations. Service is a key element of social responsibility and, from the context of college-wide assessment, is a college strength as evidenced by our service ratings by Washington Monthly and the frequency of our membership on the President’s Higher Education Service Honor Roll. As shown in Table 3, members of Greek organizations reinforce this strength because they are more likely than others to earn high ratings in service to the college and to others. However, advisers gave lower ratings to Greek members’ learning of individual attributes of responsibility.

Table 3. Percent of Organization Members Earning Satisfactory or Higher Ratings by Their Advisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Responsibility – Service to Wider Community and to College</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality and amount of work / service provided</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriateness of service/ benefit to wider community or college</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth of engagement (commitment to group leadership, activity, etc)</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and integrity (for differences, learning styles, culture, etc)</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of impact (eg. from feedback, advisor discussions, etc)</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Responsibility – Learning for Self and for Others</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time on task (2-4 hrs or weeks, intensity)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value to learners (aids personal/ career or others in long run)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth of engagement (active, planned, thoughtful/ works with others)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement evident (shows and uses skills in long run)</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Overall percentages interact significantly with organization type and type of responsibility (F = 48.5, df=1/661, p < .001)
An accreditation process for Greek organizations may have influenced their high ratings for service. The “Greeks” are considered leaders on campus and held to a higher standard than other clubs and organizations. As such, their re-accreditation requires six hours or more of service each semester with 80 percent of the membership participating.

In addition, the Social Ethics indicator, based on judicial data, revealed that fights and harassment were more likely in the spring (pledging) semester. This pattern led to changes in the accreditation process that requires all societies to foster individual responsibility through educational programs on alcohol, diversity, sexual assault, anti-hazing, annual leadership training, new members, risk management planning, and financial reporting.

The new accreditation process also allows advisers more power and discretion to offer guidance and to impose sanctions within the organization. This is stressed before and after the critical pledging time. The Intersociety Council that governs Greek activities in campus also developed an action plan to reduce judicial incidents on campus as mandated by college leadership. All together, we expect this will increase the number of opportunities for Greek members to engage in individual learning and improve advisers’ impressions of these important outcomes.

Initial results are promising, but the data will be updated near the end of the spring 2013 semester. In the future we also will examine the role of locus of control, which has been related to increased ethical behavior among students (e.g., Hume and Smith 2006). At that time we also will assess the adviser training that has been added for all clubs and organizations as part of our college-wide strategic initiatives.

Overall, we believe that the CLAI is serving our assessment needs very well. The patient approach to development and emphasis on explanation has now allowed this small college to examine the culture of our community; make changes that address concerns, as seen in alcohol-related policy revisions; assist Greek life’s improvement in its conduct of daily business on campus; and help align Greek organizations with the college’s mission. The CLAI also helps us identify future projects that are important to the values of our institution and models the assessment of an area that all traditional colleges must take very seriously.

REFERENCES


*Charles A. Graessle* is Director of Institutional Research and *Linda Logan* is Dean for Student Life at Olivet College in Olivet, Michigan.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience

Katie Strohl and Sherry Wilson

Our Institution

Crowder College was founded in 1963 on the grounds of Camp Crowder. The main campus is located in southwest Missouri, with four satellite campuses and six additional learning centers where core classes are offered. Since 2001, the institution has experienced rapid growth of about 175 percent; in fall 2012 the unduplicated head count was 5,500 students. Crowder is a commuter school with limited on-campus housing. The average student age is nineteen, and the majority of students are female. About 75 percent of the students pursue an associate of arts or associate of science degree. The remaining students intend to earn a career and technical degree or certificate.

College Orientation

College Orientation was established in 2005 as a retention strategy to increase graduation rates. The course was designed to acclimate new students to the Crowder College environment, provide them with information they will need to function as Crowder College students, and encourage self-evaluation of their character. The idea was to connect students to Crowder and to ensure that all entering freshmen were enrolled for the subsequent semester. The one-credit-hour course consists of fifteen separate modules that were designed to provide balanced information regarding knowledge and skills that are essential to a successful college experience. Instructors are provided with a course shell, which includes instructor guides, course assessments, supplemental materials, and visual aids. On the end-of-course survey, 90 percent or more of the students have consistently rated the course as "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful." Students who earn a grade of C or higher in the course are retained at significantly higher levels than students who do not take the course, fail the course, or earn a grade of D.

The Service Challenge

In 2008, the Board of Trustees initiated a challenge to establish a service learning experience for students that would directly connect to the institution's mission statement: “Building a civil, serving, literate, learning community of responsible citizens.” As a result, the Service Seed requirement was proposed. The philosophy behind the experience was to plant a seed of service that will continue to grow as students complete their education. Students’ positive feelings about service and the relevancy of the experience to each person’s life and interests allows participants to understand the value placed on service at Crowder and encourages students to seek service opportunities within and outside of the institution. At graduation, students leave Crowder prepared to serve.
Creating, Implementing, and Managing a Service Seed Requirement

Several considerations had to be taken into account as the requirement was developed. Such considerations included logistics and the interest in keeping the main focus student-based. Logistically, the following questions had to be answered: How many hours of service would be required? How would the Service Seed be presented and its importance to our mission conveyed? What would result from an incomplete Service Seed, and how would incompletes be monitored?

Research was conducted on other institutions with a service-oriented requirement. Most were high schools or private institutions, and most required a minimum of sixteen or more hours. As Crowder’s goal was to “plant a seed” of service within the student, a four-hour minimum was agreed on, to be completed within the time frame of the College Orientation course (sixteen-week semester, first or second eight-week option, or weekend express course). Students could perform additional hours of service for extra credit. After completing their service, students submitted one or more signed time sheets documenting the hours served, allowing instructors to track and verify service locations. Students also were responsible for writing a reflection essay of five hundred words or more in which they analyzed their experiences.

The Service Seed had to be presented as an important part of College Orientation without encompassing the entire course. An appropriate amount of attention was given to the presentation and discussion of the “why” behind the requirement. To do so, space had to be created within an already full curriculum without diminishing the value of any other topic. It became obvious that the Service Seed would have to be introduced on the first day of class to provide students with the maximum amount of time for completion. A detailed discussion of service was presented in the second module of the course, following the technology module. The class presentation and discussion addressed the following topics:

- Why is the Service Seed important to Crowder and, therefore, to you?
- What is community service?
- Who volunteers?
- Why volunteer?
- Why does “where” matter?
- What qualifies as service and what doesn’t?

In addition, students were given tips for choosing the best service site and tips for being a great volunteer.

Reminders and shared events were cited during each class period. Crowder’s home page featured a link to aid students as well as provide the community with an easily accessible tool for sharing. Various organizations and individuals submitted service opportunities that, on review, were posted to the Web page. Students then accessed the Web page to review those opportunities.

The institution’s catalog was edited to say: “Successful completion of the College Orientation course and its Service Seed component are required for all degree or certificate-seeking students within their first semester of enrollment at Crowder College.” The institutional syllabus includes the following policy:
Regardless of grade, students not completing the Service Seed Requirements (Time sheet indicating four completed volunteer hours and a completed Reflection Essay) will receive an Incomplete. At the end of the following semester, should the requirement not be fulfilled, the “I” will automatically be changed to an “F” grade. Students receiving an “F” in the course will need to repeat the entire course the following semester.

The Learning Opportunities coordinator, working directly with the Records Department, tracked students with Service Seed incompletes. Students are contacted via letter twice throughout the subsequent semester.

During the creation and implementation process, the focus was on the ultimate goal of the Service Seed: to cultivate a seed that would grow, students had to be provided with a positive push toward service in a way that kept the experience from yielding an adverse outcome. To do so, the involvement had to be relevant to each student’s personal goals and interests; therefore, students were encouraged to volunteer in an area of their choosing rather than one that was assigned. Ideally, the service would be applicable to the student’s degree. Consequently, the locations and organizations were highly varied. The most common service category chosen by students, with more than 60 percent of volunteer hours, involved nonprofit agencies—whether civic, faith-based, or governmental—but students chose all types of service, including to individuals, groups, clubs, and civic events.

Can Required Service Have a Positive Effect on Students and the Community?

The Service Seed continues to be a requirement for passing Crowder’s orientation class. At the end of each course, students are asked to fill out a survey, anonymously, which includes the following question: “How beneficial/rewarding did you find the Service Seed section of our course? Please consider the group discussion, your individual service, as well as your time spent completing your personal reflection.”

Since the spring 2011 semester, more than 90 percent of respondents have indicated that the experience was “very” or “somewhat beneficial/rewarding” (the first two options on a five-point Likert scale). The institution is delighted with this particular survey result. A richer depiction of the effectiveness of the program comes directly from the students themselves. Following is a small sample of student comments taken directly from reflection essays:

Serving my community has influenced me in so many positive ways. For example . . . how useful one can be by dedicating a bit of their time to serve others for a good cause. —N. Granados

It is not an easy job trying to balance work, school, family, and community service. . . . Service work when genuine helps me get out of me and focus on others. —J. Dungan

My commitment to service was nonexistent before the service seed. I hated the thought of volunteering because I wanted to spend time alone and not give up that time. Now that I have done some community service, I have a different approach when I hear volunteer work. . . . When I heard “community service,” I thought of a court judge sentencing me. . . . The influence that volunteering has had on me I cannot describe. I never realized that so many people were without. —G. Ayres

For me, commitment to community service was nearly nonexistent. . . . Involvement took too much time and energy; I was content to sit back and watch the game—not be part of it. Once I started . . . things changed. —A. Benson
I have never really done community service before this assignment, but I enjoyed it and can see myself doing it again in the future. It made me feel good to do something nice for the community on my own time without getting paid. I definitely want to look into other places to volunteer around town. —S. Miller

I kind of had a bad attitude about the whole situation. But the longer I was there, the more my attitude changed. I ended up staying seven hours instead of the needed four. It was definitely an experience. . . . [They] made my day and I know I made theirs. —A. Rice

Now that I think it over I really feel ashamed [of] how I thought about this opportunity. I now realize that I’m lucky to have what I have. . . . I didn’t realize times were still so hard. . . . With each bag or basket I handed out I started feeling better about myself. I was doing something and liking it and not getting paid! That’s what blows my mind: You can work and get paid and hate it, but I wasn’t getting paid and really enjoying it. —Anonymous

When asked what impact the Service Seed had on their particular organization, community members responded with the following:

This program has worked really GREAT for us! We have been able in working with this program to “up the bar” on providing higher AND better service to our internal AND external stakeholders . . . good “workers” who have been both enthusiastic and hardworking. . . . For example, the walking trail at Bicentennial Conservation Area has never looked better and we have received many positive comments to that effect. This would NOT be possible if we did not have this [help]. —Terry Cook, Missouri Department of Conservation

I have the opportunity to witness the subtle changes in students as they volunteer within the community and specifically, Faithful Friends Animal Advocates (FFAA). These subtle changes are internal; the students appear to have a spirit of community and giving. Upon completion of the service seed requirements, the students seem to have a less egocentric view on life. Crowder College students have been a great addition to the volunteer pool. . . . Though (our) volunteers are passionate about the cause, burn-out can lead to tired and unwilling volunteers; Crowder College students help alleviate this and provide a breath of fresh air and energy. The Crowder College Service Seed requirement is invaluable and helps support the mission of the institution. —Helen Hale, Academic Resource Center Coordinator, Faithful Friends Animal Advocates (FFAA)

The Area Chamber of Commerce has greatly benefited from Crowder College students with their “Service Seed” Community Service for several of our events! It has helped us with not only having to ask our member volunteers to help less but also given us the opportunity to have more support at our events. . . . One Crowder student emailed me after the event and thanked me for letting her assist with the event. She also said to keep her in mind to help next year! I was very impressed with her and pleased to see her enthusiasm in wanting to be a volunteer and give back to our community! —Shana Griffin, Executive Director Neosho Area Chamber of Commerce

**Conclusion**

The Service Seed grew from a Board of Trustees challenge to establish a service learning experience for students, and after several months of discussion and development, a proposal was presented and accepted. The Service Seed requirement was then initiated in fall 2010 in all College Orientation classes. There was no pilot semester. Students were required to complete a total of four hours of volunteering within the time frame of their College Orientation course. One session of the course was dedicated to introducing the definition of service and its impact on the community as well as the volunteer. After completing the required hours, students then wrote a reflection essay summarizing their experiences.
Signed time sheets allowed the instructor to track students and verify service locations. The following chart shows how many students have participated in the Service Seed within a given academic year. It does not reflect incompletes or additional hours beyond the four-hour requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Students Completing (final grade of D or above, not including incompletes)</th>
<th>Estimated Clock Hours of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FA 2010 to SU 2011</td>
<td>1,491</td>
<td>At least 5,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA 2011 to SU 2012</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>At least 5,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA 2012</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>At least 3,496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The service location covers a nine-county area, overflows into the surrounding states, and expands across the country for those students taking the course online. As word of the Service Seed requirement spreads throughout the community, support for the program continues to expand. This is shown by the addition of numerous opportunities each semester to the Service Seed Web page. Student comments about their service experience collected through the reflection essays are overwhelmingly positive. Students often indicate that they wish to continue their service beyond the one-semester requirement. The Service Seed program enriches Crowder College students, the institution, and the surrounding community. As it embodies the spirit of the Crowder College mission, the Service Seed program is a natural fit and a model for other service-oriented institutions.

Katie Strohl is Learning Opportunities Coordinator/Faculty and Sherry Wilson is Developmental Education Faculty/Division Chair at Crowder College in Neosho, Missouri.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments

Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project
Claudia Hart and Anthony Plemmons

Introduction

Opportunities to develop and enhance campus communication at Northern Michigan University (NMU) were identified in a 2010 Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Systems Appraisal. A need existed for better dissemination of information and feedback mechanisms to address two issues: a perceived lack of decision transparency and realization that feedback does not always make its way up or down the leadership chain. In response to AQIP reviewer feedback, the university adopted an Action Project, “Developing Feedback Mechanisms and Enhancing Campus Leadership Communication,” which began in September 2011 with the goal of developing processes for effective leadership-guided communication and feedback mechanisms.

As an initial component of this continuous improvement initiative and as a service learning project, an MBA Managerial Communication class conducted a communication audit to evaluate the university’s communicative health. An often-overlooked resource for quality improvement is the student body. Therefore, this project was a win-win for the students and for the broader university community. Students connected classroom theory with workplace practice, acquired significant knowledge about organizational communication, worked collaboratively in audit teams and with university employees, practiced communication skills in the real environment, and developed and defended decisions and recommendations. As a result, the university acquired valuable information about communication strengths and opportunities for improvement that were considered by the AQIP Action Project Task Force.

This paper will discuss the need for a systematic communication audit in organizations, including the types of quantitative and qualitative data that can be collected, and the process and results of this experiential, collaborative, and team-based service learning project conducted by a class of graduate students and its role in the continuous improvement timeline.

Communication Audit

The term audit refers to “a process of exploring, examining, monitoring, and evaluating something” (Downs and Adrian 2004, 6). Henderson (2005, 289) says, “just like a financial audit attempts to form an economic portrait of a company by identifying areas of waste and efficiency, a communication audit examines communication issues in detail.” She also explains, “the communications audit process is designed to examine and evaluate an organization’s communication program; to reveal hurdles to effective communication, to reveal gaps in the communication process, and to provide suggestions for improvement” (Henderson 2005, 312).

In a communication audit, both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected to get the best representation of an organization’s communication habits. Typical methods used in an audit to make
the best assessment include interviews, surveys, critical incident analysis, network analysis, participant observation, document review, and focus groups (Coffman 2004). Downs and Adrian recommend using multiple techniques when possible: “the more measures used to collect data, the more reliable are the data; they supplement one another so that the consistency of findings can be tested . . . by supplementing one with the other, auditors can ensure that their estimates of the organization are likely to be realistic” (2004, 27). As explained in the next section, the NMU communication audit team (consisting of all seventeen MBA students) collected data using three methods—interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

**Process**

This service learning project was completed during the fifteen-week fall 2011 semester, which began on August 30, 2011. The co-chairs of the AQIP Action Project attended the first class session and discussed the objectives for the project. To manage the audit, the seventeen students in the class were divided into teams, and each team was assigned one of the three divisions within the university: President’s Division, Finance and Administration Division, and Academic Affairs Division. Because of its size, the Academic Affairs Division was further divided into two subgroups: (1) faculty and staff and (2) deans, department heads, and directors.

Using the university’s organization chart, each audit team identified leaders and employees within their assigned division. Team members interviewed fourteen employees to learn their perceptions of communication strengths and opportunities for improvement. The interviews were exploratory in nature to gain an understanding of the structure of communication within the Division.

The associate vice president of Institutional Research conducted a training session for the audit team on creating and administering online surveys using **Qualtrics**™, and a business research professor provided instruction on developing survey instruments. The **Downs-Hazen Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire** (Downs and Adrian 2004) was used as a template to develop the communication survey. The class spent approximately one month writing and revising questions for the survey. The survey was then pilot-tested by the seventeen MBA students, the AQIP co-chairs, the outcomes assessment coordinator, and an undergraduate business research class. One student was responsible for completing the university’s “Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects” and for securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. All students completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Human Subjects Research Training Course as required by the university. The survey was launched and an e-mail with a link to the online survey was sent to each employee on October 25, 2011. In the next two weeks, two reminder e-mails were sent to respondents. The survey closed at 5 p.m. on November 7, 2011.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the completed surveys. A statistics team was convened to interpret and analyze the survey results. The statistics group was divided into two subgroups: a qualitative group, which analyzed written responses and identified general themes, and a quantitative group, which analyzed the questions with a predetermined number of response options.

Using the general themes from the qualitative feedback, the divisional teams conducted focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain an in-depth understanding of communication within the university. Focus group participants elaborated on and supported many common themes discovered.
from the survey results. To gain as much honest information as possible, managers and supervisors attended focus group sessions that were separate from sessions attended by their subordinates.

All potential participants received an e-mail invitation to participate in a focus group. Focus group invitations were based on management level and divisional team. Some prospective participants were also contacted via phone, campus mail, and additional e-mails; others were asked by their supervisors to participate.

After the focus groups were completed, the teams combined feedback from the interviews, surveys, and focus groups. The entire class then convened for the purpose of reviewing all results and developing conclusions and recommendations. The audit was completed on December 13, 2011, when the students delivered the final oral presentation at a university forum and submitted the written report to the Action Project Task Force. The full report can be found at www.nmu.edu/aqip/sites/Drupalaqip/files/UserFiles/Files/ActionProjects/11-12-LeadershipComm/NMU_Communication_Audit_Report_Dec2011.pdf.

**Action Project Accomplishments Resulting from the Communication Audit**

The Action Project Task Force implemented several tools and processes as a result of conclusions and recommendations from the communication audit.

**Online Employee Suggestion Box**

**Recommendation:** While employees believed that the feedback they received from their immediate supervisors was adequate, they also expressed the need for better feedback mechanisms from the university; there was no system in place that allowed employees to confirm that an issue had been addressed. An anonymous feedback submission system could be implemented to track suggestions made so the person submitting feedback would know that his or her suggestion was being reviewed.

**Accomplishment:** A prototype of an *Online Employee Suggestion Box* ([www.nmu.edu/suggestionbox](http://www.nmu.edu/suggestionbox)) was created with the intent to pass ideas up the organizational levels to the executive management team. The system allows for the review of ideas by primary decision makers between the person submitting the idea and the division leaders. Demonstration of this system to key stakeholders across campus was conducted during fall 2012. As a result, additional features were recommended to enhance the system.

**Online University Policies and Procedures Manual**

**Recommendation:** Employees identified the need for easier access to university policies and procedures. They knew that the policies existed but did not know where to find them; employees also reported a need for a more user-friendly search engine. Easier access to this type of key information is essential to effectively performing job functions and improving communication.

**Accomplishment:** An *NMU Policies and Procedures Online Manual* ([www.nmu.edu/node/216](http://www.nmu.edu/node/216)) was implemented and a process developed for ensuring scheduled updates. An *Online Supervisor’s Manual* ([www.nmu.edu/node/212](http://www.nmu.edu/node/212)) was created to provide basic reference materials for daily operations.
Employee Intranet/E-mail System

**Recommendation:** E-mail was rated among the most effective communication channels, but there were numerous suggestions for improvements. The primary concern with e-mail was the sheer number of messages received. Participants noted that the e-mail filtering system did a decent job of removing unwanted messages but often removed important messages and allowed other unwanted messages to get through. The resulting inbox clutter, along with a general overreliance on e-mail, led to e-mail “overload”; this required employees to “pick and choose” what to read. This e-mail selection process often caused important messages to go unread, resulting in a breakdown in the communication process. An intranet could be implemented to minimize reliance on e-mail and serve as the central location for important employee information, such as announcements, policies and procedures, and minutes of meetings, which normally would be sent via e-mail. This would provide a means of quickly obtaining accurate information to help bolster communication flow and increase effectiveness while minimizing reliance on e-mail.

**Accomplishment:** A prototype of an employee intranet/e-mail announcement system is currently in development to address key recommendations resulting from the audit: (1) decrease amount of e-mail sent, (2) increase update information on major campus issues and projects, (3) provide quick links to information that are of interest to employees, and (4) help employees prioritize the overwhelming amount of communication they receive.

Student Learning Outcomes

The complexity of the university’s communication audit provided MBA students with the opportunity to gain real-world skills in a nonthreatening environment. Students were responsible for meeting deadlines, designing a survey, preparing for and conducting one-on-one interviews and focus groups (including designing interview guides), analyzing data, writing a final report, and presenting their report to the Action Project Task Force and key administrators.

In addition to assisting the university’s AQIP Task Force, MBA students developed professional skills that would have been impossible to acquire in a traditional classroom setting. This service learning project enhanced their graduate education, allowing them to put theory into practice under the supervision of their professor. Students were exposed to the requirements and challenges of formal research, including the IRB application process, CITI research training, survey response rates, and participant interest. They learned about accreditation, outcomes assessment, and the university’s effort toward continuous improvement. In sum, students collaborated in teams and delivered a product that was significant in assessing and improving the quality of higher education.

REFERENCES


_Claudia Hart_ is Professor, College of Business, and _Anthony Plemmons_ is Graduate Research Assistant at Northern Michigan University in Marquette.
Introduction

Robert Morris University

Robert Morris University (RMU) is a private, independent, not-for-profit, multi-campus institution committed to providing professional education to diverse communities through accessibility by location, schedule, and program. The university’s main campus is located in downtown Chicago, with campuses in six nearby Illinois suburbs and two Central Illinois cities.

The university’s long and proud history in Chicago dates back to 1913 with the founding of Moser School. In 1975 Moser School merged with the then-Robert Morris College, which had been first chartered in Illinois in 1965. Throughout its hundred years of operation, Robert Morris has been recognized for its commitment and dedication to quality, focused, and innovative applied education and to serving a student body that is diverse in age, race, gender, ethnicity, location, and socioeconomic and academic background.

The university serves more than seven thousand undergraduate and graduate students each year, with more than half attending the downtown Chicago location. The majority of RMU students are first-generation college students, having earned high school diplomas in the public school systems in Illinois or neighboring states. While about two hundred freshmen each year move to Chicago to attend RMU, the vast majority commute to campus each day. More than half of all RMU students work full-time while attending college on a full-time basis. RMU has been recognized nationally as the most diverse university in the Midwest (Morse 2011) and for having high retention and graduation rates (Rankings 2011; College completion 2010).

Junior Achievement of Chicago

Junior Achievement (JA) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy. Since its founding in 1919, JA has contributed to the business and economics education of more than a hundred million young people in the United States and throughout the world.

JA empowers young people to own their economic success. The volunteer-delivered programs for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade foster work-readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills and use experiential learning to inspire students to dream big and reach their potential. JA uses hands-on experiences to help young people understand the economics of life. In partnership with business and educators, JA brings the real world to students.

Volunteers from the business communities, colleges, and universities teach K–12 students age-appropriate, hands-on lessons about how to be a part of our economic structure (Junior Achievement of Chicago 2012).
RMU and JA Partnership

The parallel missions of both organizations prompted RMU’s dean of Business Administration and JA’s vice president of Operations to collaborate on a creative partnership. The first step was to incorporate “JA in a Day” in specific classes. In the past six years, this partnership has blossomed into an integral component of RMU’s freshmen/sophomore experience. Students are introduced to JA during a module in a mandatory sophomore course, CMT 220, Developing Professional Presence. During their sophomore, junior, and senior years, many students continue their work with JA in a number of ways. Community service is central to RMU students’ personal mission; many already volunteer in their communities, school systems, and churches. The biggest challenge students face while in college is finding time in an already crowded schedule. By incorporating the experience in the classroom, students are able to realize the benefits during their course of study.

The ten-week course is one of a four-course sequence in career management, which is mandatory for every RMU student. The sophomore course was a natural fit for the JA experience because it allows students who are already familiar with RMU to begin thinking about their potential impact on the larger community. The experience itself involves one class period of training and one day visiting the public schools and accounts for 10 percent of the student’s end-of-quarter grade for this course. The goal of this course is for students to learn how to develop, manage, and influence their professional image, coinciding with the goals of the JA experience.

Impact on Community

- Over the past eight years, approximately three thousand RMU students have been involved in JA projects impacting more than two thousand K–12 classrooms.
- More than forty-eight thousand K–12 students—with the vast majority from the Chicago Public School system—have been impacted by the RMU/JA partnership.
- RMU Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), in conjunction with JA, completed and were awarded a $75,000 grant from Banco Popular to support the University Model program.
- RMU has hosted the annual JA Titan competition for the past five years, welcoming more than three hundred high school students to its campus.
- For the last two years, RMU has hosted more than fifteen hundred middle and high school students on the Chicago campus for JA programming and a tour of the campus.
- The JA Titan simulation program is being utilized in an introductory management course at RMU.

Impact on RMU Students

First and foremost, RMU students welcome the opportunity to become involved in community service. Naturally, they all have some apprehension, particularly because the JAID (JA in a Day) program involves students leaving campus for an entire day, thus making it necessary for students to miss other classes or work. To ease this burden, JA funds a bus to transport students to and from the schools, provides lunch, and, through its published programs, provides all the necessary training and supplies. RMU’s faculty members accompany students to the school and pair students so that there are at least two student volunteers are in each classroom.
While students may start out with fear of the unknown or preconceived ideas, these days bring life-changing experiences. By lunch, students are asking to be involved in this experience a second time. They are overwhelmed by their ability to make an impact on individual students, many times at the same school they attended as elementary or high school students.

RMU students report many benefits from this experience, including the chance to enhance public speaking skills, the ability to work in teams, project management skills, professional network building, additions to resumes, and leadership skills.

**Impact for JA**

The University Model of JAID helps fulfill JA’s goal of increasing its cadre of volunteers. It allows this not-for-profit organization to work with future professionals, assist in their development, and increase the impact of the mission of both entities. RMU led the way in development of the University Model and serves as the lead example of creating a win-win situation for both the K–12 students and the RMU volunteers who participate.

JA has also hired RMU students as interns and part-time and full-time employees. In addition, professionals from JA serve on RMU advisory boards, act as guest speakers, and participate in networking opportunities.

**Summary**

The partnership between RMU and JA works to benefit the two organizations, the RMU students, and the K–12 students impacted by the programs. The importance of education is promoted to young people, giving them a sense of direction and visible role models to emulate. RMU students are able to accomplish the goals of JA in a Day by utilizing a prepared lesson template but incorporating their own stories of challenges and successes. The Junior Achievement/Robert Morris University partnership does make a difference.

**REFERENCES**


*Mablene Krueger* is Provost and *Larry Nieman* is Dean, School of Business Administration, at Robert Morris University in Chicago, Illinois; and *Maria Ramos* is Vice President of Central Operations at Junior Achievement Chicago in Chicago, Illinois.
Institutions of higher learning are currently experiencing phenomena that force academic envelopes to be pushed in new and innovative ways. The bombardment of issues such as increasing tuition costs, lower enrollments, strained national and international economies, tighter regulations, and added expectations of the work force place institutions back to the planning table more often than previously thought or practiced. In making the needs of students a priority, colleges and universities now must consider curriculum as an essential, relevant, and evolving vehicle that can respond to market trends as well as industry and employer expectations. Curriculum aligns institutions to industry. Curricular agility keeps institutions moving forward and keeps students on the cutting edge of theory and practice.

Kendall College currently has four academic programs—schools of Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management, Business, and Education—each of which responds to the needs of respective service industries. In 2009–2010, Kendall College repurposed its institutional mission to better reflect its understanding of and position in these respective service industries. In doing so, it was apparent that specific emphasis needed to be placed in five key areas, and, as such, the five new strategic priorities were defined:

- **Priority 1**: A commitment to excellence, diversity, growth, and reputation
- **Priorities 2 and 4**: Academic excellence and student outcomes, with an emphasis on the commitment to assessment of student learning
- **Priority 3**: Financial stability
- **Priority 5**: Employee professional development

In response to Priorities 2 and 4, in particular, no longer was Kendall College willing to remain stagnant or unresponsive while continually absorbing the impact of detractors such as student attrition, outdated or misaligned programs with industry, or misalignment and non-definition of general education courses and experiences. To define competencies and outcomes specific to each program, leaders from throughout the institution were charged with creating institutional (core) competencies, while examining their respective units on multiple levels, through multiple lenses, and by multiple vehicles. Programs then mapped curricula to core and program competencies, giving leaders the opportunity to detail the learning progression while identifying misalignment, obsolescence, and incongruity. Primarily, this exercise afforded those responsible for general education the opportunity to redefine and reposition it with the mission of the college, and it afforded those responsible for academic programs the opportunity to add meaning and depth to their curricula by incorporating core and program competencies and outcomes.
General education has since become a vibrant and relevant part of the educational experience, and academic programs have been able to redefine themselves to better meet the needs of students, provide more relevant learning experiences, provide stronger connections to general education, and position students for success in their chosen industry. Those involved with general education have also been the leaders for institutional assessment initiatives in which students of all programs are measured against the newly established core institutional competencies and outcomes (see figure, below).

By using general education as the driver, and curriculum mapping as the vehicle, the process surfaced disparities and disconnects in skill development as well as gaps in skills and courses. For example, some skills that were expected to be demonstrated in 300- and 400-level courses were not introduced or developed in 100- or 200-level courses, while other skills may have been taught sporadically with no sequential rationale. This rethinking and repositioning identified many necessary changes, which needed to be made in a relatively short amount of time. Collaboratively, the institution expressed its desire and need to redefine curriculum. Collectively, the institution responded by rethinking the institutional mission, defining the general education model, defining the institution’s core competencies and outcomes, and feedback from employers within each respective field.

Now, with curriculum, instruction, and assessment common discussion topics woven throughout the fabric of the institution, the academic “envelopes” are being pushed on multiple levels. Programs are developing courses and concentrations of study in relation to one another, and in relation to the general education model, all of which helps Kendall College remain agile in redefining curriculum in an era of constant, and, at times, undefined or nebulous change.
Chapter 1: Creating and Supporting Learning Environments
Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment

TIER 1
Tier 1 courses are 100-level courses that emphasize the Skills of Kendall College’s Core Academic Competencies—including Communication, Critical Reading and Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, Research and Synthesis of Information, and Technological Literacy.

TIER 2
Tier 2 courses are 200-level courses that emphasize the Knowledge and Values of Kendall College’s Core Academic Competencies—including Cultural Literacy, Aesthetic Appreciation, Environmental Stewardship, and Ethical Awareness. INT 210 is a prerequisite for 200-level courses. No 100-level and 200-level co-enrollment, but 200-level co-enrollment is allowed.

TIER 3
INT 310 is the capstone course for General Education.

The five Tier 2 courses must be completed before taking INT 310. No 200-level and 300-level co-enrollment.

Figure 1: Kendall College General Education Core

Ryan Bartelmay is Dean of General Education, Susan Tinnish is Dean of the School of Hospitality Management, Renee Zonka is Dean of the School of Culinary Arts, and Paul Busceni is Dean of the School of Education at Kendall College in Chicago, Illinois.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
As the U.S. economy evolves, there is growing recognition of the importance of an educated workforce. A key challenge is how to help more people, particularly adults, succeed at the postsecondary level and earn degrees. However, promoting degree completion is not the only challenge. Today, the U.S. higher education system is facing a crisis regarding its perceived quality. One model for improving quality is competency-based education, in which an institution clearly defines the specific competencies expected of its graduates. This paper is a summary of a 2012 publication from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) that examines the current state of competency-based postsecondary education in the United States, profiling the various types of competency-based, or competency-focused, models that currently exist, the extent to which these programs assess for student competencies or learning outcomes, and the extent to which these programs operate outside of a credit-based system. These programs can help inform other institutions interested in developing a stronger focus on competencies, whether by demonstrating the possibilities of high-quality programs or by facilitating the recognition of learning acquired outside of traditional instruction. (The full publication can be found at www.cael.org/pdfs/2012_CompetencyBasedPrograms.)

Current Competency-Focused Degree Programs in the United States

Following a review of recent literature and interviews with a wide range of institutions, CAEL identified several institutions that are currently using competency frameworks as part of their postsecondary degree offerings. One subset of institutions uses competency frameworks in the context of a course-based system. By course-based system, we mean that students take the same kinds of courses that have always been offered by colleges and universities: instructor-led and credit-hour based. Another subset of institutions uses competency frameworks as a tool to disrupt the traditional college curriculum in new and innovative ways.

Competency Frameworks Within Traditional Course-Based Programs

Many institutions that are designed around courses and credit hours have embraced the use of competency frameworks for their programs. It is, in fact, somewhat common to see colleges and universities take the most basic approach: identifying the intended learning outcomes for students graduating with degrees from the institution. College catalogs might include language such as “Our students will be expected to know and be able to do the following upon graduation” or “Students earning a degree in this discipline will have the following competencies.” Many colleges take this approach down to the course level, articulating the specific learning outcomes that students are
expected to have at the end of a given course. Delaware County Community College (Pennsylvania) is a good example of this kind of approach.

A much smaller number of institutions have developed, or are working to develop, methods of assessing the competencies. In these cases, competency assessment is built into the courses. Examples described in this paper include Rio Salado College (one of Arizona’s Maricopa Community Colleges), Alverno College (Wisconsin), and Brandman University (California and Washington). A slightly different take on competency assessment is used at Tusculum College (Tennessee), which has established specific learning outcomes for its general education core curriculum. At Marylhurst University (Oregon), the program is primarily course-based, but there are some competency requirements that students can satisfy through assessments rather than through courses.

The above-mentioned institutions are mostly, if not entirely, course-based. In other words, students receive instruction primarily through courses or demonstrate learning through course-based prior learning assessment (PLA). In addition, they are also credit-based in that the students satisfy graduation requirements by earning a required number of credits, mostly by taking courses from the institutions. In no case can a student progress toward a degree by demonstrating competencies alone.

**Competency Frameworks That Drive Curricular Redesign**

Competency frameworks can also provide an opportunity for institutions to offer a very different curriculum from the traditional course-based models. As we identified a range of institutions focused on student competencies, we recognized that some presented remarkably different models of instruction or degree completion. These institutions have taken noteworthy steps away from traditional or seat-time-based course models.

Westminster College (Utah), for example, redesigned its business degree program to be a series of competency-driven projects for students to accomplish. Southern New Hampshire University conducted a thorough analysis of its business administration program’s existing courses and discovered that a redesign of the curriculum into specially designed modules could better instruct and reinforce the required competencies while eliminating the need for an entire year of study. The result is an innovative, competency-based three-year bachelor’s degree that saves students both time and money in earning their degrees. Taking another approach, Western Governors University (Utah and national) and DePaul University’s School for New Learning (Illinois) allow students to progress toward a degree by demonstrating competencies acquired through courses or independent study. Similarly, Excelsior College’s School of Nursing (New York and national) provides an example of a professional school that allows students to graduate by demonstrating competencies.

**The Use of Competencies and Progress Toward a Degree**

Some of the examples described in this paper show that it is possible for students to earn degrees by demonstrating competencies alone. At DePaul University’s School for New Learning, students progress toward a degree by demonstrating the competencies required for the degree. They can do this by taking courses that are related to those competencies or by preparing portfolios that demonstrate mastery of those competencies through prior learning (with minimal required course work). At Western Governors University, there are no required courses, just required competencies. Students
gain knowledge and skills on their own, with the help of faculty mentors, but they can demonstrate competencies at their own pace and earn degrees based on what they have learned from a variety of sources, including work and other life experiences.

In contrast, in the competency-based business programs at Southern New Hampshire University and Westminster, traditional forms of PLA (e.g., standardized exams, challenge exams, evaluation of external training, and portfolio assessments) are not options, and yet the focus on competencies, rather than on seat time, allows the student to progress toward a degree more efficiently. While neither the Southern New Hampshire University model nor the Westminster model offers the same kind of transferability of learning between institutions that is possible at DePaul’s School for New Learning or Western Governors University, their examples show that competency-based education is not just about moving beyond a credit-based system. It is also about advancing multiple visions for what postsecondary education could be in the future.

Lessons and Suggestions for Implementation

Institutions and state higher education systems interested in developing and implementing competency frameworks of their own can learn from the experiences of the colleges and universities that have pioneered the approaches described in this paper. Suggestions for implementation come from literature on this subject as well as from the individuals we interviewed and include the following:

- Ensure strong leadership and vision. A strong leader is important for creating an institutional culture that is open to change and oriented to the same mission.
- Develop a system of reliable assessments. Some form of assessment is important for the effectiveness of a competency framework in ensuring the quality and value of the degree.
- Rethink the traditional models for staffing and courses. A focus on competencies and related assessments may require new or expanded roles for faculty, and it may require a new way to design courses and learning activities.
- Establish pathways to other degree programs. Programs breaking free of the seat-time constraint may need to find ways to exist within credit-hour systems so that students are able to transfer to other institutions, receive financial aid, and have their degrees recognized by advanced degree programs. There are currently efforts to explore how financial aid regulations can be expanded to include programs that are competency-based and not credit-based.

A View to the Future

The steps taken to move beyond the credit-hour framework for higher education are helping colleges rethink higher education in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness. They are more efficient in that they are focused on how best to help students demonstrate competence, even if doing so means eliminating redundant course work or unnecessary degree requirements. They are more effective in that they develop methods to validate that student learning has occurred and competencies have been achieved, rather than merely assuming that such learning has taken place if a student has taken a certain number and series of courses. They are fairer because they recognize learning that the student may have acquired outside of a classroom. Learning is what counts, not the time spent in a classroom. Several policy changes can help to create a more welcoming environment for these approaches:
The Higher Learning Commission  
_A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement._ 29th Edition. © 2013 The Higher Learning Commission

- Support further adoption of competency-based degree programs. Public officials and policy makers can provide incentives for colleges and universities to design their programs around well-defined and assessed student competencies in an effort to promote higher quality, effectiveness, and fairness. This includes finding solutions to financial aid eligibility outside of a credit-based system.

- Support research that results in a greater understanding of competency-based degree programs and how they might be used. We need to continue to explore new models for competency-based programs. In addition, more information is needed to understand what it takes to develop and maintain effective assessment methods and to evaluate the benefits to the student.

- Identify and promote quality standards for competency-based programs. Institutions interested in developing and implementing programs designed around competencies need flexibility to pursue innovative approaches, but there should also be standards for ensuring high quality and academic rigor.

- Align degree-based competencies with workplace skill requirements. Colleges need to collaborate more closely with workforce systems, industry associations, and regional employers to ensure that the competencies assessed are meaningful in the world of work.

- Remove existing policy barriers. Federal and state higher education policy makers need to consider how existing policies, regulatory language, and stated rules may serve as barriers to institutions interested in developing new programs.

- Promote valid approaches to recognizing and awarding credit for prior learning. Federal and state policies that encourage greater access to and use of PLA options would help to advance a broader understanding of why focusing on what a student has learned rather than how that learning was acquired is efficient, effective, and fair. A broader acceptance of PLA can provide a pathway for institutions and accrediting bodies to implement innovative approaches to competency-based degree programs.

- Use competency frameworks to support statewide transfer and articulation agreements. State higher education leaders should encourage all institutions within a state system to specify the competencies acquired in each course, and those competencies can then be used to develop clearly understood transfer and articulation policies within the system. This kind of policy change will encourage a greater focus on competencies throughout the system and create an environment in which new competency-based programs can emerge.

These policy changes can provide a starting point for what could ultimately be a transformed system of higher education that is focused on student learning above all. Degree completion without such transformation is but a hollow goal.

_Becky Klein-Collins is Director of Research and Judith Wertheim is Vice President for Higher Education Services at the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning in Chicago, Illinois._
Faculty governance structures, through which the faculty of a college or university conducts its business, have both functional and symbolic importance. Faculty governance structures speak to the values of the institution, indicating what work is important and how inclusive it is—that is, whose work is important. Faculty governance structures are notorious within (and outside academe) for being cumbersome and oriented toward maintenance of the status quo. At the same time, many institutions are taking up new and important challenges, issues in which faculty and staff participation is vital to the success of the institution’s responses. For instance, many institutions have reconsidered or are reconsidering their general education programs, assessment plans, and accountability measures, and they are expanding opportunities to new populations of students. These ventures may require new and more flexible structures to support the efforts of the faculty and staff involved in them.

The governance system of Northwestern College, a small Christian liberal arts institution in the rural Midwest with about twelve hundred students and eighty-five full-time faculty members, had been in place since the 1960s. During that time, some modifications had been made in response to growth and other issues. The typical solution to any problem was the addition of a new committee. For some time, the college’s faculty members’ interest in serving on committees had been declining. Some asked to be excused to devote time to scholarship, or they expressed concern about the perceived time demands of certain committees. Newer (and younger) faculty members, in particular, seemed disinclined toward committee service. Conversations with colleagues at other institutions suggested that this situation was not unique to Northwestern College.

Process

The dean of the faculty called for a task force that would review the college’s governance structure, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and propose changes, if warranted. Faculty members elected task force members to serve with the dean of the faculty, and one of those became chair of the task force. The task force began its work in the context of a newly adopted integrative general education program, the proposal for which called for the formation of a new committee to manage general education. There were also well-known problems with the workloads of other committees, including the Faculty Status Committee and the Assessment Committee. In addition, Northwestern College had begun to offer online courses, and there was some uncertainty about how these new programs and the Office of Online Learning were connected to existing policies and procedures.

The task force was wise to recognize that an inclusive process would be necessary to make meaningful changes. It began its work with some frank discussions among its members and then surveyed the faculty. The survey asked faculty members to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses in the current structure, to rate the importance of various tasks assigned to existing committees, and to
estimate the amount of time spent on specific tasks as well as overall committee work. The results of the survey confirmed concerns about workload, with a significant number of responses clustered around the following issues:

- Lack of representation from departments with heavy teaching and advising workloads
- A tendency to rely on a small number of committed individuals to fill key committee roles
- Dissatisfaction with aspects of the nomination and election process
- Lack of representation from staff members
- Inefficiencies in committee processes and structures
- Issues of poor communication generally and cross-committee communication specifically

The survey also affirmed that faculty valued their role in governance, with many indicating that they valued the opportunity to share in decision making, especially as it concerned the academic program. A significant number also reported that committee service played a significant social function in creating opportunities to know and collaborate with colleagues from other departments and offices.

Because of this feedback, the task force was able to evaluate the existing structures with openness and a minimum of defensiveness. An important insight was that while all of the current committees were “committees of the faculty,” some of them were doing work that concerned the whole institution, and some of them overlapped with the duties of staff members in other divisions. This insight led the task force to distinguish between committees that ought to be campus-wide in membership, scope, and responsibility and those that ought to be faculty members only. A second significant insight was that it would be useful to have some flexible structures for dealing with certain kinds of issues that did not need to be codified in the faculty constitution and that could therefore be time-limited or responsibility-specific. Finally, the task force determined that it would address membership and load credit concerns.

A New Structure

The final recommendation of the task force was a new structure that would balance continuity with flexibility. Specifically, the task force recommended four types of committees:

- **Faculty committees.** These committees would be composed primarily of faculty members and academic administrators. Their work would be focused on curricular and faculty concerns, including policy issues. The task force recommended these faculty committees:
  - Academic Affairs (curriculum)
  - Academic Program Assessment
  - Deans’ Council (advisory)
  - Faculty Development
  - Faculty Status Committee (tenure, promotion, evaluation)
  - Integrated General Education
• **Campus-wide committees.** These committees would have representation from a variety of divisions, with membership often determined by role or office, and would work on issues of concern to the college as a whole. Faculty members would continue to be involved and have membership, but would not “own” these committees. Included in this group were the following:
  – Institutional Analysis
  – Retention
  – Strategic Planning

• **Work groups.** Work groups were envisioned as flexible structures for time-limited tasks that do not fall within the score of a regular committee. Membership could be faculty members or staff members, depending on the task, and would generally be appointed versus elected. Examples include the following:
  – Appeals
  – Faculty Handbook
  – First-Year Experience

• **Task forces.** Task forces would take on significant projects that were beyond the scope of other committees. Membership could be faculty or staff, with members either elected or appointed.

In the process of revision, some existing committees were eliminated, some new ones were created, and responsibilities were evaluated, with some being reassigned to other committees or administrators. For example, the Campus Life Committee was eliminated, because Student Development staff members have become responsible for work previously delegated to faculty members. The Admission, Honors, and Retention Committee was eliminated, because most of its work was actually done in the Admissions and Registrar’s offices. Campus-wide efforts related to retention were assigned to a new committee. Throughout this process, faculty members who had served on these committees were consulted for advice.

**Membership Issues and Service Credit**

Once again, the task force considered the feedback it had received from faculty members via surveys. Service is the proverbial third leg of faculty responsibilities, but some faculty members clearly had too many opportunities in this area and some were excluded for various reasons. The task force opted for a broad revision of service expectations and credit or rewards for service. One recommendation was to intentionally limit the size of some previously large committees to reduce demands on faculty and to improve efficiency of decision making. Another recommendation was to include more staff members, where appropriate, with the goal of improving both communication and cooperation across divisions. More significantly, the task force recommended that a certain number of seats on various committees (ranging from one to three, depending on the type of committee) would be appointed by the dean of the faculty, with input from the Deans’ Council, rather than be elected. The task force thought that newer faculty members could be integrated into governance more quickly through this mechanism.

The most innovative proposal of the task force was a point system of assigning credit for committee service. Every committee assignment was given a point value based on its projected workload and estimated time commitment. All faculty members would be expected to have an average of
five service credits each year. In addition to committee credits, departmental and other service assignments, such as advising, would also be credited in this way. In years when service assignments were demanding, credit could be banked for time off in other years. The point system is intended to spread responsibility for governance more broadly across the faculty by explicitly stating expectations.

Acceptance and Implementation

The task force was careful to communicate with the larger faculty throughout the course of its work. It received helpful feedback that was incorporated into the final proposal. The proposal was made available to all faculty members and discussed at a faculty meeting before it came to a vote. The final vote was close to unanimous. The process took approximately eight months from start to finish.

At this time, Northwestern College has transitioned its faculty governance from the old structure to the new. Elections were conducted and appointments made. All new committees are up and running. A few minor adjustments have been made here and there to improve workload. With few exceptions, all faculty members have a service assignment and engagement has been good. We look forward to evaluating the overall success of our changes in several years, particularly the hope that it will allow us to be more flexible and respond to both internal and external challenges.

Conclusion

Most faculty governance structures are like Grandma’s furniture—attractive and functional, perhaps even beautiful and stylish when new, but faded and worn as time goes on. They become comfortable for sentimental reasons and because everyone knows where the lumps are. Northwestern College’s experience suggests that with good attention to process and a mandate for governance revision, the old can be successfully traded for the new.

Adrienne M. Forgette is Dean of the Faculty and Tim Schlak is Director of the Library at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Beverly Kopper, Virginia Arthur, and Faith Hensrud

Crises and challenges test the best leaders. Great leaders handle these challenges in a transparent and collaborative manner in support of their institutional mission and in a way that moves their institution forward. As Blanchard (2007, 14) observes, “In high performing organizations, leadership practices support collaboration and involvement.” Sample (2002) argues that a truly effective leader needs to be able to see the shades of gray inherent in a situation in order to make wise decisions as to how to proceed. The essence of thinking gray is this: don’t form an opinion about an important matter until you’ve heard all the relevant facts and arguments, or until circumstances force you to form an opinion without recourse to all the facts. . . . (p. 7)

The three case studies presented here demonstrate these critical factors of great leadership—collaboration, involvement, and the abilities to see shades of gray and hear the facts and arguments—from the point of view of the administrative leader involved in each situation.

We are facing unprecedented change in higher education. We must be prepared to meet changes, crises, and unanticipated challenges in ways that ensure transparency, collaboration, and openness. By taking this approach and striving to maximize campus engagement and support in response to organizational challenges and crises, we move our institutions forward.

A Powerful Campus Reaction in Support of Inclusive Excellence

In fall 2010, the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater experienced three hate crimes that were atypical for this campus. The institutional response was one of immediate openness and transparency. The chancellor and provost initiated various communications with the campus community regarding the incidents and responded to media requests. The provost facilitated a meeting of faculty members and staff members to make sure everyone was updated on the events and the campus response, to discuss individuals’ perspectives on the incidents, and to identify short-term and long-term strategies for addressing the situation. The chancellor, provost, and vice chancellor for Student Affairs held a similar meeting with students.

The meetings began with two assumptions. First, issues of hate, homophobia, and racism are not singularly university problems—they are also societal problems. But as a community of learning, we are uniquely positioned to respond. Second, the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater is by and large a safe place, and the recent incidents are anomalies, not reflecting the character and values of the university. We began by checking these assumptions. In his analysis of great companies, Collins (2001) describes the Stockdale Paradox of good to great leading as retaining “absolute faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND at the same time confront the most brutal facts of your
current reality, whatever they might be” (88). We had absolute faith we would prevail, but we had to begin with examining our current reality and assumptions.

Various suggestions for addressing the hate crimes were generated during these meetings. A common theme echoed at both meetings was the desire on the part of the campus community to come together in a campus forum to continue the dialogue and share information and ideas. The value of having instructors discuss these events in their classes was also a common theme. Recognizing that these may be difficult discussions for some instructors, the Inclusive Excellence Committee developed class materials, information, and resources to facilitate these classroom discussions.

The powerful campus reaction resulted in a “We Are All Purple” campaign, which included students, faculty members, staff members, and administrators collaborating in a series of strategic meetings and campus events. A new Web site called We Are All Purple was launched to share information and resources related to the incidents and news and events regarding the campus community’s response. A “We Are All Purple” video was produced documenting the reaction across campus. The importance of continuing to come together culminated in a “We Are All Purple” forum, which included breakout sessions generating short-term and long-term strategies for addressing the situation. The changes enacted as a result of these incidents continue today and have enhanced the university’s Inclusive Excellence efforts.

The New Normal of Public Higher Education Funding

The situation facing the University of Northern Iowa in fall 2011 was one that many public higher education institutions have faced or are facing. The economic situation in the country and within the state of Iowa resulted in a rapid erosion of state appropriations. Rising costs, especially for compensation, compounded the budget situation. Significant budget challenges were further complicated by a highly contentious relationship with the faculty union. Mandatory furloughs, the sudden merger of two colleges, and the dismissal of a faculty member for inappropriate behavior involving students had also aroused the ire of a number of faculty members. Communication was difficult, with individuals often believing that their words had been taken out of context or misrepresented in very public ways.

By fall 2011 it was clear that internal allocations to maintain programs and services were no longer possible, and in January 2012, the Board of Regents and the university initiated consultation with the faculty union regarding the definition of a program for purposes of initiating the contract provisions on staff reduction. Shortly after these talks reached an impasse, the president announced closure of twenty-two undergraduate majors, twenty undergraduate minors, sixteen graduate programs, and the K–12 laboratory school, based on recommendations from the provost and her academic deans. Tenured faculty who were potentially subject to layoff based on these program recommendations were offered an early separation incentive program, and an employment clearinghouse was established to facilitate the transfer of qualified faculty members to other open faculty, administrative, or professional positions. Ultimately, no tenured or tenure-track faculty members were laid off.

Program closures and restructurings are becoming more commonplace in the financially constrained environment for higher education. A map created by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in fall 2011 showed that twenty-one higher education institutions had recently announced multiple program closures (see American Association of University Professors 2011). An Association of
Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) study conducted late in 2009 indicated that eight (9 percent) of the 188 member institutions it surveyed had laid off tenured faculty and that twenty-one institutions (24 percent) had eliminated programs. More than half (58.6 percent) indicated that they planned to begin strategic reviews of academic programs, with the clear implication that program closure or restructuring, along with faculty and staff reductions, might result (Keller 2009). Thus, the actions taken by the University of Northern Iowa were not without precedent nor can they be viewed as aberrant. If this is so, what accounts for the dramatic response and critical attention paid to the university’s actions and what lessons can be learned from these events?

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) describe situations in which “serious and unfamiliar challenges” result in the need for crisis leadership. Leaders need to recognize that such crises have two phases: the emergency phase requiring immediate, short-term actions and the adaptive phase in which leaders need to tackle the underlying causes of a crisis and build the organization’s capacity to thrive in a new reality. One of the key characteristics of adaptive leadership is to “embrace disequilibrium” and help people navigate the discomfort that comes with accepting that change is necessary if the institution is to survive and thrive in the face of external pressures (Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky 2009). Individuals are not resisting change itself but instead are resisting the losses they fear change will bring.

In retrospect, it would have been beneficial to conduct a “reset” early in the cycle of fiscal crisis to help the faculty and staff face the difficult situations and decisions directly. This would have included campus conversations and work groups. One lesson from the campus crisis at the University of Northern Iowa was that it is impossible to overcommunicate. While the provost’s office sent messages to constituents as new developments occurred, it soon became obvious that daily or sometimes twice-daily (morning and evening) communication was the only way to satisfy the need for information. On many occasions, these update messages simply reported that there were no new developments but shared information about meetings or other activities that had occurred.

**Mother Nature’s Unanticipated Fury**

On June 19 and 20, 2012, the University of Wisconsin–Superior was hit by what many in the region called a five-hundred-year flood, with more than eight inches of rain falling in a twenty-four-hour period. The campus sits on clay soil that does not absorb water, and rapid accumulation of rainwater resulted in extensive flooding in the region, the city of Superior, and across the campus. The most significant damage was to the university’s library, heating plant, telephone lines, and steam-distribution system. With more than $23 million dollars in estimated damage, the campus leadership and campus community worked together to effectively manage the crisis and recovery, resulting in the loss of only one day of instruction during the summer session.

Key to management of this crisis was the close and daily interaction of top administrators and the transparent and daily communication that was provided to the campus through e-mails and constant interaction with the press. Communication continued into fall 2012, with an overview of the impact of the flood presented to the entire campus community when classes began again in fall. Work continues to this day to reestablish the library collection.

Leadership challenges come in various forms and can be handled in numerous ways. Kouzes and Posner (2003) described leadership through five common practices that help university administrators mobilize people to get things done: (1) model the way, (2) inspire a shared vision, (3) challenge the
process, (4) inspire others to act, and (5) encourage the heart. In times of crisis, two of these practices proved to be most effective for the University of Wisconsin–Superior: model the way and inspire others to act.

While leaders in higher education prepare for every contingency and develop continuity of operations plans that we expect will enable us to handle any number of situations, it is not until an actual crisis occurs that we can adequately test these plans. For the University of Wisconsin–Superior, leaders at all levels were tested by floodwaters that impacted every building and caused the loss of the entire general collection of books and periodicals housed in the university’s library. The institution’s heating plant was flooded with thirty-three feet of water in its main structure and more than 900,000 gallons of water in the building, flooding all five boilers and compromising the insulation on steam lines and pipes in more than ten thousand linear feet of the steam-distribution system. The floodwaters also compromised insulation on all pipes in the lower two floors of a three-floor structure and throughout the steam-distribution system.

In days immediately following the flood, campus leaders established the goal to have all buildings and offices repaired and reoccupied, the phone system working, the library back online, and the heat-distribution system functioning by August 15, 2012. To ensure this success, a command post was established on campus, from which the chancellor, provost, and vice chancellor for Administration and Finance maintained command of the situation for three weeks as the recovery operations continued. This close, centrally located command structure and daily interactions of key leaders with staff, faculty, and the external support infrastructure were critical to the successful recovery of the institution and ensured that the campus was restored by the August 15 deadline.

During the initial recovery period of less than two months, it was necessary for leaders to model effective leadership and inspire a variety of staff to function at very high levels to ensure success. Campus leaders worked with a catastrophic recovery firm that was identified and on location the day after the crisis, as well as local, regional, and the University of Wisconsin System risk-management officials. Interactions between the campus leaders and Wisconsin’s Bureau of State Risk Management, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the university’s insurance firm were critical to the institution’s recovery.

**Conclusion**

The major lesson learned from dealing with these situations is that crises always lead to some sort of change for individuals on our campuses. Change engenders a sense of loss for some and fear for others. Therefore, these challenges need to be handled empathetically, openly, and honestly. Leaders cannot let their own fear of confrontation or conflict interfere with their communication and engagement with campus constituencies. Clear communication is critical, as most theories of leadership and organizational development emphasize. Most importantly, leading a campus through these types of changes involves authentic listening behavior, with openness to change and clarity of communication about why certain factors cannot be changed (Goleman 2004). The importance of this type of transparency cannot be underestimated if we are going to turn crises and challenges into opportunities to move our institutions forward in a positive direction.
REFERENCES


*Beverly Kopper* is Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at University of Wisconsin–Whitewater; *Virginia Arthur* is the former Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at the University of Northern Iowa and current Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and *Faith Hensrud* is Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at University of Wisconsin–Superior.
Despite ever-growing pressure for increased accountability from accreditors, government at all levels, and the media, there is evidence that American higher education suffers from a lack of evidence-based decision making. In a recent survey of chief academic officers, about 70 percent of respondents indicated that their institutions could be better at using data for decision making (Green, Jaschik, and Lederman 2012). A 2009 survey from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment showed that 60 percent of chief academic officers believe that they need greater expertise in strengthening assessment of student learning (Kuh and Ikenberry 2009). A growing base of experience and literature has led to an increased understanding of ways to best structure, carry out, evaluate, and improve institutional research (IR), assessment, accreditation, program review, and planning, collectively known as institutional effectiveness (IE). As presidents and other institutional leaders prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation, perhaps especially under the new Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Pathways model, they should review the effectiveness of these functions. This paper provides a rationale and practical ideas for integrating and improving them.

The IE function, especially IR, benefits from a history of self-reflection about effectiveness and improvement. Volkwein (2008) studied the structures and functions of IR offices and concluded that the most efficient and effective are larger offices with staff members at various levels who carry out sophisticated, systematic research projects in addition to reporting and ad hoc studies. The larger, centralized model “takes advantage of natural economies of scale that are associated with shared expertise, cross-training, and methodological diversity . . . and protects the institution better against the inefficiency of narrow specialization and the service gaps resulting from staff turnover” (Volkwein 2008, 14). He finds the optimal reporting structure for such an office to be direct report to the president. Leimer and Terkla (2009) agree with Volkwein’s conclusions and note that this structure results in high-quality, timely research and analysis that directly addresses policy decisions, goals, and institutional operations. This valuable input to the decision-making process can facilitate the discovery of potential solutions and place the institution at an advantage in achieving its goals.

(p. 49)

Volkwein, Liu, and Woodell (2012, 28) point out, however, that such structures “account for barely one-quarter of the IR arrangements nationally.” Leimer (2012) concluded that the institution would be better served if [its leaders] involved IR professionals more, expecting them to educate and utilize interpersonal and political skills to assist the campus community at large to learn to use data comfortably. Being proactive, establishing trust, seeing the big picture, understanding institutional culture, providing alternative perspectives and implications, and educating should be common skills of effective, seasoned institutional researchers . . .
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation

Consequently, unless such professionals are limited by an institutional perspective of IR as only technical, or an infrastructure that confines IR solely to reporting, they can be strategic partners in helping executives carry out their priorities and achieve institutional goals. (pp. 11–12)

Astin (1993, 140) notes that “lack of expertise is a major impediment to the effective use of assessment in American higher education” and lists important areas of expertise as understanding institutional purposes and ideals, understanding of academic culture, knowledge of measurement and research design, information technology skills, understanding relevant educational and social science concepts, communication skills, and academic qualifications commensurate with appointment as a tenure-track faculty member. Norris and Poulton (1991) indicate that the characteristics of successful planners include an understanding of one’s organization and its needs, an understanding of the perspectives of various stakeholders, and an awareness of the need to continuously reevaluate and reengineer their efforts.

At a meeting of practitioners at the 2010 Association for Institutional Research Forum convened to discuss increasing effectiveness in IR, participants discussed the importance of maintaining involvement with formal governance groups, working to have IR recognized as the official source for institutional information, and establishing practices such as “management from information, not anecdote” (Knight et al. 2010, 2). They discussed the need to build and maintain quality relationships and to be proactive and constantly on the lookout for ways to improve insights, informed decisions, and organizational learning. Participants agreed that having IR report to the institution’s president or chief academic officer is best, because these leaders have the highest-level view of institutional priorities and are most able to facilitate cross-functional collaborations. They agreed that housing offices of institutional research with assessment of student learning, accreditation, strategic planning, program review, and other “quality assurance” functions adds value to the sum of the component parts by establishing synergy and providing economy of scale with a larger professional staff working together.

Leimer (2012), who studies integrated, multifunction offices of institutional effectiveness, writes that

An IR office and other operational units may provide data, but this in itself does not promote their use, nor is their application self-explanatory. For culture to change, someone must turn data into information and institutional knowledge through analysis and interpretation. Then someone needs to be responsible for setting that knowledge in the context of institutional goals and disseminating it in multiple formats that are appropriate to particular stakeholders, in order to inform recommendations and planning. (p. 46)

By linking the use of evidence to problems of interest to constituents, they may be able to spark curiosity and influence attitudes and perspectives that help develop an appreciation for data use. Integrating these functions coordinates a set of tools that helps executives, senior managers, and faculty identify where the organization is successful and where it is lagging, thereby helping to focus on internal improvement. (p. 47)

She provides the following ideas on the characteristics of the leader of such an office:

Personal characteristics needed include sensitivity, openmindedness, flexibility, a capacity to listen, enthusiasm, a commitment to learning, a sense of humor, the ability to build others’ self-confidence and motivate them, creativity, team-building and problem-solving capacities, a thick skin, a tolerance for ambiguity, and patience. So too are the abilities to educate, build trust, and use data to tell a compelling story. (p. 50)
She also writes that two major elements are often missing that are necessary to spark and sustain evidence-based decision making and improvement. One is leadership in making sense of, strategically applying, and communicating data and findings to diverse audiences in ways that prompt organizational learning and stimulate people’s desire to know more and then to act on the information. The other is a highly visible institutional research (IR) function that is integrated with complementary functions such as assessment and planning and that is widely recognized as integral to shaping institutional policy and practice. (p. 45)

This background informs the following recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the IE functions:

1. Integrate institutional research, assessment, accreditation, program review, and strategic planning—the IE functions—into one centralized organization.

2. Structure the position of the person who is the leader of that organization so that he or she reports directly to the president or provost/chief academic officer and he or she operates at a high level of visibility and authority, ideally as a cabinet-level officer and perhaps as a vice president.

3. Hire a person in that leadership position who has well-developed leadership skills and emotional intelligence (open-mindedness, ability to understand the perspectives of others, sense of humor, tolerance for ambiguity, patience, etc.), knowledge of higher education management issues, and the ability to rapidly gain understanding of the campus culture, as well as technical-analytical skills.

4. Provide a sufficient level of staffing to ensure specific areas of expertise, synergy, economies of scale, cross-training and support, timely responses to client requests, and the time and energy to be proactive. The level of staffing depends on the size and complexity of the campus and the responsibilities of the office, but the minimum for mid-sized campuses should be six professional staff members plus clerical support. The chief staff member with responsibility for assessment should have qualifications commensurate with an appointment as a tenure-track faculty member.

5. Provide the IE office with opportunities for engagement, visibility, and building relationships and trust on campus.

6. Emphasize the IE office as the single source of institutional information for decision support.

7. Provide the IE office with the opportunity, or perhaps require it, to make recommendations based on its findings and work with clients across campus to collaboratively make meaning of results.

8. Shield IE staff members from excessive external reporting responsibilities that preclude more meaningful institutional improvement efforts. This effort is aided by establishing and enforcing an office priorities statement. It is also facilitated by providing technology that enables simple self-service reporting for clients.

9. Provide all staff members with the appropriate level of access to the data needed to do their jobs.

10. Clearly differentiate the responsibilities of the institutional effectiveness office and other offices such as information technology.
11. Provide the IE office with the opportunity, or perhaps require it, to establish networks for professional development, exchange of ideas, and advancement of the function.

The following organizations, Web sites, publications, and conferences support professional development in IR, assessment, strategic planning, and accreditation. (See Knight [2003] for further details.)

- The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Web site (www.airweb.org), annual conference, institutes, workshops, webinars, grants and scholarships, and numerous publications, including the Resources in Institutional Research series, the New Directions in Institutional Research series, the Professional File, IR Applications, the Higher Education Handbook of Theory and Research, and the eAIR newsletter
- Numerous state, regional, and international AIR-affiliated organizations
- The Reshaping IR listserv, REHAPINGIR-L, hosted by Ball State University
- Several assessment conferences, the most mature of which is the IUPUI Assessment Institute (see http://planning.iupui.edu/conferences/national/nationalconf.html)
- The ASSESS-L list hosted by the University of Kentucky
- The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) Web site (www.scup.org), annual conference, institutes, online programs, communities of practice, e-mail newsletters, and numerous publications
- The Web sites, conferences, publications, and other resources provided by regional, national, and disciplinary accreditation organizations
- The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education publication series, with numerous resources, including the Handbook for Institutional Research
- Other higher education publications in print and Web formats, such as the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and Change
- Other higher education organizations, such as the National Association of College and University Business Officers (www.nacubo.org), the American Council on Education (www.acenet.edu), the National Center for Educational Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov), the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (www.nchems.org), the Southern Regional Education Board (www.sreb.org), and the Western Interstate Consortium for Higher Education (www.wiche.edu)

As Leimer (2012) points out, there are currently no professional development resources designed specifically for the newly recognized integrated IE function. Several persons with responsibility for this function are currently discussing development of a new professional organization, a Web site, or publications that address its opportunities and challenges. To this end, the author is currently writing a monograph focusing on leadership development in IE.

REFERENCES

Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation


William E. Knight is Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana.
Indiana Wesleyan University has developed the Academic Quality Index (AQI) to fulfill a variety of institutional effectiveness purposes. The AQI defines what we mean by academic quality, establishes measures for each of the defined elements of quality, and compiles and presents the measures in a format that facilitates management, quality improvement, and accountability to multiple constituencies. The AQI is intended to be a unified source for all data relating to academic quality. To avoid a “one size must fit all” conflict with regard to data gathering and presentation, the AQI allows individual units to optimize process and procedure organically and then uses minimalist technology for compilation and presentation.

The mandate for assessment of student learning and other institutional effectiveness measures comes from many quarters, including the Higher Learning Commission, and the data we gather are used for multiple purposes: accountability, management, quality improvement, and others. With many operational units accomplishing assessment for multiple purposes, it can be challenging to bring coherence to our reporting for the sake of management and accountability. Several companies offer technologies that can be used to gather and present assessment findings, but these technologies sometimes require assessments to subscribe to a particular architecture that may be a misfit for certain programs.

In setting out to gather our assessments into a single presentation for management and accountability purposes, we were guided by several priorities, as described below.

- The focus of assessment must be quality improvement, not reporting. To prevent assessment from becoming a trivial, make-work exercise in data reporting, we encourage the faculty of each academic program to adopt or develop the assessments that are most appropriate to the discipline of study, without prescription of style or mechanism of assessment. The result is a rich spectrum of assessments from portfolios to standardized exams to performance juries. The variety of assessments presents a challenge for compilation and presentation, which we address with the AQI, but this challenge is preferable to trivializing assessment through imposition of an arbitrary assessment system for the convenience of the administration.

- To have an impact on student learning, assessment must be in the hands of program faculty members. Resisting the temptation to centralize control of assessment, we adhere to a program of distributed responsibility for assessment. Deans hold faculty members accountable to accomplish assessment, but program faculty members are free to design and accomplish assessment in the manner that is of greatest benefit to their students. Again, this mitigates against a one-size-fits-all system for reporting assessment results.
• Student learning is only one component of the academic quality and effectiveness of a university. Academic quality is affected by the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of many interrelated responsibilities by offices throughout the university. To improve quality over the long run, each of these factors must be understood and evaluated by appropriate measures.

• To be of value in the context of management, the various measures of effectiveness must be evaluated or scored in a manner that draws attention to elements of quality in need of attention. This enables the AQI to be used as a central tool in strategic planning and resource allocation. Evaluation of each measurement relative to ideal levels in a dashboard-instrument fashion is both common and useful, but it does not lend itself well to aggregation of sub-measures into domain scores. We have decided to translate each measure of quality to a uniform ten-point scale, with variable weighting, which provides for both intuitive interpretation and aggregation.

The Academic Quality Index (AQI)

The AQI is our attempt to provide for the compilation and reporting of assessment data in the context of distributed liberty in assessment practice. It uses modest technologies to provide an intuitive interface, offering a quick evaluation of overall academic quality with drill-down capability to specific measures.

We began by defining what we mean by academic quality—in effect, the intended outcomes of the entire academic enterprise. Through an iterative process of reflection with academic leaders, we arrived at six domains of quality with seventeen guiding questions (see Figure 1). For each of these elements, we have derived (and continue to derive) measures. Each measure is scored on a ten-point scale. The score is based on external benchmarks when these are available, otherwise it is based on internal expectations and aspirations. Where multiple measures are available for particular elements of quality, the individual measure scores are aggregated into an overall score. Individual measures are weighted according to the nature and strength of the measure. Typically, perception measures are given a weight of 1, indirect measures a weight of 2, and direct measures a weight of 3.

To establish the entire AQI with an initial scoring of uniform validity, we surveyed six constituent groups—students, recent alumni, administrators, teaching faculty members, administrative faculty members, and trustees—with regard to their perception of our quality as defined by the domains and guiding questions. The responses across the groups were remarkably consistent. To this background picture from perception, we are continuously adding direct and indirect measures as the assessments of offices, departments, and programs are translated for inclusion in the AQI.

The Technology for the AQI

Rather than impose an arbitrary technological solution onto the assessment practice of the many departments, we use modest technologies to translate and present data in the AQI. Overall, the AQI is presented as a set of Web pages in html. Individual measures may have associated data documents in portable document format (PDF), but each measure has its own summary html page that presents the heart of the data and the AQI score and weight for the item. Most of the measure pages have been produced from the original data using Veera software by Rapid Insight (see Figure 3). The individual measures are aggregated and presented in tabulation pages, one overall page (see Figure 2), and one page for each of the domains and guiding questions. These tabulation pages are generated from Microsoft Excel. It is quite possible that some of the available assessment and dashboard programs
could be put to good use in this context, especially for assessments that need to read data in real time, but Veera and Excel have been sufficient for our needs so far. The AQI is designed to be an accessible presentation of summary data with flexible architecture, and this can be accomplished with simple tools.

### Indiana Wesleyan University’s Six Domains of Quality, with Guiding Questions

1. **Quality of Service to Students**
   a. How well do we know the preparation and needs of our students?
   b. How well do our service structures meet the needs of our students? (no unit item)

2. **Quality of Student Achievement**
   a. How well are our students learning?
   b. How well do we retain our students?
   c. How well do our students persist to graduation?
   d. How well do we place our students after graduation?

3. **Quality of Teaching**
   a. How well qualified, skilled, and resourced are our faculty?
   b. How rich and robust are our instructional and service systems? (no unit item)
   c. How effective is our teaching?

4. **Quality of Academic Programs**
   a. How relevant, informed, and rigorous are our academic programs?
   b. How well are we closing unneeded programs and developing new programs and avenues of accessibility (locations, models, modalities)?

5. **Quality of External Influence**
   a. How active and rigorous is our scholarship?
   b. How extensive and effective is our public engagement?
   c. How extensive is our geographical footprint?

6. **Quality of Our Reflection of the Body of the Christ**
   a. How faithful are we to our Christian calling and our Wesleyan heritage?
   b. How well do we care for the members of our community as individuals?
   c. How diverse are the cultural/ethnic/racial origins of our faculty and students?

---

*Figure 1. The IWU Domains of Academic Quality with Guiding Questions*
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability

Figure 2. Partial Screenshot of the AQI Summary Page

This figure was produced using Excel. Highlights to newly added measures are at the top, followed by the overall academic quality score, domain scores, and guiding question scores. Clicking on any item will drill down to the underlying data.

Traditional Graduation Rates: Bachelor's-seeking, Full-time, First-time Freshmen on the Marion Campus

Thursday, September 06, 2012 3:06 PM

Contents as you scroll down
- Traditional graduation rate data for the Marion campus
- External benchmark data
- Derivation of the AQI score for this measure
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability

Marion Campus, Bachelor’s-seeking, Full-time, First-time Freshmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Term</th>
<th>Entering Cohort Headcount</th>
<th>4-Year Graduates</th>
<th>4-Year Grad. Rate (%)</th>
<th>5-Year Graduates</th>
<th>5-Year Grad. Rate (%)</th>
<th>6-Year Graduates</th>
<th>6-Year Grad. Rate (%)</th>
<th>8-Year Graduates</th>
<th>8-Year Grad. Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FA2000</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2001</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2002</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2003</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2004</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2005</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2006</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2007</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2008</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2009</td>
<td>759</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2010</td>
<td>771</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA2011</td>
<td>753</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

External Comparisons - FA2004 Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group</th>
<th>4-Year Mean Rate</th>
<th>5-Year Mean Rate</th>
<th>6-Year Mean Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IWU</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCU - Council for Christian Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICI - Independent Colleges of Indiana</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRU - Midwest Regional Universities</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN4 - Four-year colleges of Indiana</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirant Schools</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AQL Item Score and Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>AQL Item Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Screenshots from Individual Measure Page.

The measure page was generated using Veera. The data are followed by the AQL score derivation, based on external benchmarks.

David Wright is Provost and Chief Academic Officer and Donald R. Sprowl is Assistant Provost for Research and Accreditation at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion.
Context

Concordia College is a small, faith-based, liberal arts college, serving primarily undergraduate students in a residential setting in Moorhead, Minnesota; enrollment in fall 2012 was 2,632. With Carnegie accurately classifying Concordia College as balanced arts & sciences/professions (Bal/SGC), Concordia experiences the inherent tension of viewing itself as a liberal arts college while a significant portion of its students graduate with degrees in professional programs. The most recent data from the Concordia Office of Institutional Research (2012) indicate that 41 percent of all majors at Concordia College are in professional programs, a percentage that has increased slightly in recent years. Most of the college’s professional programs, including chemistry, music, education, nutrition/dietetics, accounting, long-term care administration, nursing, and social work, seek accreditation or approval from their appropriate specialized accrediting body. Like similar institutions, the coexistence of professional programs and traditional liberal arts majors at the undergraduate level has the potential to cause conflict but also creates the possibility for collaboration in ways not historically experienced at Concordia College. This paper touches on several problems, either real or perceived, that such coexistence raises and discusses briefly some of the approaches that have been explored at Concordia College.

Issue One: The Goals of Liberal Arts Conflict with the Goals of Professional Programs

The assumption exists in certain circles on campus that the goals that drive curriculum and instruction in professional programs are antithetical to the goals of a liberal education. This is not true. At Concordia College, the guiding document for the curriculum is called the “Goals for Liberal Learning” (2004), a document that lists and describes the vision for an education at Concordia College. The following table notes some of the ways that standards and criteria from accrediting bodies align with Concordia's goals.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities

Goals for Liberal Learning (Concordia College 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals for Liberal Learning</th>
<th>Specialized Accreditation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instill a love for learning.</td>
<td>“TEAC requires evidence that the candidate learn how to learn important information on their own, that they can transfer what they have learned to new contexts, and that they acquire the dispositions and skills that will support lifelong learning in their fields” (Teacher Education Accreditation Council 2012, 21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop foundational skills and transferable intellectual capacities.</td>
<td>Social workers “apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments” (Council on Social Work Education 2008, 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an understanding of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and intercultural perspectives, and their connections.</td>
<td>Social workers “distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom” (Council on Social Work Education 2008, 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivate an examined cultural, ethical, physical, and spiritual self-understanding.</td>
<td>Social workers “recognize the extent to which a culture’s structures and values may oppress, marginalize … or enhance privilege and power”; and to develop in students “sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups” (Council on Social Work Education 2008, 5). “TEAC requires evidence that candidate understand the implication of confirmed scholarship on gender, race, individual differences, and ethnic and cultural perspectives for educational practice” (Teacher Education Accreditation Council 2012, 21).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to professional programs having goals and standards that are congruent with—and, in fact, complement—the “Goals for Liberal Learning,” the college expects that all students completing the Bachelor of Arts degree, both those in professional programs and arts & sciences majors, fulfill the same core curriculum requirements. Understanding the ways that the traditional goals of a liberal arts education are aligned with the approaches of professional programs brings another dimension to the twenty-first-century liberal arts college, one that can only enhance learning for all students, regardless of their program of study.

Issue Two: Institutional Identity

Though proclaiming itself to be a liberal arts college and declaring many of its peers to be those institutions with 80 percent or more of their graduates in arts & sciences disciplines, Concordia College is classified as balanced arts & sciences/professions by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2010). This mismatch between what an institution proclaims itself to be and what the industry, in fact, views it as creates challenges for colleges and universities in their marketing, recruiting, and curricular innovation. With increasing demand to add professional programs—Concordia College recently opened the new state-of-the-art Offutt School of Business—and with institutions seeking to maintain their liberal arts identities, it is essential that arts & sciences disciplines and professional programs work together closely to develop a strong core curriculum, one that provides a foundation for integrating professional studies and liberal arts.

At Concordia, the most recent evidence is in the aforementioned Offutt School of Business, which “prepares [students] for real-world success by combining liberal arts coursework with a specialized
business education. What sets [OSB] apart is its emphasis on four critical skills: global understanding, entrepreneurship, ethics and leadership” (Offutt School of Business 2012). As evidence of successful implementation of the Offutt School of Business vision is gathered, its approach can be an effective example of the type of collaboration required for liberal arts institutions to embrace professional programs as part of their mission. Thus, rather than focusing on the institutional classification, it becomes more important to concentrate on student learning and developing a common vision of a liberal education for all students, along with the ways that each program—arts & sciences and professional—can contribute to the “Goals of Liberal Learning.”

**Issue Three: Threats to Traditional Liberal Arts**

Professional programs and traditional liberal arts have coexisted at Concordia College since its founding in 1891, yet Concordia is not immune to the threat that professional programs pose to core liberal arts studies. Concerns include large professional majors that leave too little room for coursework in the liberal arts, specialized accreditation that challenges institutional autonomy, and the attraction of students and resources away from core liberal arts studies. Still, professional programs are popular. The ongoing question at Concordia is how to maintain quality professional programs in response to strong student interest, while staying committed to liberal learning goals and the traditional liberal arts. Concordia has responded to this challenge in ways that mutually benefit both the professional programs and the traditional liberal arts.

Over the past ten years, Concordia has hosted intentional conversations on understanding the liberal arts and understanding the liberal arts in professional studies. The concept that the liberal arts remain exclusively in the domain of the traditional liberal arts disciplines is fading. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), through its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, emphasizes that liberal education in the twenty-first century has changed from being delivered “through studies in the arts and sciences” to being delivered “through studies that emphasize the essential learning outcomes (of liberal arts) across the entire educational curriculum” (American Association of Colleges and Universities 2012, 9). In its report, Greater Expectations, the AAC&U claims that this updated approach to liberal education “erases the artificial distinctions between studies deemed liberal (interpreted to mean that they are not related to job training) and those called practical (which are assumed to be). A liberal education is a practical education because it develops just those capacities needed by every thinking adult: analytical skills, effective communication, practical intelligence, ethical judgment, and social responsibility” (American Association of Colleges and Universities 2002, 26). Leaders at Concordia embrace the twenty-first-century concept of the liberal arts and have created space for faculty members in the professional programs to articulate the role of liberal arts in their respective programs. Since 2001, faculty workshops have invited faculty members from across campus to provide perspectives on shared liberal learning goals and aspirations, and faculty members from professional programs are regularly included. Ten years later, many faculty members from the professional programs feel that there has been an observable shift of culture on campus. Professional programs maintain a presence in curricular and pedagogical discussions once thought to be the domain of traditional liberal arts (such as critical inquiry seminars, core capstone courses), and the traditional liberal arts have increasingly incorporated a theory-to-practice approach utilizing experiential learning once thought to be primarily the domain of professional programs.
The most significant development that has contributed to this shift at Concordia College is the development of a new core curriculum in 2006. The Concordia College core curriculum is developed around the goals for liberal learning described earlier, and it achieves these goals by implementing best practices in high impact learning. Some of these best practices include: a first-year seminar, linked courses to promote common intellectual experiences, writing intensive courses, U.S. diversity and global perspectives courses, experiential learning, and capstone seminars. In addition, the college has added new initiatives in undergraduate research and global education. The comprehensiveness of the core requires participation by all disciplines on campus, including professional programs, to meet the capacity demands of students. Due to the early conversations about the changing nature of the liberal arts that were facilitated at the college, this transition was met with less tension than might have been expected a decade earlier.

Professional programs at Concordia College have long depended on interdepartmental collaboration to prepare students for their fields. For instance, social work students need coursework in human biology, psychology, and sociology as a foundation for social work study. The nursing and dietetics departments rely on coursework in math and science as prerequisites for their programs. Students in the education department seeking teaching certification are heavily engaged in studies across campus from science and mathematics to the humanities. Professional programs could not exist without this cooperation. Likewise, arts and science disciplines are bolstered by the enrollment of professional studies students. Arts and science programs have found that by offering more capacity in the core curriculum, their departmental enrollment is stronger. Often students will develop additional interest in these areas and seek to pursue a minor or a global educational experience in liberal arts fields. While this situation is not unique to Concordia College, Concordia has put itself in a position to highlight the mutual benefit that such coexistence brings to a campus.

Two final lessons learned at Concordia College are the importance of broad faculty participation and inclusive strategic planning. Since the 2006 core curriculum reform, there has been an increase in the number of faculty from professional programs who teach in the liberal arts core curriculum. Faculty members from accounting, business, dietetics, education, social work, and nursing currently teach courses in the core curriculum. This was not typical with the previous core and reflects the evolving nature of the liberal arts. The result is recognition of the common goals that exist across disciplines and greater interdisciplinary familiarity among faculty members. The campus as a whole benefits from broader faculty participation in the core curriculum as it brings the potential to improve student advising, leads to stronger participation in faculty governance, and creates greater investment in college mission.

The college’s 2012–2017 strategic plan outlines a number of initiatives that have the potential to establish common ground between traditional liberal arts and professional programs. Initiatives such as global learning, sustainability, and vocational discernment are broadly embraced on campus. Strategic initiatives in language learning and interfaith dialogue will call on leadership from the humanities to advance cultural and spiritual development for all. Finally, initiatives in the use of e-portfolios, career development, demonstrated competencies, and experiential learning provide an opportunity for leadership from the professional programs to further enhance liberal learning on campus.

In summary, faculty members and administrators at small liberal arts colleges are challenged to meet the seemingly conflicting goals of professional programs and liberal arts studies. It is critical that liberal
arts institutions develop models, similar to those presented in this paper, that not only bridge the gaps but that also highlight the mutual benefits, interdependence, and rich opportunities that exist on such campuses.

REFERENCES


*Kristi K. Loberg* is Program Director and Assistant Professor of Social Work and *Michael Wohlfeil* is Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Education at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement

C. B. Crawford and Chapman Rackaway

Introduction

Changes in the culture of higher education have led to many institutions utilizing their mission statements as guides for day-to-day university activities. The growing centrality of university mission statements puts ever more attention and importance behind the mission statements and their maintenance. Fort Hays State University (FHSU) undertook a mission redesign in the 2011–2012 academic year and developed a process for reviewing and proposing new university missions.

The mission review process developed at FHSU focuses on stakeholder input, comprehensive analysis of input, and inclusion of all stakeholder communities. The process is replicable at other institutions as well. For any institution seeking to revise and update its mission statement, this process can serve as a baseline framework for the information search, feedback solicitation, mission draft development, and presentation.

Literature Review

While the concept of a mission statement is not new or unique to higher education institutions, limited academic research has been conducted on what makes an effective university mission statement. A thorough review of recent published literature yields about ten articles, which are the basis for the following literature review.

A primary consideration must be given to the question of “why”; the value of a university mission cannot be taken as self-evident. Morphew and Hartley (2006, 457) present the case for two independent benefits to the articulation of a university mission. Based on their research, they reasoned that a university mission statement “helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institutional imperatives and those that do not.” They further identified that a university mission conveys “a shared sense of purpose [and] has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and to communicate its characteristics and history to key external constituencies.” Meacham rationalizes a third benefit to institutions:

> An effective mission statement ensures stability and continuity across changes in administration. Administrators bring different perspectives, leadership styles, and ideas about how to get things done. In contrast, the mission statement provides the overarching consensus, deeply rooted in an institution’s history and identity, about what needs to get done. (2008, 21)

Morphew and Hartley (2006, 458) conclude that mission statements have irreplaceable normative value—they are necessary because every institution has one, so it appears “that not having a mission statement begs the very legitimacy of a college or university.” Masterson (2008) and Morphew and
Hartley (2006) converge on the importance of the mission to accurately symbolize the value of the institution to external constituents, including state Regents and state legislators.

Conceptualizing a university mission statement is more common than rationalizing the institution’s existence. Several authors offer reasonable descriptors that accurately characterize various elements of the university mission statement phenomenon, including:

- Mission statements are declarations of a campus’s rationale and purpose; its responsibilities toward students and the community; and its vision of student, faculty, and institutional excellence: “The mission statement will represent a campus-wide consensus on values and aspirations, expectations for student learning, and academic priorities for many years ahead” (Meacham 2008, 24).

- A mission statement is “an invisible hand that guides a college or university’s diverse personnel to work independently and yet collectively toward the realization of the organization’s goals” (Kotler and Murphy 1981, 479).

- “The sustainable mission for our time must be a spark plug for new ideas as well as a steady beacon” writes Gow (2009, 27). “As a marketing tool, the mission statement must be fresh, crisp, punchy—polarizing but oxymoronically non-threatening: the three word mantra as cute bumper sticker. As an expression of core beliefs, the mission statement must be clear, comprehensive, and courageous—a set of pillars that support the workings of the school down to the smallest detail. And as a justification for the school’s existence, it must be stirringly idealistic” (Gow 2009, 28).

- Mission statements should reflect an organization’s purpose and the means for accomplishing that purpose. Mission statements should include the ultimate aims of the firm, thus providing unity of direction for managers, shared expectations by employees, and a projection to customers of what the firm provides and represents. Mission statements will answer the question of what business the firm is in, what its objectives are, and how the company will win (Green, Medlin, and Linn 2005).

Gow (2009, 30) imparts an important reminder for institutions seeking to precisely craft a mission: “Words do not and cannot define an institution. Jake Giessman notes that there is a gestalt understanding about the unique character of the school. And gestalt defies articulation. Mission statements aggregate truisms; the more finely crafted the words, then the more they may lose precise meaning.”

**Open Feedback Process Model**

Accomplishing a revision of core “founding” documents requires inclusive process and attention to high-quality outcomes. These interests must be balanced with the benefits that come from greater clarity of mission and vision. Revision will allow subsequent decisions on significant university projects to be aligned with the mission and focused on core values. The following represents a process and schedule, based on research in the discipline, that effectively balances process and benefit from outcomes.

It is vital that an institution of higher education identifies and solicits input from its key stakeholder groups. FHSU focused on faculty, staff, students, the Hays community, and alumni. As a Carnegie Foundation Community Engaged institution, the Task Force identified the citizens of Hays as an important constituency and thus chose to include them specifically in the input solicitation process.
Other institutions adapting this model may identify employers, industries with which the institution is connected, or other specific constituencies.

**Process Model**

**Phase One, Formation and Authorization**
In this phase FHSU identified the stakeholder groups that would serve as the focus group for data collection as well as forming and charging the Mission Review Task Force. The most important stakeholder groups were identified as alumni, faculty, staff, and students. Those four groups were specifically surveyed in later stages of the process. The Task Force included the current president as well as the past two presidents of the Faculty Senate, the president of the Student Government Association, the registrar, the university counsel, the athletic director, the director of University Relations, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the director of the Virtual College. The assistant provost for Quality Management served as chair.

**Phase Two, Research**
Task force members collected literature as well as peer institution mission statements. The peer institutions were compared with the existing FHSU mission and categorized for types of statements included in each. The Task Force found spare relevant academic or best-practices literature on university mission statements. A number of pieces exist on business missions, but they required adaptation to the unique collegiate environment.

**Phase Three, Open Comment**
The Task Force solicited comments from stakeholders. Using a variety of media, including social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as the university webpage, the Task Force opened a phase of open comment. Using the best practices and open comment, the Task Force adapted Green, Medlin, and Linn’s (2005) survey into an instrument that was distributed to all four stakeholder groups.

At the beginning of the fall 2011 term, Task Force members made the survey available online to all stakeholder groups. During this open survey phase, the Task Force made numerous announcements prompting recipients to complete the survey. The survey included the existing mission statement and twenty questions pertaining to the unique characteristics of the university that each respondent was important to be reflected in a mission statement.

More than 1,500 respondents completed the survey, and more than half of the completed instruments came from alumni. The results highlighted a number of important elements in need of change. The existing mission was seen as too old and out of alignment with the significant presence of FHSU’s Virtual College. A push to include FHSU’s global presence and an excitement for the use of technology emerged through the survey.

**Phase Four, Focus Group Comment**
Task Force members convened numerous focus groups to solicit further comments from faculty, staff, and students on campus. This segment of the process involved developing the focus group instrument and supervising the administration of the focus groups held on revising the mission.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement

**Phase Five, Data Analysis**
Task Force members’ efforts centered on analyzing the data from the open comment phase, surveys, and focus groups. All open- and closed-ended responses were analyzed. Open-ended comments were categorized via factor analysis to determine trends that may be separate from the closed-ended responses as well.

**Phase Six, Draft Statements**
During this phase, Task Force members took the data aggregated through the previous phase and turned it into draft mission statements. Using the core principles that emerged from the analyzed data, Task Force members drafted initial mission statement proposals. After testing the draft on a high-level university institutional effectiveness body, the Task Force developed supporting documents to explain why specific wording was chosen for the draft mission statement. Task force members wanted the support of the Faculty and Staff Senates as well as the Student Government. All three bodies endorsed the revised mission statement, as did the executive leadership of the university.

**Phase Seven, Approval**
After presenting the draft and justification document to stakeholders, the Task Force moved to the seventh and final phase, approval. The approval phase was largely a Board of Regents process once the proposed mission was accepted by administrative leadership. At Hays, this phase culminated within two months of acceptance by the executive administration. The entire process took just over one academic year.

**Best Practices**
Through the process, numerous important practices emerged. Seeking stakeholder input is vital. Business institutions may find it useful to draft a mission statement internally at the highest organizational levels, but universities have a unique stakeholder environment and the regular reliance on open comment was vital to crafting a quality document. The stakeholder feedback at earlier phases also helped create more buy-in at multiple levels as the draft was submitted to vital groups.

Seeking specialized constituency input on drafts was another important element of the review and replacement process. Once the drafts were completed, the Mission Review Task Force organized specific open comment forums for constituency groups—one for on-campus and one for beyond-campus community members. At each forum, the Task Force presented the report produced from survey responses, which categorized responses into key areas. The draft mission statement was not presented at the forums so that public micro-wordsmithing would not occur; instead Task Force members presented the criteria that emerged from the survey.

Defining the entities from which the Task Force would need to gather support was another significant part of the process. Task Force members knew that the state Board of Regents would ask if any on-campus groups had concerns about the university’s proposed mission statement, and any lack of support would be seen as a weakness in the proposed statement. Therefore, two key constituency groups were identified on-campus: the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate. Each advisory body has the authority to issue resolutions supporting or opposing activities on campus and proposals issued by the administration. The Task Force presented the draft mission statement to the Faculty Senate and
prepared by adding an explanation document to the draft. The Faculty Senate met in special session to consider the draft and, after deliberation, offered a resolution of support of the proposed mission. The Staff Senate also sent a resolution of support in favor of the draft. The Mission Review Task Force identified allies in both senates, worked with leadership, and provided documents and testimony while securing that support. Other stakeholder groups (alumni, community) were involved in various stages of the process and were considered secondary stakeholder groups.

REFERENCES


**C. B. Crawford** is Assistant Provost for Quality Management and **Chapman Rackaway** is Professor of Political Science at Fort Hays State University in Fort Hays, Kansas.
In 1970, student unrest was considered the major social problem in the United States (Fendrich 2003, 350). The Report of the President’s Commission on Campus Unrest agreed, stating “This crisis has roots in divisions of American society as deep as any since the Civil War” (1970, 1). Demonstrations at Kent State were part of a national student protest movement with roots in the civil rights and antinuclear peace movements of the early 1960s, coalescing for college students nationwide in the burgeoning antiwar movement of the mid-1960s (Report 1970, 18–19). At Kent State University, on Monday, May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard, called in by the mayor of the city of Kent, literally lined up on one side of the campus commons, with students on the other side. Most of the two to three thousand who gathered that day were observers. Many felt aligned with the general counterculture movement. Some were campus activists.

Before students started assembling for the May 4 rally, which had been planned since Friday, May 1, the Guard had decided to disperse the gathering. And so at noon, the Guard moved out with tear gas and—unsuspected by students and most others—with their M1 rifles locked and loaded. After clearing the commons and giving all appearances that they had completed their mission and were returning to where they had come from, the guardsmen instead wheeled in unison without warning and fired on the students who had left the commons area or were passing through on their way to and from class. Thirteen seconds of gunfire left four Kent State students dead and dying and nine others wounded. The closest student shot was 60 feet from the line of fire, the farthest 750 feet. The FBI (Justice Department 1970, 84) later determined that no immediate provocation—such as rocks being thrown or a sniper—caused the Guard to turn and shoot. The President’s Commission on Campus Unrest would conclude that “The indiscriminate firing of rifles into a crowd of students and the deaths that followed were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable” (Report 1970, 289).

The shootings became a watershed moment for many Americans (Gitlin 1993, 410). The event quickly resulted in the largest national student strike in U.S. history (Urban Research Corporation 1970, 1). “More than half the colleges and universities in the country (1350) were ultimately touched by protest demonstrations, involving nearly 60 percent of the student population—some 435,000 people” (Sale 1974, 636). Nixon’s advisers understood the impact of the events of May 4. H. R. Haldeman (1978) observed that the shootings marked the beginning of the end of Nixon’s presidency. Henry Kissinger declared that the “tidal wave of media and student criticism powerfully affected the Congress” (1979, 512). “By January 1973 when Nixon announced the effective end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam,” historian Mark Barringer wrote later, “he did so in response to a mandate unequalled in modern times”(1998, 55).
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning

Forty years after the shootings, in 2010, the National Park Service placed the site on the National Register of Historic Places, determining that the site met its criterion of being associated with events that made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of U.S. history. According to the National Register of Historic Places, “The Kent State Shootings Site is considered nationally significant given its broad effects in causing the largest student strike in the United States history, affecting public opinion about the Vietnam War, creating a legal precedent established by the trials subsequent to the shootings, and for the symbolic status the event has attained as a result of a government confronting protesting citizens with unreasonable deadly force” (2010). As the university noted in announcing the designation, historian Patrick Andrus, who served as the National Park Service’s reviewer, observed that listing a site fewer than 50 years old on the National Register of Historic Places showed the exceptional importance of what took place at Kent State University (Kent State University 2010).

The backstory of the event reveals administrative choices—choices made in the context of their time—that provide reflection for higher education today. Richard Nixon’s choice on April 30 was to announce the invasion of Cambodia during television’s prime time. College students around the country immediately protested what they saw as the president’s broken promise: he was escalating the war in Vietnam, when he had been promising since 1968 to end it. Students at Kent State held two protests the next day, one to protest the invasion of Cambodia and the other to discuss the violent treatment of African American protestors at Ohio State earlier in the week. Then university president Robert White took the temperature of the two Kent State protests; determining they were peaceful, he left on a trip to Iowa as planned.

On Friday evening, young people from around the region gravitated to Kent for the many bars in town. When the revelry of the first warm spring night of the year led to the setting of a small trash fire, some thrown beer bottles, and some blocking of the street, the city mayor closed the bars, sending large numbers of disgruntled patrons onto the street. When some members of the crowd broke business windows in protest against the war, the mayor phoned the governor’s office. Succumbing to pressure from townspeople and the Ohio National Guard liaison whom the governor had dispatched to Kent, the mayor met a 5 p.m. Saturday deadline to request that the Guard be put on alert in Kent. Without permission from university officials, the Guard entered campus Saturday night when the ROTC building burned.

The next morning, university officials were in attendance as the governor attacked college student demonstrators as “worse than the ‘Brown Shirt’ [sic] and the communist element and also the ‘night riders’ and the Vigilantes,” vowing that “they’re not going to take over the campus” (Barbato, Davis, and Seeman 2012, 8), and refused to let the campus be closed temporarily. In the presence of the governor and university officials, law enforcement authorities affirmed they would go so far as to use guns to address campus disturbances. Hearing the governor say, “The campus is now going to be part of the County and the State of Ohio” (Barbato, Davis, and Seeman 2012, 8), the university administration concluded that the governor and the Ohio National Guard were in control of the campus. University officials appear to have played no role in guiding the Guard’s actions from that point.

As the Guard moved out with tear gas and loaded weapons to disperse the rally on the commons at noon the next day, Monday, May 4, President White was lunching at the local Brown Derby and strategizing for that afternoon’s faculty senate meeting. In the half-hour after the shootings, when it became clear that the guardsmen might shoot a second time, it was faculty marshals who intervened...
with the Guard to avert further tragedy. Well-known professor Glenn Frank convinced students to leave a sit-in on the commons that students had formed to protest the Guard’s killing of their classmates. The administration took action within the next half-hour, ordering students to evacuate the campus by 3 p.m. Few students had cars, and long-distance calls home, even collect, were impossible because Kent Bell Telephone had decided to shut down the phone system. “David Ambler, dean for student residence life, had the . . . idea of wheeling out the thirty-six university buses, loading them with students, and starting them off to Cleveland or Columbus, from which spots frantic students could catch what airplanes were available” (Michener 1970, 419–420) or otherwise make their way home as best they could. Traffic in and out of the city was stopped by roadblocks, obstructing parents’ efforts to retrieve their children from campus and keeping others from entering or leaving the city. Military personnel patrolled the city and campus and enforced a dusk-to-dawn curfew.

In the decades that followed, what is locally known as “May 4th” became indelibly known around the world as “Kent State.” The university balked at this equivalency, struggled with the legacy of the shootings, and desired, understandably, to be known best for its achievements. In 1977, succumbing to pressure from the reelected governor who sent the Ohio National Guard to Kent on May 4, the university forcibly removed protestors from the May 4th site after a yearlong protest—in order to build a gymnasium. Protestors, who included parents of the slain students, felt the university was trying to cover up what had happened and that alteration of the scene would impede the quest for justice in the courts, which was in progress. In 1990, the university again faced protests when a formal memorial at the site was perceived by some to be built in a scaled-down version of the original design. Town–gown relations continued to be marred for decades.

Nowhere were the facts of the event available in a means easily accessible to the public, which knew only the broadest strokes of what had happened and few of the documented details that might have changed people’s understanding. Collaboration among all stakeholders (university administration, town officials, townspeople, etc.), a necessary ingredient to move beyond the event, was a long time in coming. The university needed to come fully to terms with the event and its aftermath. A 2012 article in the Wall Street Journal noted that the view of the university’s current president, Lester Lefton, has been affected by his experience leading Tulane through aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Lefton said: “We’re going to stop denying that the incident happened but instead embrace its history as part of who we are” (Porter 2012). For two years, Lefton and Kent State’s board of trustees delved into the history to fully learn the details of what happened on May 4 and to reflect on how understanding that history could benefit students and the public today. The board passed resolutions in fall 2009 supporting the nomination of the site to the National Register of Historic Places and the creation of a May 4 Visitors Center with both outdoor and indoor public exhibits. These resolutions signified the university’s positive change toward acceptance of its legacy and led the university beyond memorializing to institutionalizing the history of May 4 in a form that serves the public and fulfills the university’s academic and social mission.

Collaboration continued as Kent State scholars worked with humanities scholars, consultants, community leaders, veterans, and hundreds of students to determine the content of the May 4 Visitors Center’s indoor and outdoor exhibits. Members of the public contributed ideas through public forums, and local historians and community leaders reviewed materials as they were developed. National experts, along with Kent State specialists in anthropology, geography, history, Pan-African studies, sociology, theater, and visual communication, examined exhibit content to ensure accuracy and
balanced viewpoints. Reviewers for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ohio Humanities Council, the Ohio Preservation Office, and the Department of the Interior also provided constructive feedback from an external public perspective.

In 2010, the outdoor exhibit was dedicated. It features interpretive trail markers, an educational brochure, and a Ken Burns–style documentary narrated by Julian Bond. On October 20, 2012, the university opened the doors to the indoor exhibit of the May 4 Visitors Center, a multimedia museum that tells the story of what happened on May 4 set in the context of its time and reflecting on the meaning of the historical event for citizens today. This opening reflects the university’s commitment to its mission as a public institution that values education as a public purpose.

"The past won’t fit into memory without something left over. It must have a future": so public historian Jay Winter recalled the words of Nobel Prize winner Joseph Brodsky to an audience at Kent State’s Symposium on Democracy, a conference founded to honor those who died and to support ongoing learning. As the plans for the May 4 Visitors Center took shape, Winter praised the Kent State community for its “achievement to shape [its] future through [its] framing of active knowledge in this place and at this time” (2012, 49). Opening the May 4 Visitors Center, Kent State has given the public a place for the “something left over” that insists “it must have a future.” Through the May 4 Visitors Center, the public may discover the real-life details, discuss the hard truths of the past, and see in the story of the loss of four young lives larger implications that may guide their choices as citizens today. Those who seek such knowledge will help to preserve a democratic society respectful of differences of opinion and culture.

REFERENCES


Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning


Stephane E. Booth is Associate Provost, Quality Initiatives and Curriculum, and Laura L. Davis is Professor of English and Director, May 4 Initiatives, at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Cultivating Organizational Innovation
Scott Newman

Today, there is widespread emphasis on innovation—with a preponderance of calls by leaders of all stripes for those they lead to be more innovative. However, most know little about innovation or its cultivation. Not surprisingly, innovations typically occur within the contexts of one-off initiatives or are stumbled upon by accident. Ultimately, enterprises should, through sustained effort, seek to establish cultures of innovation—cultures that extend beyond labs and incubators, engage diverse constituencies, and apply to any (or at least many) organizational areas. Following are strategies that are essential for creating innovative cultures.

Hire Innovative People

Most who desire to establish cultures of innovation face doing so within existing organizations—as opposed to developing them from scratch. Nevertheless, any organizations looking to become more innovative must incorporate into their onboarding processes mechanisms that gauge the actual or potential innovativeness of prospective employees.

There is a Chinese proverb about the best time to plant trees: twenty years ago. The second best time? Now. Gaining insights into prospective team members’ capacities to innovate can significantly advance an organization’s efforts to become a culture of innovation.

Define Innovation

Organizations that seek to expand their capabilities to innovate must establish working definitions for innovation. While definitions differ, they generally include two components: creativity and improvement. A common understanding of what innovation is—and is not—is critical to creating an organizational culture around it.

Identify Innovation Domains

As with developing definitions, organizations must explicitly delineate the domains for which prospective innovations will be considered. Some organizations will only entertain ideas relevant to specific strategic organizational priorities or be interested in low- or no-cost innovations. Others will actively seek potential innovations relevant to any aspects of their operations. Though the domains identified will vary widely from one organization to another, they provide much-needed focus to related efforts.
Integrate Innovation Strategies

Wherever possible, innovation-oriented activities must be harmonized with existing organizational processes, programs, systems, and so on. A lack of integration often begets stakeholder uncertainty and, consequently, diminished engagement.

Crowdsourcing Ideation

Many organizations have individuals or units explicitly focused on innovation. However, innovation should not be the responsibility of a relative few whose attentions and energies are directed primarily to core organizational activities. All organizations have bright, creative stakeholders who can contribute significantly to their advancement.

If organizations truly desire to become more innovative, they should actively seek potential innovations from all possible sources. This happens best when diverse constituencies are encouraged to continuously ask: “What if . . . ?” While some organizations will choose not to engage all constituents in their innovation processes, the more involved, the greater the likelihood of creating sustainable, innovative cultures.

Delineate Processes for Procuring Ideas

Organizations must have well-defined mechanisms through which innovative ideas may be submitted and must explicitly identify data required for consideration. The latter may include descriptions of the issues or opportunities the innovations are intended to address, potential tangible and intangible impacts, requisite resources, implementation timelines, and so on. It is key to strike balances between requiring sufficient information to consider ideas fully and necessitating so much that stakeholder participation is discouraged.

Establish Frameworks for Vetting Potential Innovations

Everyone engaged in an organization’s innovation efforts is responsible for the success of those efforts. Nevertheless, someone(s) must be accountable for their execution.

Many innovative ideas can be implemented with little cost; others will require considerable organizational investment. While the evaluation of potential innovations may be delegated, and multiple stakeholders will likely be engaged in an organization’s vetting processes, leaders representing key organizational areas will most often be accountable for them.

Just as idea generation can be crowdsourced, so can idea evaluation. Though many organizations will limit those engaged in vetting potential innovations, some will actively solicit broad constituent participation. In most cases, evaluated ideas will be selected to be: (1) piloted or implemented, (2) retained for refinement and/or reconsideration (see Keep Good Ideas Alive below), or (3) dismissed. Some proposals will not be potential innovations but will concern health and safety. As a result, organizations must establish means for handling such submissions.

Not surprisingly, evaluation processes and their outcomes will vary, depending on a variety of variables. Regardless, they must be timely and transparent, or stakeholders will disengage.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Cultivating Organizational Innovation

Keep Good Ideas Alive
A number of ideas proffered will have merit but be ill-timed or require further refinement. Therefore, organizations should retain and periodically reevaluate such potential innovations until they are piloted, implemented, or dismissed.

Develop Innovation Communication Flows
Organizations that seek to create sustainable cultures of innovation must develop and implement communications that promote and support each component of their innovation processes and must thoughtfully convey the value innovative thought and action can have for organizations and their stakeholders. Timely, open communications will positively influence their initial and ongoing engagement.

Foster Diverse Collaboration
Diversity is essential to excellence. Likewise, engaging stakeholders with unique abilities and perspectives is vital to fostering innovative organizational cultures. Therefore, organizations must actively encourage collaboration between diverse individuals and groups—particularly in their innovation-oriented communications, as well as in their procurement and evaluation of innovative ideas.

Recognize Contributors
All who contribute to an organization’s innovation efforts should receive some level of recognition. Acknowledging those involved underscores the importance of innovation and participation in related processes. Further, such recognitions often lead others to become engaged and those already involved to increase their support.

Assess Innovation Undergirding and Success
Organizations that seek to cultivate cultures of innovation must continuously and candidly evaluate both their success on that front and their innovation practices. Most can assess their efforts and outcomes by asking two simple questions: To what extent do our stakeholders consider our organization supportive of innovative thought and action? To what degree do our peers view our organization as innovative?

Conclusion
Innovation is widely viewed as critical to organizational performance—though all too often it is rhetorical, occurs in isolated pockets, or is left to happenstance. The establishment of innovative cultures is essential to sustained organizational innovation. Subscribing to these strategies will advance organizations toward that reality.

Scott Newman is the Information Technologies Division Chair at the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in Okmulgee.
Change has become a way of life. At the Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC), a single day may bring a new project from the Board of Regents, followed by a request for information from the state or an accrediting body. One way to address these many requests is to incorporate them into the overall data-gathering process as much as possible. OCCC is working to make this happen. This paper outlines the college’s planning process and accountability and how those are linked to Achieving the Dream (AtD) goals, Complete College America requirements, and the new Higher Learning Commission Criteria.

Planning

In FY2000, the college adopted a policy governance model using the John Carver model. As a result of embracing this model, the Board of Regents resolved to “focus on intended long-term impacts on students and community (ENDS), rather than on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects (MEANS)” (OCCC Policy Governance, September 17, 2001). These ENDs form the cornerstone of the process to develop the college’s five-year strategic plan. The strategic plan begins with the development of numerous listening posts (sixteen in this current fiscal year) or focus groups, which have included faculty, staff, Board members, and external constituencies. The information gathered from these sessions is synthesized by the Planning and Research Department and presented to the President’s Cabinet. The President’s Cabinet formulates a draft for review by the OCCC Board of Regents during its fall retreat. Subsequently, a detailed annual plan based on the strategic goals begins to take shape. This annual plan includes the college’s five ENDs with identifiable targets for each of the components. This information is communicated in five monitoring reports.

These targets have become the cornerstone of the college’s dashboard. Targets are statistically measured and the results quantified. In the dashboard component of the monitoring report, results are shown in one of three colors, each of which signifies the level of accomplishment: green denotes at or exceeding target; yellow denotes slightly below target, requiring monitoring; and red denotes significantly below target, requiring monitoring. Following are the five ENDs and the targets set by the Board of Regents for the 2013 fiscal year:

1. **Access**: Our community has broad and equitable access to a valuable college education.
   a. Market share—at or above prior year
   b. FTE enrollment—at or above prior three-year average
   c. Race and ethnicity compared to the five-county area—minority/ethnicity at or above the five-county area
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements

2. **Student Preparation:** Our students are prepared to succeed in college.
   a. Concurrent enrollment—at or above prior year
   b. Successful developmental course completion—at or above prior year
   c. Successful gateway course completion—at or above prior year

3. **Student Success:** Our students achieve their individual educational aspirations.
   a. Course completion rates of 1000 level and 2000 level—at or above prior year
   b. Persistence—at or above prior year
   c. Retention—at or above prior year
   d. Graduates—at or above prior three-year average
   e. General education success—based on review of artifacts with students demonstrating competence at or above the 70th percentile
   f. Progression rate (measures the progress that a first-time student to OCCC has made toward earning a degree or certificate over a three-year period)—at or above prior year

4. **Graduate Success:** Our graduates succeed at four-year institutions and/or in their careers.
   a. Transfer GPA compared to that of Oklahoma State University, University of Central Oklahoma, and University of Oklahoma—equal to or above the compared university
   b. First-time licensure pass rates (Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Assistant Paramedic, Physical Therapist Assistant)—at or above the national rate
   c. Graduates’ degree of satisfaction with transfer preparation and employment preparation—graduates have 90 percent satisfaction or higher
   d. Employers’ degree of satisfaction with graduates—employers have 90 percent satisfaction or higher

5. **Community Development:** Our community is enriched economically and socially by our educational and cultural programs.
   a. Community development performance is at or above margin—overall breakeven or above
   b. Career transitions—successful course and/or job placement above prior three-year average
   c. Adult Basic Education/General Education Diploma/English as a Second Language (ABE/GED/ESL)—achieve at or above half (or five) of the eleven national benchmark levels
   d. Capitol Hill Center—number of enrollments/visits over prior year
   e. Arts Festival Oklahoma—attendance at or above prior three-year average
   f. Cultural Arts—tickets sold at or above prior three-year average
   g. Wellness Center visits—at or above prior three-year average

Another critical component of the monitoring reports is the development of improvement strategies designed to address those targets (shown in yellow or red) that have not been met. The vice president of an area in this category develops a list of improvement strategies to address these targets. At the end of the report, the vice president identifies how last year’s improvement strategies were met and lists improvement strategies for next year. Because this component has become such a critical factor
to the OCCC Board of Regents, Planning and Research Department staff members have begun to meet with the vice presidents at least one month before the report goes to the Board so that the vice presidents can prepare their responses in a timely fashion.

Finally, each year, information is collected on all of the targets and compiled in a summary report. This information is used in part by the OCCC Board of Regents to evaluate the president. The president’s salary increase is based on how well the college performed on these targets.

**Achieving the Dream (AtD)**

At OCCC, AtD began in FY2008. The goals of an AtD student include the following: (1) successfully complete remedial or developmental instruction and advance to credit-bearing courses; (2) enroll in and successfully complete the initial college-level or gateway courses in subjects such as mathematics and English; (3) complete the courses they take with a grade of C or better; (4) persistence from one term to the next; and (5) attain a certificate or degree. As with each of the targets set for the college’s ENDs, the college tracks all five of the AtD goals and includes them in the monitoring reports. In addition, with the primary AtD goals in mind, the college, along with a cross-functional team, has selected five AtD initiatives, including:

1. Comprehensive revision of the developmental mathematics courses
   a. Elimination of all online developmental math courses due to poor completion rates
   b. Development of our own assessment testing to better coincide with course requirements
   c. Redesign of the teaching format to include three components—lecture, online experience, and one-on-one tutoring in the lab
   d. Revision of the courses offered, from sixteen-week to eight-week increments, after discovering that students were more successful in eight-week courses
2. Establishment of cooperative learning as a teaching method to improve student success in gateway courses
3. Development of processes to increase the number of students who apply for financial aid
4. Development of an online orientation to provide students with a firsthand understanding of the differences between an online course and a traditional course
5. Establishment of a student advising alert program for students who are failing their courses

Success within each of these categories has varied. One of the best results came from the changes made to the developmental math courses. To date, the course success rates have risen significantly while withdrawal rates have declined. Students in cooperative learning courses have been doing significantly better compared to those in the same courses taught with traditional methods. Financial aid applications have increased significantly, with those students who apply experiencing greater retention and persistence. Online orientation has previously been impossible to track, but with the new learning management system, we will be tracking these students in FY2013. The student advising alert program has also had some difficulties tracking students because of the level of assistance. Some students received mailings while others received one-on-one counseling. The college will continue to review potential means of analyzing the results of the advising early alert program.
One of the most significant impacts of AtD goals on OCCC’s collection of data for the monitoring reports was the definition of course success. Historically, the college had always allowed Ds as a mark of success, but after joining AtD, this was no longer an option. The college now defines success as achievement of the following grades: As, Bs, Cs, and Ss (for satisfactory). To further highlight and emphasize the importance of this component, the college provides faculty with course completion data, which include course success, withdrawals, and failures, including Ds. These data are compared to data from the same course. So, if an economics faculty member is given a success rate of 75 percent for a particular course, he or she can compare that statistic to the average success rate of all other economics courses.

**Complete College America/Complete College Oklahoma/Complete College OCCC**

Complete College America has been adopted by Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education as Complete College Oklahoma, and, similarly, OCCC has adopted this new initiative through Complete College OCCC. The State of Oklahoma is embracing the Complete College America efforts in FY2013 to increase the number of graduates over the next ten years. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education requires all public colleges and universities to increase their number of graduates by 67 percent over the next ten years.

Because OCCC has completed its five-year commitment to AtD, it has begun a new cycle titled Complete College OCCC. Similar to the process used to generate the initiatives for AtD, the college met with a cross-functional team comprising representatives from every department and every division. The Institutional Effectiveness Department prepared data for the team to review over several two-hour meetings. This information was synthesized in a half-day meeting designed to have each subgroup in the team review the materials and put forth ideas on what initiatives would increase the college’s number of graduates. Although the college will continue to monitor AtD initiatives, it has now tentatively identified three Complete College OCCC initiatives: (1) improve student success in online courses, (2) improve student success in 2000-level courses, and (3) reduce the number of students on probation and improve probation success.

The first step in this process was to provide $20,000 in grant money for staff and faculty to implement projects to improve student success. The next steps will be to form three committees, one for each of the three initiatives. As the committees set targets, those targets will be incorporated into the college’s planning process.

**Higher Learning Commission Criteria**

The Higher Learning Commission recently revised the Criteria used to evaluate each of its postsecondary institutions. Some of these Criteria can be directly linked to the data we provide for our planning process:

- **1D3:** “The institution engages with the identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.” (Monitoring Report [MR] Community Development includes the measurement of successful activities for Career Transitions, Arts Festival Oklahoma, Cultural Arts, Wellness Center, ABE/GED/ESL, and Capitol Hill Center.)
- **2C1:** “The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.” (The annual plan targets are included in the monitoring reports.)
• **3B2 and 3B3:** “It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.”; “Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.” (MR Student Success includes an assessment of general education artifacts.)

• **3D2:** “The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students.” (MR Student Preparation includes successful developmental course completion.)

• **4A6:** “The institution evaluates the success of its graduates.” (MR Graduate Success includes the review of GPA at subsequent universities, first-time licensure pass rates of selected programs graduates, graduate satisfaction with the education at OCCC, and employer satisfaction of graduates.)

• **4C:** “The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvements through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in the degree and certificate programs.” (MR Student Success review of successful course completion of 1000- and 2000-level courses, persistence, retention, progression, and number of graduates.)

• **5B3:** “The institution enables the involvement of its administration, faculty, staff and students in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.” (Key initiatives for the college are developed through a cross-functional team of seventy employees.)

• **5C3:** “The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.” (Listening posts are an integral part of the planning process, which includes soliciting feedback from faculty, staff, students, the OCCC Foundation, and community leaders.)

• **5D:** “The institution works systematically to improve its performance.” (College performance is measured and presented through the monitoring reports, AtD initiatives, and Complete College OCCC initiatives.)

**Conclusion**

OCCC will continue to strive to meet the criteria of each of its constituencies—students, the community, the OCCC Board of Regents, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the Higher Learning Commission, Achieving the Dream, and Complete College Oklahoma. Through measures of success and in-depth comprehensive initiatives, the college will succeed.

*Janet C. Perry is Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Oklahoma City Community College in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.*
How does a large, multi-campus college redesign an action research system adapted from a national model to become one that meets the unique needs of the institution and is sustained through knowledge retention and effective leadership succession? This paper addresses the need for such a system and describes one community college’s steps toward developing infrastructure that supports innovative ways to promote student completion in a system designed to change.

Institutional Characteristics
As a four-campus, multi-location college serving approximately thirty thousand students annually, Tulsa Community College (TCC) provides the first two years of public higher education to students in northeastern Oklahoma. A critical characteristic of TCC is its gap-funding program, Tulsa Achieves, which provides free tuition to students who matriculate from Tulsa County high schools. TCC consistently has one of the largest freshman classes in Oklahoma public higher education. Further, as a community college with an open admissions policy, the college’s students often face barriers to completing their certificate or associate’s degree programs, which Bailey, Dong, and Sung-Woo write about in Referral, Enrollment and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges (2009). Indeed, 84 percent of first-time degree- or certificate-seeking students at TCC in fall 2011 required remediation in at least one area (i.e., math, writing, and/or reading). In addition, many students face financial hardship, lack of support from friends and family, and other challenges to succeeding in college (Tulsa Community College Achieving the Dream Data Team 2011).

Recognizing these barriers, TCC prioritized learning effectiveness and student success as one of three goals in its three-year strategic plan. Goal One indicates the college will become “a national leader in effective teaching, learning, and support services to develop the whole student” (Tulsa Community College 2011). In addition, Oklahoma’s is one of the state systems selected by Complete College America to participate in their Alliance of States, a group that pledges to prioritize college completion by setting completion goals, developing action plans, and regularly collecting and reporting on measures of progress (Complete College America 2011).

Promoting Persistence and Completion
To address persistence and completion barriers that students encounter, in 2007 TCC became a member of the national Achieving the Dream (ATD) network and has been actively involved for the past six years. As a member of this national organization, TCC focuses on systemic changes in the college that will increase student persistence and completion, are driven by faculty and professional staff teams, and are research-based and informed by evidence. An emphasis on underserved populations and remediation transformation has guided the initiative since its inception (Achieving the Dream, Inc. 2012).
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change

Over the course of six years, the college evolved using the action-research process of (1) collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to identify student barriers; (2) investigating national literature for best practices; (3) piloting strategies to promote student success; and (4) analyzing the data for continuous improvement of the strategies. Although the college demonstrated progress, it became apparent that TCC’s ATD initiative did not have effective processes for knowledge retention that are resistant to the natural transition of leaders within the organization.

During the 2011–2012 academic year, TCC’s organizational structure for ATD included numerous teams with varying purposes:

- **Strategy Teams.** The strategy teams planned, implemented, and evaluated new programs designed to promote student success. The five active strategies during the 2011–2012 academic year were (1) an African American male mentoring program; (2) a MathPath refresher course for students wanting to brush up on math skills; (3) a collaborative learning course redesign program in Beginning Algebra; (4) a three-credit hour Academic Strategies student success course; and (5) new student orientation.

- **Lead Team.** The Lead Team guided the entire ATD initiative at TCC, with a faculty leader, the dean of University Transfer and Workforce Programs, and the associate vice president for Academic Affairs serving as tri-chairs. This team included all team leaders as well as other key stakeholders.

- **Core Team.** The Core Team vetted new strategies for logistic feasibility and institutionalization, consisting of key stakeholders from various offices at the college, including members of the President’s Cabinet.

- **Data Team.** The Data Team assisted strategy teams with data collection and analysis.

- **Research Team.** The Research Team helped strategy teams with literature reviews for planning their new programs.

- **Communications Team.** The Communications Team facilitated communications both within ATD and between ATD and other members of the college and community.

Although the structure from 2011–2012 helped TCC make improvements in supporting student success across its first five years in ATD, resignations in ATD leadership during years three through five slowed the progress of the strategy teams’ projects and created both confusion within the organization and an abrupt decline in the organization’s momentum. The college leadership decided to make a number of structural and procedural changes during the 2012–2013 academic year. Behind all of these changes is the same broad goal: to develop more efficient and systematic processes that will help sustain knowledge despite the inevitable changes in leadership within the system that have and will continue to occur.

**Sustainability and Knowledge Retention**

Based on interviews with the ATD strategy team leaders at the end of the 2011–2012 academic year, the Lead Team tri-chairs recommended expanding to four Lead Team leaders, adding the director of Planning and Institutional Research (P&IR). Another structural change included replacing the Data and Research teams with a P&IR research analyst to serve as a data consultant on each strategy team. Similarly, the Communications Team was replaced by a communications officer who now serves on each strategy team, supporting communication efforts within the teams, between the teams and other stakeholders at the college, and with community partners and other educational institutions.
Also, in lieu of a formal core team, the strategy teams will now vet their programs by presenting to the entire President’s Cabinet at the end of each spring semester. Finally, the four new Lead Team leaders recommended the creation of three governance committees to help build a strong infrastructure to support action research focused on student success at the college. The three committees—the Sustainable Leadership, Strategic Planning, and Budget and Finance committees—consist of Lead Team members. The Lead Team is empowered to make recommendations to the President’s Cabinet for institutionalizing ATD strategies.

**Sustainable Leadership Committee**
This committee has been charged with developing a plan for smooth transitions of ATD leaders that emphasizes knowledge retention across transitions, primarily for the Lead Team leaders but also for the strategy teams. To that end, the committee has proposed a pilot four-semester process for rotating faculty leaders of the Lead Team through an entry, mentoring, and exit cycle. A new faculty leader is selected for the two-year cycle, entering as an apprentice the first semester (with three credit hours of reassign time), serving as a standing leader for two semesters (with six credit hours of reassign time), and mentoring the new incoming faculty leader during the fourth semester (with six credit hours of reassign time). Faculty members will apply for the position and candidates will be reviewed by the Sustainable Leadership Committee. The committee will then make recommendations to the entire Lead Team, who will ultimately appoint the new faculty leader. In addition to developing a process for recruiting and selecting new leadership in ATD, this committee is working on job descriptions for the various roles within the ATD structure at TCC.

**Strategic Planning Committee**
This committee has been charged with developing a mission statement, goals, accountability processes, and application and exit procedures for ATD strategies at the college. Of particular importance is the creation of a systematic application process for new strategy teams, which will provide enhanced structure and clarity regarding new project selection for inclusion in ATD. The committee is also discussing various methods for holding strategy teams accountable as well as the processes by which a strategy team ceases to participate in ATD.

**Budget and Finance Committee**
This committee has been charged with creating policies and procedures regarding the distribution of funds for the planning and implementation of ATD strategies/programs. In addition to developing an application procedure for funds that will have explicit criteria for approval, the Budget and Finance Committee is exploring various sources of funding for the strategies that are both internal and external to TCC.

The aforementioned structural changes are expected to provide a foundation for continued growth and progress in the development of innovative ways to promote student success at TCC. What is equally important to sustaining these efforts is a monitoring system that includes self-regulatory and assessment processes within the organizational structure. As facilitators for the system, Lead Team leaders now hold annual individual conversations with Strategy Team leaders based on a set of questions designed to provide self-assessment to the Strategy Team leaders and critical feedback concerning the organization’s structure and effectiveness. Questions range from strategy team
concerns to the changes made in the college’s ATD organization, including the following: What are two or three strengths/weaknesses in this year’s ATD organizational changes? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your strategy team (recommend plan for improvement)? What evidence do you have that your team’s intervention has addressed student barriers? What are your strengths/weaknesses as a team leader? In light of the responses above, do you feel the intervention should continue in its current form during 2012–2013? Based on these annual discussions as well as other surveys and assessments, the organizational system will continue its evolutionary process to achieve the ultimate goal of increased student persistence and completion.

All of the changes for the 2012–2013 academic year were made with the same broad goal in mind: building a strong foundation to support action research focused on student success and completion at TCC. More specifically, these changes will support knowledge retention across transitions in leadership and strategies while simultaneously providing an infrastructure with clear policies, procedures, and criteria for admission and funding. In addition, progress is expected in two fundamental areas of ATD, data analysis and communications, as individuals dedicated to those particular tasks are now participating on each strategy team as well as the Lead Team.

Next Steps

During the fall semester of 2012, the ATD Lead Team and the President’s Cabinet determined to discontinue membership with Achieving the Dream and focus primarily on this system as one under further development for a Quality Initiative for Open Pathway reaffirmation of accreditation aligned with Complete College America goals. As a result of the development of a micro-system, the former ATD organization at TCC will assume a slightly different label of Action Research for Completion (ARC) dedicated to identical goals, processes, and structure as TCC’s enhanced ATD system (Higher Learning Commission 2012).

The intentional redesign of ATD to TCC’s Quality Initiative, ARC, will ensure stronger success strategies and higher performance rates than existed during the six-year period of process development. The systemic process will be continually informed by external partners—Complete College America, the Tulsa P-20 Council, the Higher Education Forum of Northeast Oklahoma, TCC’s four-year institutional partners, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the HLC Academy for Student Persistence and Completion, and other TCC initiatives, such as EXCELRerate, a dual-enrollment partnership with two area school districts, and other student affairs initiatives. Figure 1 illustrates the model to be suggested for the Open Pathways Quality Initiative with three of the key

REFERENCES


Donna Wood is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Kevin David is Director of Planning and Institutional Research, and Sarah Stecher is Associate Professor of English at Tulsa Community College in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance

Marsha Watson, Jonathan Keiser, and Kathleen Gorski

If you were sick and walked into a doctor’s office that appeared to be something out of an earlier era—ledgers instead of laptops, anatomical drawings instead of data connections, herbal treatments instead of pharmaceutics—you would leave. You would likely seek medical attention that is supported by the most up-to-date technology with access to the most current theories and practices. Yet, we remain complacent with educational systems that are grounded in practices and theories from an earlier era.

During the early 1900s, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching helped establish the credit hour as a metric for learning (a student’s time on task) and as a standard measure for faculty workloads, internal budgeting, and external reporting in higher education (Shedd 2003). With regard to a measure of student learning, the Carnegie Unit, as it became known, explicitly stated, “in the counting the fundamental criterion was the amount of time spent on a subject, not the results attained” (Kreplin 1971, 2). On July 1, 2011, federal regulations concerning the assignment of academic credit took effect, which codified the old Carnegie Unit (also known as “seat time”) as a mechanism for assigning credit: one unit of semester credit requires a minimum of one hour of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks; similarly, one unit of quarter credit requires one hour of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for ten to twelve weeks. However, in December 2012 (more than a hundred years after the metric was first introduced), the Carnegie Foundation announced that it would use a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to study the Carnegie Unit and its role in American education. As Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) continue to expand at the most elite institutions, and as blended courses and online education become commonplace, it makes little sense for twenty-first-century educators to hold on to this Industrial-era metric that is based on the number of hours that students literally sit in a classroom.

Reflecting on the direct contact time between teacher and student and how it translates to hybrid and online education forces a reconsideration and articulation of values and how practices might shift. Smyth (1989) provides a reflective cycle using four steps and related questions to assist teachers in critically thinking through their craft:

1. Describing: What do I do?
2. Informing: What does this mean?
3. Confronting: How did I come to be like this?
4. Constructing: How might I do things differently?

Think of these questions as helping to set the stage for measuring learning and teaching differently. Focusing on credits earned (as opposed to credit hours) and allowing faculty members to determine
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance

Credit worthiness in their disciplines might be a step toward a more authentic measure of learning. Credit could then be grounded in curricular assessments—authentic measures of student learning—rather than on seat time. Learning outcomes and measures of student effort would replace (or at least complement) notions of direct and indirect instruction. Some of this work already exists, but it is far from being standard or conventional. This paper provides two models of how analysis of the amount of direct instruction and student out-of-class time credit was used to improve curriculum, connect learning outcomes to assessment artifacts, and learning outcomes to the award of academic credit.

Columbia College Chicago: Credit-Hour Compliance and Accelerated Course Design

At Columbia College Chicago, a course-level model was developed and implemented during spring/summer 2012 to ensure that an accelerated, hybrid (or “mixed FTF”) course would meet the instructional and out-of-class time requirements of the traditional Carnegie Unit. The review and analysis undertaken revealed that the compressed instructional time schedule in accelerated hybrid courses can prove to be an obstacle to student completion of out-of-class work time requirements. Specifically, there are only so many hours in a day, so multiple hours in classroom instruction leave little or no time to complete the required amount of out-of-class work. The development of this model revealed that there are limits to how much a course can be accelerated, and to how much instructional time can be compressed, and still result in satisfactory student learning. As underscored by the course-level effort at Columbia College Chicago, teaching effectiveness in any accelerated modality is improved when courses are (re)designed to give careful attention to Carnegie Unit out-of-class time requirements as well as instructional time requirements.

National Louis University: University-wide, Comprehensive Credit-Hour Compliance

At National Louis University (NLU) the work to define and implement the Academic Credit Unit—or, in other words, assignment of credit via outcomes assessment—began as an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Action Project in fall 2011. An NLU faculty team review of a representative sample of university courses across colleges as well as all formats and modalities, and analysis of alignment with the Carnegie Unit assignment of credit, was conducted during spring and summer 2012 to ensure compliance with federal requirements in anticipation of an AQIP Checkup visit in September 2012. Following are the steps in the process that was developed:

1. Faculty members articulated their assumptions of the components of instruction in all formats and all modalities, including lecture, instructor guidance, instructional feedback, and peer feedback, and resulted in a standardized chart (Phase 1).
2. In-class instructional and student learning activity components were defined for all formats and all modalities and aligned with Carnegie Unit requirements (Phase 1).
3. Out-of-class instructional activity components were defined for all formats/modalities and aligned with Carnegie Unit requirements (Phase 1).
4. Specific assessments of course and program outcomes were identified and mapped (Phase 1).
5. A faculty team analyzed all university courses in all learning formats against the requirements of the Carnegie Unit to determine credit-hour compliance. Courses and programs were revised/restructured as necessary (Phase 2).

6. Outcomes assessment was integrated into a university-wide assessment of student learning and assignment of academic credit, as well as other appropriate university systems (Phase 3).

The completion of this process clearly defines university instructional and student out-of-class work components in the five basic delivery formats (face-to-face; online; hybrid; internship; independent study) and standardizes the assignment of credit, all of which contributes to teaching effectiveness and enhanced assessment and improvement of student learning.

**NLU’s Three-Phase Credit-Hour Compliance Plan**

NLU formulated a one-year, three-phase plan for complete compliance with the new federal requirements; management of the project fell on the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) unit, which includes the Office of Assessment. From the start, the credit-hour compliance effort was envisioned as a vehicle for both laying the foundation for outcomes-based assignment of credit in the future and moving forward on authentic, campus-wide assessment of student learning. As the following graphic illustrates, Phase 1 included creating a mechanism for assigning credit, a process for auditing classes for compliance, and articulation of all components for each course modality (i.e., delivery format). Phase 2 implements the decisions made in Phase 1 through a faculty-driven audit process. In this phase, faculty members audit all courses for compliance while simultaneously mapping program outcomes, identifying all program assessment assignments, identifying the precise assessments associated with each credit hour assigned in the course, and, when noncompliance is revealed, revising courses as necessary for compliance.

The first two phases are sequential; Phase 3, however, began concomitant with Phase 1 and continues alongside Phase 2. Phase 3 represents the technical, “in the weeds” portion of the plan, including articulation and implementation of appropriate policies concerning assignment of credit and other policy and procedural issues arising from ongoing complete compliance, such as assessment of course and program learning outcomes; data management; and ongoing, annual internal audit procedures and processes.

**Phase 1: Articulating instructional and out-of-class components**

The crucial Phase 1 deliverable was a guideline of course components that NLU faculty members could use to calculate faculty-directed “instructional time” as well as student “out-of-class work”—and this meant articulating faculty expectations for time-on-task (in the form of faculty-generated guidelines) for all possible components of each. In addition, faculty members were asked to clearly describe their expectations for each of the five basic course formats. The goal was to produce clear definitions of the five learning modalities that articulate NLU’s distinctive approach to each, so that faculty and students could understand course expectations before teaching or enrolling in a class.
NLU’s Institutional Effectiveness unit was proactive about sharing information and encouraging faculty participation. It was important to provide not only context but ongoing support for what became an intense and focused effort by faculty colleagues. The director of Assessment, who was tasked with coordinating the project, made herself available via face-to-face meetings and teleconferencing to speak about the effort at any meetings or events in which faculty members were expected to participate, including the University Assessment Counsel, college-level curriculum committees, the full Faculty Senate and its committees, the Faculty Association, and the University Leadership Counsel. Also, because NLU is a multi-campus university, the director visited multiple campuses and held face-to-face meetings with as many faculty members as possible to explain the project, offer assistance, and answer questions.

Initial meetings were with the deans and program curriculum committee members. The deans worked together to create a unified message for communication to all university faculty members that would encourage participation. The curriculum committee members helped communicate the process to colleagues. The University Assessment Committee also helped in the communication effort and provided advice and counsel on integration of assessment of learning outcomes in the overall project.

An all-faculty meeting was hosted to generate the first drafts of the guidelines, which were subsequently posted to a SharePoint site; all faculty members were invited to review the drafts and provide feedback. The posted guidelines were created in a PDF fill-in format so that faculty members could easily provide comments and suggestions and see the comments and suggestions of their peers. Faculty feedback, after being aggregated and synthesized, was used to revise the draft guidelines, and these revised documents were presented in a working meeting of the University Leadership Counsel (a cross-functional group of faculty members, staff members, and administrative leadership) facilitated by the vice provost of IE and the director of Assessment. Two deliverables were sought from this meeting: (1) a final faculty review of the revised guidelines, and (2) a list of policies and procedures from staff and administrators that needed to be altered or generated as a result of how the credit-hour compliance audit affected their work (this information collected from staff was essential to the success of Phase 3). Finally, faculty volunteers tested the draft guidelines by conducting an audit of their courses. This effort produced a single, fillable PDF audit form that individual faculty members and faculty groups could use to audit courses in Phase 2 for compliance with the Carnegie Unit, identify learning outcomes assessment artifacts, and connect specific assessments to award of credit. Faculty members testing the audit tool found that audits took about twenty to thirty minutes per course. A link to the audit form was loaded into every course shell in NLU’s learning management system (LMS).

**Phase 2: University-wide, complete compliance audit**

With IE, and the Office of Assessment in particular, acting as process manager and facilitator, cross-college faculty teams and individual faculty members analyzed courses for compliance, mapped curriculum for program outcomes, identified assessment artifacts with specific learning outcomes and learning outcomes with award of credit, and revised/restructured courses to meet compliance requirements. Faculty members utilized the guidelines and audit process produced in Phase 1 to assess compliance of courses and programs and adjust or revise as necessary, ensuring consistency across and within colleges.
Completed audits are submitted to the Office of Assessment, which in turn provides a copy to college deans and program chairs. The results are reviewed and discussed in department and college meetings. Programs that are found to be out of compliance begin a process for revision or redesign. Revising courses to meet compliance requirements also often include revising existing curriculum maps, program outcomes, assessment artifacts for program and university outcomes-based assessment, and the amount of credit associated with program learning outcomes.

**Challenges: Unanticipated Misunderstandings**

In every meeting held to discuss the creation of NLU university course components of direct instruction and homework, there was confusion about the reason the guidelines were needed. This confusion derived from a commonly held assumption among faculty members that a set of standards or guidelines already existed “out there.” In early meetings (and even some later ones), faculty members asked for a list of “standard course components and time-on-task” from the federal government and/or our regional accrediting agency to use to audit courses. Faculty members had difficulty understanding that while instructional and out-of-class seat time requirements had been defined, each university is responsible (and has the opportunity) for creating guidelines that pertain to its individual expectations in these areas.

Another unanticipated challenge of the project was a common misunderstanding among faculty members of the definition of “direct instructional time.” More than a few faculty members had difficulty separating student seat time from faculty-directed instruction. For example, some faculty members looked at the expected time of, say, an in-class group student activity and multiplied that by the number of students in the class. So an activity that would take a class of fifteen, in groups, about twenty minutes, would be counted as 15 x 20 minutes of direct instruction. The faculty members’ reasoning was that the instructor had to interact with the students in each of the groups during the class—essentially, the challenge was to move faculty members from the amount of time they spent on planning, preparing, and conducting courses to the time students were expected to spend on task under faculty direction. As the project progressed, a definition of direct instructional time evolved:

“Direct Instructional time” can constitute a variety of activities in different modalities that count as “in-class time.” Essentially, any “in-class” activity which the instructor-of-record actively facilitates and is planned with a pedagogical purpose and documented as such counts as “direct instruction.”

**Other Challenges**

Creating the guidelines brought to light the fact that colleges might have similar course components with different titles. In one college, a course component may be called “student teaching,” and in another a similar activity could be called a “clinical counseling assessment.” As work continued on the course component guidelines, it became apparent that too many similar activities were listed. To condense the list to a workable document, course components were made general, and detailed descriptions were added to allow for multiple program use. For instance, a course component was created under the general category of “Field Work,” and the definition of fieldwork included terminology from two colleges.
Conclusion

The work of the two institutions presented here did not have the benefit of a variety of models; indeed, these institutions were working in uncharted territory. It is hoped that this work will serve as a beginning for other institutions that undertake this very difficult but rewarding work. As more colleges and universities are compelled to undergo a credit-hour compliance process, more and improved models will become available.

REFERENCES


Marsha Watson is Vice Provost of Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation and Kathleen Gorski is Director of Assessment at National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois. Jonathan Keiser is Director of Evaluation and Assessment at Columbia College Chicago.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes

Jion Liou Yen and Cathy F. Ayers

Introduction and Background

As institutions focus their assessment efforts on improving learning and institutional outcomes, they must systematically gather, report on, and use the evidence to demonstrate student learning and institutional effectiveness. Building a cohesive data system remains a challenge for many institutions as the data may not be integrated in the reporting system or formulated at either an aggregated or disaggregated level. The uncoordinated and disconnected data silo creates communication challenges that hinder evidence-based decision making for sustained improvement. In addition, institutions most often find themselves investing large amounts of assessment resources in gathering indirect measures of student learning (e.g., course evaluations, surveys, etc.), rather than gathering evidence about their student learning from direct measures (e.g., portfolio, presentation, etc.). Reallocating assessment resources to yield direct evidence of student learning requires broad-based involvement of relevant committees and administrators. As the process to review and improve assessment practices is ongoing, it needs a new mechanism to provide a high-level view of the assessment practices with drill-down capabilities for strategic management of data. This study provides a matrix table that links all assessment components in order to help campus units identify needed data and sources, address data quality issues, and decide a specific time frame of data analysis.

The current project started in 2004, when Lewis University became an AQIP institution. Part of that process was to foster a culture of continuous improvement to enhance student learning and institutional effectiveness. Historically, the university had collected masses of institutional performance data annually through various surveys and data reports. The accumulation of this immense amount of data helped the university in its planning and improvement efforts; however, the utility of the data was limited because the findings were aggregated at the institutional level and the data were not used in the broader context of program assessment. Conversely, the collection of the program-level data was not organized to obtain aggregated info because the data were obtained through different means, stored in multiple locations, and used for a wide variety of purposes. In many cases, data are collected but are not being systematically analyzed, used to guide decision making, or communicated through various channels over time for improvement. Consequently, it became a priority for the university to integrate and consolidate the data in a way that could provide a comprehensive view to identify priority needs to help students learn.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) was established in 2009 to support the university’s efforts to move toward a continuously improving, evidence-based culture. As the office was in charge of managing the proliferation of data and converting data into actionable information, a matrix was first designed to conduct an inventory of existing assessment processes on campus. Using a mapping feature, this matrix presented profiles of identified measures and various
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes

Instruments associated with these measures to the university’s mission, values, strategic priorities, learning outcomes, and accreditation requirements. The application of the matrix helped identify data stewards and stakeholders in furthering communication on data quality, consistency, and usability. In 2010, OIRP further constructed a multidimensional matrix to link the first matrix with a new matrix to examine what should be assessed and what had been assessed, revealed from the first matrix analysis. The implementation of both matrices helped the university manage and leverage data to examine critical issues, measure progress, and prioritize action steps as an integral part of the continuous improvement process.

Multidimensional Matrix and Its Application

The multidimensional matrix involved the integration of data from disparate sources and the development of a unified view of these data. It was an integrated data system with parallel processes that aligned indicators to objectives (top-down) as well as collected and aggregated data/results from the bottom up. It began with a matrix that contained rows and columns indicating data sources/measures and their relationships with the university’s mission, values, strategic directions, and nine AQIP categories in a hierarchical order. This was followed by a second (multidimensional) matrix to provide context to data by showing the life cycle of assessment data across various tools. Because the multidimensional matrix was designed for vertical and horizontal scalability, it allowed viewers to query the measurements and their relationship to other identified strategic measures in a variety of assessment contexts. Therefore, it offered a comprehensive view of campus assessment practices and strategic intents. It also identified overlaps and gaps in assessment data collection to assist the university in leveraging its data resources to improve processes. The combined information generated from these two matrices allowed stakeholders on campus to understand how learning flowed from the institution’s mission, goals, and learning outcomes down to core curriculum and co-curriculum activities. The knowledge gained from the matrix analyses also helped the university plan and implement a campus-wide assessment system that tied its mission, goals, learning outcomes, and data into a unified approach. Most importantly, the matrix provided synthesized and integrated information that helped the university strategically allocate assessment resources to illuminate the path for improvement in supporting its pursuit of providing quality education.

Adoption of the Matrix in the CQI Process

As an AQIP institution, Lewis University has set out on a mission to advance continuous quality improvement (CQI) in every aspect of the institution. To help campus stakeholders understand available information and interconnections, the matrix was designed to display the relationship between objectives, indicators, student learning outcomes, and their associated measurement methods and data sources. The matrix helps identify data availability and relevance and also serves as a road map that guides the planning of the next phase of data collection. The matrix is thus a coherent assessment data system that clearly delineates not only where the university’s mission, vision, strategic goals, learning outcomes, and accreditation standards are addressed but also demonstrates how these elements are integrated into all aspects of the university’s operations. The matrix facilitates informed decision making and continuous assessment of institutional progress toward expected outcomes. It also empowers campus stakeholders to actively engage in constructing effective learning environments that are conducive to learning for all students. The adoption of the multidimensional
matrix further enhanced the quality of and reduced time to produce the university’s second Systems Portfolio. Inclusion of the nine AQIP categories in the matrix made it possible to know where to locate assessment data needed for the Results section of each category, and using the matrix itself was the primary process for Category Seven, Measuring Effectiveness.

**Conclusion**

At Lewis, where the focus on assessing and improving student learning has helped drive many assessment initiatives on campus, issues arose on how to develop effective processes to collect, analyze, and utilize assessment data to evaluate the institution’s performance results. Efforts to develop and implement matrices to review and map out existing data at an aggregate level helped the university identify gaps and improvements needed for a successful data-driven process. It also helped to engage multiple constituents to align their assessment needs with the university’s goal to strategically manage its data to support the university’s ongoing quest for improvement at all levels and programs.

*Jion Liou Yen* is Executive Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning, and *Cathy F. Ayers* is Professor, Communications, at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois.
Missouri State University was founded in 1905 as the Fourth District Normal School. During its early years, the institution’s primary purpose was preparing teachers for the public school systems in the southwest region of Missouri. In 2005 the institution became Missouri State University, reflecting its enrollment of tens of thousands of students, as well as higher admissions standards and increased graduate programs. The Missouri State community includes 22,866 students in the Missouri State system, making it the second-largest university in the state; six academic colleges, a school of agriculture, and a graduate college; almost four thousand faculty and staff members, with 90 percent of full-time ranked faculty members holding the most advanced degree in their field; four thousand students living in university housing; fifteen hundred international students studying on the Springfield campus; and eight-five thousand alumni applying their education around the world.

Program Review at Missouri State University

As have many institutions of higher learning, Missouri State University struggled to establish a meaningful process of program review. For several years, the state Coordinating Board for Higher Education mandated college-by-college review of programs on a five-year cycle for each of the state’s institutions of higher education. The reviews were completed by academic colleges and were helpful to the individual programs and academic colleges, but there was inadequate feedback provided for the campus. A campus-wide program review was concluded in 2004 and a campus committee evaluated all programs simultaneously. A final report was made, including recommendations to improve the process.¹

A more rigorous and systematic process of periodic program review, including external evaluation, began during the 2006–2007 academic year. A primary goal of the 2006 initiative was to provide departments a process to evaluate and improve academic programs, thus allowing “program faculty and all levels of administration to regularly gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of its academic programs,” according to a summary of the program review process, including purpose, components, and continuing nature of program review, 2006–2011, prepared by the current provost, Dr. Frank Einhellig, in September 2010.² It should be noted that one of the suggestions from the Higher Learning Commission’s 2005 site visit was to improve the university’s process of program review.³

Policy

As outlined in the 2010 summary, the program review process comprises three integrated components: strategic planning, annual review, and periodic extensive self-study and external review. The initial policy documents used in the process were developed in 2005, with a revision in late 2007.⁴ The policy statement includes a timeline, expected products, suggestions for selecting the external reviewer or reviewers, instructions for the reviewer, and resulting actions by administrators and the academic
department. Each program, which is many times a department, has as a part of its strategic plan a mission statement; an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (often termed “SWOT analysis”); an assessment plan; current priorities and objectives; and an action plan. The annual reviews address each component of the program’s strategic plan. The periodic extensive self-study reviews annual reports and other available data. Critical to the self-study is the involvement of all faculty members in the program. The external reviewer receives specific instructions from the dean and provost and meets with students, faculty, alumni, and administrators while on campus. An exit interview is held with the dean, department head, faculty and a representative from the provost’s office to ensure “360-degree” communication. The final report from the external reviewer is submitted to the dean, and the dean sends the report to the department and provost’s office. The department then has time to respond and to write an action plan based on the recommendations by the external reviewer. These components, with their relationships, are shown in the figure.

Elements and sequence of events for academic program review. Solid arrows and boxes show production of relevant documents. Broken arrows show supporting information flow. Source: Einhellig 2010.

**Review Cycle**

Implicit in program review is that it is a continuous process with periodic self-studies and external reviews on a five- to seven-year cycle. Exceptions to this cycle may be made for accredited programs, which often maintain a different periodicity.⁵

**Assessment of the Process**

The 2010–2011 academic year brought about the final round of program reviews based on the five-year cycle. Provost Einhellig requested that an evaluation be conducted of the program-review process.
Continuation of program review was a given, and the evaluation was to determine if any modifications were needed to make it more beneficial to program faculty members, deans, and the central administration. Drs. Kathy Coy and William Cheek began the evaluation in late September 2011 and were able to close the loop by conducting an extensive evaluation of program review. The three-month evaluation (September–December 2011) of the program-review process consisted of three parts:

- Evaluation of current program-review guidelines, instructions, timelines, and schedules.
- Content analysis of all program review documents on file in the Office of Institutional Research. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine what topics were covered in the program review materials and to what extent program review followed published guidelines.
- In-depth interviews were conducted with all academic deans and fourteen department heads; at least one department head from each college was interviewed. Most of these were one-on-one interviews. Because of the mix of accredited and nonaccredited programs, all department heads in the College of Health and Human Services were interviewed in a group setting.

Content analysis revealed that the vast majority of completed program reviews included the six elements—mission statement, SWOT analysis, educational outcomes (student learning outcomes), priorities and objectives, action plan, and annual reviews. Most often missing was review of educational outcomes (student learning outcomes). Some did not include “SWOT Analysis,” but those were primarily programs that relied on accreditation as their program review and where the accrediting body may use another term, such as “environmental scan.” “Annual reviews” have consistently been reported, with some departments reporting as many as five. In only one instance did a department request postponement of program review.

In-depth interviews with deans and department heads provided valuable information. Following is a summary of the interview responses:

- Program review is a positive activity that has the potential to foster program improvement when all or the majority of program faculty members are actively involved. The self-study was thought by many to be the most beneficial element.
- More emphasis on student learning outcomes needs to be incorporated into program review.
- Program review guidelines need to be revised but constant change of data requirements should be kept to a minimum. (Guidelines were interpreted to emphasize data gathering early in the first cycle.) In addition,
  - There is a need to better incorporate graduate programs into program reviews. The first cycle emphasized undergraduate education in many of the reviews.
  - Guidelines should not be rigid and should allow appropriate format flexibility.
  - There is a need to better connect program review with the university’s long-range plan.
- External reviewers (consultants) need to be more candid in providing constructive feedback that provides suggestions that are actionable. It was reported that often consultants were more candid during exit interviews than in the written reports. In addition, reviewers seem to have trouble understanding the university’s public affairs mission and thus cannot or do not comment adequately in the reviews.
Accrediting agencies do not always ask the important questions needed in a program review.

Examples of “best practices” program reviews should be made available to other departments. Faculty members should have a better understanding of the value of program review to department, college, and university.

It was suggested that the five-year cycle is not always the most appropriate. A seven-year (or longer) cycle is allowed when accreditation is used.

**Recommendations**

A draft set of recommendations was presented to academic deans before changes were initiated in the program review by the provost. The following were those final recommendations that were implemented in current program review policy:

- Give greater consideration in picking external reviewer or consultant. Greater lead time may be necessary. Suggestions for selecting external reviewer should be provided.
- Review current program review guidelines and make appropriate revisions.
  - Determine what is important and ask those questions in the guidelines.
  - Provide a list of minimum requirements (topics, elements) and require that any not covered in accreditation documents be prepared separately.
  - There should be greater emphasis on student learning outcomes, and student learning outcomes should have greater emphasis in guidelines.
- Data are available and there should be less emphasis on data reporting and more emphasis on analysis and trends.
- There should be greater mention and emphasis on graduate programs, whether evaluated separately or integrated in common program review.
- There should be a greater connection between program review and the university’s long-range plan.
- Change from the current five-year to a seven-year cycle. A seven-year cycle would allow time to assess the impact of actions taken.

**Changes to the Process**

Program review is an evolving process, and the changes made after the 2011 evaluation were a continuation of this process. Few major changes were made. Instead, the changes were seen as making the process more beneficial to the academic units. Major changes included the following:

- Programs were allowed to move from the current five-year to a seven-year cycle. Many accrediting agencies, for example, are on a seven- to ten-year cycle, and, because we allow accreditation review for program review, it was thought logical to move to the longer cycle. More important, however, the longer cycle allows for better assessment of improvements resulting from the self-study and external review.
- More explicit guidelines were developed for selection of the external reviewer. In addition, greater lead time in the selection process was implemented.
• Guidelines were made more explicit and data sources for all questions were identified. Greater emphasis was placed on analysis and trends while less emphasis was placed on simple data listing.

• Although programs may use program accreditation in place of program review, programs must prepare a document for both internal and external review that addresses all topics in the program review guidelines.

• Inclusion of graduate programs in the program review is a requirement. In some instances, graduate programs are reviewed by a separate consultant.

• The requirement that student learning outcomes be articulated and that a comprehensive assessment plan with results and actions be included in the review was made more explicit.

• The connection between the program review and the university’s long-range plan was made more explicit.

Conclusions

One of the outcomes of this process was to develop a Web site that catalogs all program review activities along with progress reports in a way that makes sense and keeps the campus community informed. This part of the Web site is password protected, but all faculty members and staff members have access to the site.

The evaluation of the university’s academic program review proved to be a beneficial activity. It not only provided an opportunity to improve the process, it also confirmed that it was a continuing form of assessment that would continue to be taken seriously. One of the most important findings was that program administrators universally considered it to be beneficial, not a dreaded activity.

Notes

1. See www.missouristate.edu/assets/programReview/pr_ProgramReviewHistory.pdf.
2. The report is available at www.missouristate.edu/provost/ProgramReview/process.htm.
4. See www.missouristate.edu/assets/programReview/ProgramReviewInstructions.pdf.
5. A list of accredited programs with dates for campus visits may be found at www.missouristate.edu/provost/ProgramReview/process.htm.

REFERENCE


Frank Einhellig is Provost, Tamera Jahnke is Dean, College of Natural and Applied Sciences, and William Cheek is Professor Emeritus at Missouri State University in Springfield.
In March 2009 Jefferson College underwent a comprehensive visit by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The resulting report indicated that a Core Component within Criterion One, Mission and Integrity, needed organizational attention: “Although there is a commitment to and valuing of collaborative processes in the College, there is evidence that the number and size of committees (at this point numbering at least 21 and continuing to proliferate) do not contribute to governance that is efficient and effective as well as appropriately consultative. Both administrators and faculty concur that the structure needs review, reorganization, and consolidation” (“Report of a Comprehensive Visit, 2009,” Assurance section, p. 9).

The evaluation of the committee structure by colleagues within the college during the self-study process and the validation of this challenge from HLC consultant-evaluators served as the springboard and motivation (and inspiration) for a collaborative and campus-wide initiative: institutional committee restructuring. This was not a revision, but a total reorganization of the institutional committee structure that has changed the way that the college approaches developing new initiatives, sustaining existing initiatives, solving problems, enhancing strategic planning, collaborating, and communicating. This paper summarizes the process for this institution-wide change and the goals that the college is striving to achieve.

To tear down and rebuild a structure in any organization presents many challenges. How does a college implode the existing institutional committee structure it has inhabited for more than forty years, rebuild on the same site, and avoid casualties? At Jefferson College, administrators, faculty members, and student services staff members came together with the following goals while dismantling and rebuilding the institutional committee structure: (1) support governance; (2) improve effectiveness of institutional committees; (3) improve campus-wide communication; (4) support the ongoing strategic planning process; and, (5) support the mission of the college.

The overarching challenge was to develop a process that collaboratively accomplishes a large-scale institution-wide change. Members of an Institutional Committee Restructuring Task Force were appointed by the president and given the following charge:

Propose an institutional committee structure that supports effective shared governance, collegial collaboration, and open communication. Propose functions, membership, and purpose of each proposed committee. Consider the following: (1) the strengths and weaknesses of the current committees and committee structure; (2) the Mission, Values, and Vision of the College; (3) support for the Strategic Long Range Plan; (4) the Higher Learning Commission Assurance Report; and (5) feedback from constituent groups.

(President’s memo, September 2010)

The Task Force convened regularly for a year and a half, focusing on this charge.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership
Institutional Committee Restructuring:
A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning

The committee’s first tasks were to discuss and determine several processes: the roles of Task Force members, the approaches to consider in the imploding and rebuilding, the vehicles for sharing information and soliciting constituent feedback along the way, and the intermediate timelines and the final proposal deadline (which the committee ultimately missed by one semester—not bad for higher education). It was agreed that meetings would be announced and open so constituents were welcome to attend and take part in any of the processes, and, in some instances, present cases for their committees or the functions of their committees. It was also determined that the Task Force would make presentations to constituent groups at their meetings once some progress was made on the draft proposal and that, ultimately, campus-wide forums would be conducted to further encourage discussion and solicit feedback.

The next task was to determine how to begin reviewing, researching, and evaluating. The Task Force began by considering several sources: the Board of Trustees’ goals; the college’s policies and procedures and strategic long-range plan; the team report, Assurance section; the self-identified challenges and next steps in the College’s 2009 self-study; and the current committee structure. To evaluate the existing institutional committee structure, the Task Force developed a survey to inquire about the charges, functions, work, and roles of each committee and perceived effectiveness. These surveys were distributed to all chairs and members of the existing institutional committees. This survey also served as a means to begin the college-wide discussion and to share the reasons for the need to restructure. Included in the analyses of survey responses was a comparison of the college’s published materials regarding the existing committees, which revealed several interesting discrepancies. Concurrently, in an effort to learn from the work of others, Task Force members conducted external research to determine how several other colleges’ committees were organized and the purposes, charges, and goals of their committees. As research was conducted and analyzed, discussion took place within the Task Force meetings as well as with constituent groups and with constituents one-on-one, as needed.

It was determined early in the process that the committee structure proposal needed the foundations of agreed-upon guiding principles, a definition of shared governance, a definition of institutional committees, responsibilities of institutional committee chairs, membership, and committee reporting structure. After considerable analyses and discussion, the committee began drafting a proposal, using a template to serve as worksheets to begin the first run at specifying the purpose, charge, membership, communication and resources, reporting structure, and relationship to strategic planning aim(s) of each committee. These templates ultimately served as a means to communicate to constituents details of each of the proposed committees and helped guide the discussions and means for feedback from constituents.

The proposal went through several drafts before the committee released it online and at face-to-face meetings for additional feedback. Task Force members visited a regular meeting of each existing institutional committee to solicit feedback. They also shared the draft proposal at department meetings and administrative cabinet meetings. This resulted in some “courageous conversations,” in response to many thoughtful questions, including, but certainly not limited to, the following:

- How do we differentiate a department function from an institutional committee function (ex. library, marketing)?
- What areas would be better served if they were integrated into committees instead of being stand-alone committees?
• Which committees could be merged to improve collaboration, such as Cultural Council and Global Education?
• How will committees support the ongoing strategic planning process of the college?
• How will information flow?
• How will membership effectively representing constituent groups be achieved?

After considering feedback and after multiple revisions, at the August 2011 Orientation, a draft proposal was presented to faculty members and staff members at forums for feedback, which suggested that the twenty-one committees be abandoned and that the following eleven new committees be developed: Accreditation Committee, Assessment Committee, Council of Institutional Committee Chairs, Cultural Diversity Committee, Curriculum Committee, Employee Support Committee, Environment and Safety Committee, Events and Community Outreach Committee, Strategic Enrollment Management and Retention Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, and Student Learning and Support Committee. Consideration of feedback and tweaking by the Task Force continued throughout the fall semester. Faculty members and staff members were encouraged during the final review period to begin expressing their committee membership preferences to their supervisors, so upon approval by the administration and Board of Trustees, the department chairs and directors could staff the committees—a voluntary process with guidance and encouragement from supervisors.

The final proposal was submitted to the campus December 2011 and to the Board of Trustees in January 2012. Membership was finalized by faculty members and staff members in collaboration with their supervisors after the Board of Trustees’ approval, and committees were directed to meet before the President’s Council meeting in the last week of February 2012. The initial meeting of each institutional committee included a review of the purpose and charge and election of the chair (if not previously appointed). The new institutional committees have been meeting since February 2012 (some meeting in summer as needed). Initial informal feedback has been positive. A survey will be conducted in spring 2013 to evaluate the first year of the new structure.

With rebuilding comes several cultural shifts. Among them, committees have moved from functioning primarily as recommending bodies to functioning as groups who are researching, proposing, and carrying out initiatives in addition to serving as consultative and recommending bodies. Furthermore, to improve engagement and communication, all committee meetings are open and anyone who is interested is welcome to attend. Semester schedules of the monthly meetings are posted online, and minutes are posted online as they are approved. Most committees have appointed ad hoc committees (or subcommittees) to accomplish research and initiatives, which involves others with interest and expertise across the campus; but contrary to the previous structure, all ad hoc committees are chaired by a member of the parent institutional committee and report their work through the parent committee. The goals are to be inclusive while maintaining cohesiveness and accountability. In addition, under the new structure, committee chairs’ expectations are clearly delineated in the proposal, and, to acknowledge the work of college leaders, committee chairs are paid for chairing. To support collaboration and communication, one of the new committees, the Council of Institutional Committee Chairs, serves as the committee where all the chairs come together to share their committees’ discussions and work, to support each other, to identify opportunities for collaboration as well as any overlapping of related initiatives, and so on. These minutes are posted prominently on the intranet each month to communicate a summary of committee work and issues for all constituents to read.
This new institutional committee structure is based on the diverse experience and expertise of many hard-working colleagues who willingly shared their insights and worked collaboratively and consistently to address the concerns expressed in the college's self-study and validated in the team report. The institutional committee structure will be evaluated by constituents annually for two years, beginning in this spring semester, and every five years thereafter. It is the hope of the college, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year, that this new committee structure, with some tweaking along the way, will support an effective foundation for shared governance, collaboration, strategic planning, and effective communication as the College plans for the future.

Mindy Selsor is Vice President of Instruction and Kim Harvey is Director of Admissions and Student Records at Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Missouri.
Chapter 2: Organizational Leadership

Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program

Elizabeth Kline and Pamela Kirst

Sometimes called “road scholars,” adjunct faculty members are teaching professionals who teach courses, often at multiple institutions, often piecing together a living with term contracts paying a lump sum per course, with no guarantee of employment in the next term (Brown 2010). Part-time adjunct faculty members at institutions of higher education are compensated at approximately one-fourth of the amount per course that their full-time counterparts earn (Arana 2009). They are the “highly educated working poor,” earning approximately $12,000 to $24,000 annually by teaching fifteen to twenty-four courses throughout the year (Maisto and Williams 2011).

In 1975, part-time faculty members accounted for 24 percent of all higher education faculty. By 2009, the number had increased to 41.1 percent (American Association of University Professors 2011). These part-time faculty members cost their institutions 80 percent less than their full-time counterparts, especially if no benefits are provided (Bettinger and Long 2010). In community colleges in particular, adjunct faculty members provide approximately half of all instruction (Jacoby 2006). The number of part-time faculty members is growing, and, in light of the tough economic climate, increases in student enrollment, and decreases in state funding, this trend shows no signs of stopping.

Given the increasing numbers of adjunct faculty members, institutions would be well served by devoting time and energy to improving the adjunct faculty experience. Zane State College’s adjunct faculty advancement model, which was designed by a team of full-time faculty members, adjunct faculty members, and staff members, seeks to accomplish that goal. The model was designed to provide for professional development and advancement of adjunct faculty members, including proposed pay raises and a variety of benefits tied to each level achieved. After the model was designed, it was piloted in two different departments that rely heavily on adjuncts. At the completion of the pilot period, participating adjunct faculty members and their supervisors were interviewed utilizing an appreciative approach. (The appreciative approach gives the interviewees a chance to reflect on the positive experiences while working toward a vision for the model; Michael 2005).

Setting the Stage: Zane State College

Zane State College is a two-year college in south-central Ohio, an area with proud Appalachian influences. The college has been in existence for just over forty years. During that time, two name changes—from Muskingum Area Technical Institute to Muskingum Area Technical College early in the school’s existence; from Muskingum Area Technical College to Zane State College much more recently—have marked significant changes in the curriculum and depth the college provides.

Zane State College has traditionally served about sixteen hundred students yearly. Recently that number has increased to almost three thousand. As the series of name changes suggest, the college
has progressed from being a technical-focus college to being a full-service community college. It has two accredited campuses, offers the associate's of arts and associate's of science degrees in addition to a breadth of technical degrees and certificates, and has added degree and certificate programs in response to recent growth in the oil and natural-gas industries in the region. Talented and farsighted leadership has led to national recognition: the college recently was named the top two-year college in the United States for student success by Achieving the Dream; in the Washington Monthly survey in September 2007, it was ranked the ninth-best two-year college in the nation; and it has been named a Great College to Work For, based on employee input collected for two years running by the Chronicle of Higher Education. For this solid change to take place, Zane State College has depended on talented and dedicated adjunct faculty members. As the enrollment grew at the college, need for qualified adjuncts grew apace. In fall 2005, according to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Zane State College employed eighty adjunct faculty members. By fall 2012, the number of adjuncts teaching had soared to 168.

To facilitate the needs, training, development, and maintenance of such a large group of adjunct faculty members, in spring 2010 the college restructured its four dean positions and added the position of adjunct faculty services coordinator. The college also added faculty department chair positions. These full-time faculty leaders are adjunct faculty members’ direct supervisors; they coordinate preparation, mentoring, and evaluation of adjunct faculty members in conjunction with the adjunct services coordinator.

In fall 2010, the adjunct services coordinator, working with an Adjunct Advisory Board composed of administrators, department chairs, and full-time and adjunct faculty members from throughout the college and with the director of Institutional Research and Planning, surveyed adjunct faculty members at the Fall Development Event. The advisory board was exploring the question of whether an advancement program based on performance would be embraced by adjunct faculty members and whether it would be a tool to continuously improve performance and retain outstanding adjuncts. Seventy-four adjuncts responded to the survey. Their responses showed that more than fifty were strongly interested in participating in such a program; that a large majority would like to be able to contract for a full academic year if such a program made that possible; that a majority would be interested in developing learning communities; and that a majority would be interested in mentoring other adjunct faculty members.

The Model

Fueled by this positive response, the Adjunct Advisory Board spent an academic year researching and developing a proposal for adjunct advancement based on performance, sharing the draft with the Academic Council and the President’s Cabinet, and incorporating suggestions and feedback into the final proposal. The goal of the model was to recognize and reward outstanding part-time teaching. The program was designed to be optional: adjunct faculty did not have to take part in order to remain in good standing as employees.

A flowchart illustrating the model is provided (see the figure below). Under the proposed plan, all adjuncts enter the institution at Level 1 and may advance through the model to Level 3. In short, adjuncts have to complete a requisite amount of professional development courses centered on good teaching practices from practical applications (such as how to enter grades) to teaching methods
(classroom management, effective use of technology). In addition, they have to work with an adviser-mentor to implement their learning into their classes, assemble a portfolio with documentation of each accomplishment, and take part in an observation and follow-up conference with the adviser-mentor. Various activities earn points, and a total of fifteen points is required to earn the highest status (Level 3). There are various benefits for each level. Level 2 includes a pay raise, an opportunity to serve on college teams and committees, and additional benefits that are at this time undetermined. Level 3 includes another pay increase, an opportunity to serve as mentor to other adjunct faculty, and a possible annual contract and limited benefits package.

The Pilot

In summer 2011, a pilot program was launched. The two departments that utilize the highest numbers of adjuncts on the Zane State College campuses, Development Education and Educational Paraprofessionals/Early Childhood Education, recruited twenty adjuncts to take part in the program. The adjuncts taking part represented a cross section of Zane State College’s adjunct corps: young professionals building résumés, retired teachers staying involved and “giving back,” professionals teaching in addition to their career-based work, and “career adjuncts.” The intent behind the pilot was to see how the points required for advancement lined up with the experience of long-time adjuncts and how suitable those points were for relatively new adjuncts. Of all of the adjuncts who participated, only one completed the entire model with enough points and courses taught to move to Level 3. She was classified as a career adjunct and had been at the college for many years. In addition, one adjunct completed the paperwork for advancement from Level 1 to Level 2 but did not complete the required classroom observation. None of the other adjuncts who agreed to participate in the pilot program submitted the required paperwork or followed up with their supervisor after the initial start of the program.

After the pilot program was completed, the advisory board evaluated the model by gathering the perspectives of the adjuncts who initially volunteered to participate and the supervisors for the two participating departments. In addition to the review of the paperwork that had been submitted, an attempt was made to interview the two supervisors and all participants of the program utilizing an appreciative approach. The intent was to find out what worked and capitalize on those assets instead of scratching everything and going back to the drawing board to address negative components. The two supervisors agreed to participate in one-on-one hour-long interviews with the representative of the advisory board. Two focus groups were created for interviewing adjunct faculty members. However, only two pilot group members agreed to participate in the focus groups. As such, in lieu of a focus group, an invitation was extended via e-mail for written comments or questions or a one-on-one telephone interview. As of January 2013, only three adjuncts had responded. Not surprisingly, representatives of each of these groups had very different responses to the program.

Lessons Learned

As this paper is intended as supplemental, background information, it is not the intent to provide a detailed account and interpretation of the qualitative data generated to date. However, following is a brief summary of the qualitative data gathered from the review of the pilot. Supervisors pointed to the program’s key assets as the spirit or the intent of the program for enhancing professional development and the desire to reward adjuncts with a vested interest in the mission of the institution to provide
student-centered learning with a personal touch. Adjunct faculty members who were interviewed liked the tiered approach and the potential for recognition and reward. These strengths of the model need to be streamlined, easily understandable, and accentuated. The main question of the pilot program was whether or not a performance-based advancement plan was a universal answer for all of Zane State College’s adjuncts. The answer is a firm “no.” While the performance-based plan is a logical approach for those who can be considered “career adjuncts,” it does not necessarily meet the needs of active or retired professionals. Its benefit to new professionals launching careers needs to be explored. At the same time, the value of such a plan for a large number of adjunct faculty members is clearly recognized. In addition, the implementation of this pilot has highlighted the need for all of Zane State College’s adjunct faculty members to have access to quality professional development and individualized mentoring.

Thus, while the results of the pilot year may not have been exactly what the planning group anticipated, the rich data produced have provided fertile ground for the college to continue to expand its goals for adjunct development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2 Benefits</th>
<th>Level 3 Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The adjunct will receive a pay increase.</td>
<td>• The adjunct will receive a pay increase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The adjunct will be able to serve on college teams and committees.</td>
<td>• The adjunct maintains all benefits available to Level 2 adjuncts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The adjunct will be able to apply for additional benefits as determined.</td>
<td>• The adjunct may serve as a mentor to other adjunct faculty members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complete the “Worksheet for Adjunct Advancement” by earning 15 points, as defined by the “Adjunct Advancement Criteria” worksheet.</td>
<td>• The adjunct may be considered for an annual contract and be eligible for a limited benefits package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Submit a portfolio of teaching and service accomplishments as evidence of points.</td>
<td>• Gather 2 recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gather 2 recommendations.</td>
<td>• The adjunct must complete the requirements for promotion to Level 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once the requirements are met, the adjunct submits all required material to Adjunct Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eligible adjuncts apply for promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjunct advances to Level 3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


_Elizabeth Kline is Instructor of Biology and Environmental Technologies and Pamela Kirst is Adjunct Faculty Coordinator at Zane State College in Zanesville, Ohio._
Chapter 3:
Assessment of Student Learning
Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to implement meaningful assessment that is aligned with your institution’s mission and results in action being taken to improve the institution. None of the agents we previously sent on this mission have returned and are presumed lost somewhere in academia. We believe you can be successful if you carefully follow the guidance provided in this dossier.

Intelligence sources report that the Higher Learning Commission’s third fundamental question on assessment of student learning asks, “In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?” This question challenges institutions to move assessment beyond a process of simply collecting data on student learning to one of continuous reflection, discussion, and action. Be aware that there are many barriers to meeting this challenge—low engagement of faculty members, poorly designed assessment tools or assessment procedures, lack of communication of assessment results across campus, and insufficient institutional structures to implement change. Fundamentally, many barriers that prohibit institutions from fully using evidence of student learning to effect change result from a mismatch between the purpose and design of the assessment process and the mission of the institution. Aligning the purpose of assessment with the mission of the institution will increase the likelihood that assessment will integrate with the campus culture and result in the use of assessment evidence to improve student learning.

This mission is divided into three parts: know thyself, intentionally design the assessment process, and be prepared for the unexpected. Many graduate students have lost their assistantships gathering the information for this mission. We hope you use it well.

**Part 1: Know Thyself**

The first step is to fully understand your institution’s mission. (Note that in larger institutions the steps suggested here may also be applied at the college or program level.) In some ways this may be the most difficult aspect of your task, because, if your campus is anything like ours, it often feels like it fits Clark Kerr’s description of the university as “a series of individual faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking” (1964/2008, 50).

A good place to begin is with the mission statement itself. A well-written mission statement will make clear what the institution is about and what it seeks to accomplish. However, mission statements may be overly broad or ambiguous. It is also likely that the stated mission is quite different from the lived mission. In these cases, it may be helpful to seek answers to the following questions:

- What students does the institution typically serve? Are they of traditional age? What are their background characteristics and level of academic preparation, and what resources and supports are available to them?
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission

- What are the goals and aspirations of the students served by the institution? What do they hope to learn or achieve?
- What do most of the students do when they graduate?
- What learning goals has the institution set forth for its students? What learning goals have the degree programs identified for their students?
- What teaching techniques are most common? Do instructors encourage discussion during class, team projects, or presentations, or do instructors tend to use multiple-choice exams and lectures? What kinds of data are meaningful to faculty members—quantitative reports with lots of data analysis or case studies and narratives?
- Who is interested in the success of the institution’s students? Does the institution prepare reports for a governing board, for a corporate board, or for the State Department of Education? Is there an advisory board made up of industry representatives who hire a large number of the institution’s graduates, or is there a hospital or school where many graduates seek employment?

Part 2: Intentionally Design the Assessment Process

Assessment processes are often based on current fads or efforts to emulate some gold-standard model at another institution. Instead, institutions should carefully consider each step of the assessment cycle and identify assessment approaches that match the institution’s mission and context. The assessment cycle broadly consists of identifying assessment goals, gathering evidence, analyzing results, and making recommendations. Aligning each aspect of this cycle to the mission of your institution increases the likelihood that relevant stakeholders will use assessment findings. Aligning these processes to valued institutional objectives may also ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to support assessment efforts. The questions listed below may assist practitioners in aligning assessment projects with an institution’s mission at each step in the assessment cycle.

Identifying Assessment Goals and Purposes
- What is the goal of this assessment project?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders?
- Does this assessment project flow naturally from the institution’s mission?
- Will the results of this assessment project provide information that will help determine the extent to which the institution’s mission is being met?

Specifying the Form of Learning to Be Assessed
- Is the institution concerned with learning inputs (i.e., supports necessary to achieve objectives), processes (how learning occurs), or outcomes (i.e., effects of participation)?
- Are the learning objectives in this project pertinent to the goals of the institution and to students’ goals?
- Are these learning objectives being assessed because they are easy to assess or because they are important to the institution?
- Have students had the opportunity to achieve the learning goals being assessed in this project?
Selecting the Assessment Tools

- What opportunities already exist at the institution for students to demonstrate they have achieved these learning objectives?
- How well does the assessment tool match the objectives to be assessed? Does this tool match how students typically experience this objective at the institution?
- Will stakeholders find the results from this assessment tool meaningful?
- Do the score reports available for this assessment tool provide enough information for accurately reporting students’ level of achievement of the learning objectives?
- Is this assessment tool similar in format to assessments used in classes at this institution?
- Will student motivation be an issue? If so, what steps are being taken to ensure an appropriate response rate and reasonable effort on the assessment tool?
- If the institution decides to construct its own test, is it willing to allocate the resources necessary to develop this instrument before beginning the assessment project?
- If the institution uses an existing tool, what reliability and validity evidence exists? Have others used this tool in a similar way?

Plan for Using and Sharing the Results

- How will the institution share and use results from this assessment project?
- Who, both internally and externally, is interested in the results from this assessment project? Who should be interested? How might these individuals and groups be involved early in the assessment project?
- How might the results be used to inform changes on campus to improve the extent to which the institution’s mission is being achieved?

Examples from Others Who Have Accepted This Mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission and Context</th>
<th>Poorly Aligned Assessment</th>
<th>Well-Aligned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large, research-extensive institution that prepares students to be critical thinkers and leaders who help solve complex problems in the state. Faculty members are highly committed to this mission and include many assignments on this topic in their classes.</td>
<td>Standardized test of a small sample of seniors. Test measures critical thinking in a business context. Students are not motivated to perform well on the standardized test. Results are posted on a website.</td>
<td>Large sample of student papers and projects relevant to the topic collected from existing courses. Papers and projects are scored using a rubric developed by a team of faculty members at the institution. A task force with representatives from across campus guides the process and develops plans for sharing and discussing the results.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission

Assessment of Professional Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission and Context</th>
<th>Poorly Aligned Assessment</th>
<th>Well-Aligned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A small professional school prepares students for nursing and other health professions. The school works closely with a local hospital and emphasizes the health concerns of underserved populations.</td>
<td>Students complete a generic survey on nursing attitudes. Results are entered into students’ academic records and shared with advisors.</td>
<td>Practicum supervisors at the hospital provide written progress reports on students’ interaction with and knowledge of the health concerns of patients from the local community. An advisory board, made up of representatives from the hospital and the school, examines aggregate results across students and discusses implications and possible improvements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-licensure Engineering College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission and Context</th>
<th>Poorly Aligned Assessment</th>
<th>Well-Aligned Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A medium-sized college prepares students to become fully licensed engineers. One critical step in earning engineering licensure is successfully passing the fundamentals of engineering exam.</td>
<td>Students’ grades from mathematics and engineering courses are collected and aggregated. Results are summarized and shared with the Mathematics department and the dean of Engineering.</td>
<td>As part of a capstone course in the senior year, students are required to complete a practice version of the fundamentals of engineering exam. Scores are disaggregated by content area and are shared with the corresponding departments and instructors. The curriculum committee meets each May to examine results and discuss curricular changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 3: Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Be forewarned that your work in assessment may be hazardous, and it is best if you are fully prepared for the dangers that lie ahead. Even assessing a single institutional learning objective can be a daunting task. Therefore, it is important, particularly in the beginning, to keep things simple. Although it is recommended that agents keep their assessment practices simple, beware the dangers of naiveté. In a warning about scientific practices, Abraham Maslow (1966, 15) writes, “I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.” It is necessary to avoid this temptation at all costs. Most institutions have a wide range of objectives that may be difficult to assess. Attempting to assess all of these objectives with a single assessment project or tool is, to be perfectly candid, unfeasible and could result in global thermonuclear war (or worse, the HLC may require you to submit a follow-up report on assessment). Relying on a single assessment tool is dangerous, and it is rarely, if ever, justified to implement radical institutional changes based on the results of a single piece of evidence. It is therefore critical to “attack” each objective that is to be assessed from various vantage points while using multiple tools. Ideally, agents should base judgments on a triangulation of evidence from multiple sources, methodologies, and lenses all while keeping a careful eye on the mission and context of the institution.
Final Thoughts

Educational assessment can be a messy task, and it can be particularly challenging to align the practice of assessment with the mission and context of your institution. We hope that the guidance provided in this paper will give our agents the background needed to undertake this important work. Finally, before going into the field, you need to include the following items in your attaché case or hidden in your emergency assessment tool belt:

- A high tolerance for ambiguity
- Persistence in the face of adversity
- A skeptical, yet open attitude
- A willingness to be led by evidence, even if it is counterintuitive
- A willingness to be honest with yourself and others
- A willingness to jump off a cliff (figurative or literal) and try something new
- An umbrella to help you weather any storms and a bottle opener to celebrate small successes

As always, should you or any member of your team be caught or unaccredited, the authors of this paper will disavow any knowledge of your actions. This PDF will self-destruct in 5...4...3...

REFERENCES


Jeremy D. Penn is Director, University Assessment and Testing, and John Hathcoat is Data Analyst at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.
The American Association of Colleges and Universities has identified capstones as a high-impact practice because of research demonstrating their strong correlation with student success in college (Kuh 2008, 14). As Kuh notes, capstones are linked with deep learning, resulting in gains that are general, personal, and practical (15). They are also correlated with educational practices known to enhance student success, including increasing level of academic challenge, using active and collaborative learning, increasing student–faculty interaction, and providing a supportive campus environment (15). The benefits of capstones as a venue for assessment are equally high. Situated near the time of graduation, they allow assessment of the learning that matters most: the learning students retain and can use at the time of graduation.

It is little wonder, then that capstones have gained in popularity across higher education. However, they are most frequently viewed as “owned by” the discipline or major. In this essay, we describe opportunities for maximizing capstone value by using disciplinary capstones as sites for assessment of learning outcomes associated with general education.

Disciplinary Capstones and General Education

Although capstones are often associated with majors and programs of study, their potential as a venue for assessment of general education outcomes is significant. At many institutions, students typically take general education courses during the first two years of study, or, increasingly, take them elsewhere and transfer the credits to the degree-granting institution. This creates challenges for assessing general education outcomes. And yet, many common general education outcomes (e.g., written and oral communication, critical or analytical thinking, information literacy) align with typical program outcomes. Furthermore, regardless of whether these outcomes are explicitly aligned with outcomes for the major, mastery of general education outcomes is often demonstrated in the kinds of culminating projects students complete during capstones. Because of this, student work completed in capstones, even discipline-specific capstones, can be evaluated to determine whether general education learning outcomes are demonstrated at an appropriate level and with an appropriate degree of consistency.

The great advantage of course-level assessments in disciplinary capstones is that they are authentic for both students and faculty. A student’s work is integrated into the class and is the basis for much of the course grade. Based on those assignments, faculty members are able to directly evaluate the extent to which students achieved designated outcomes. Such assessment can be carried out using one of two basic approaches.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones

The Course-Level Assessment Approach

In designing strategies for course-level assessments within disciplinary capstones, faculty might consider three questions:

1. How much autonomy will faculty have to design and score the student work?
2. Although assessment serves multiple purposes, is the primary aim of this project to improve student learning in individual courses or to assemble a coherent campus-wide portrait of student learning?
3. How and when will the assessments be completed and collected, and what will happen to the assessment results?

On the one hand, maximizing faculty autonomy in creating and evaluating student learning is likely to maximize faculty support. This may be particularly true on large, complex campuses with a wide variety of majors. On the other hand, the greater the degree of faculty autonomy, the less likely that the individual course results can be aggregated to serve as the basis for drawing meaningful conclusions about student learning across campus.

If the primary purpose is to promote rich formative assessment of student learning and improvements in particular courses, then maximizing faculty autonomy seems preferable. However, if the major aim of the assessment process is to create a comprehensive institutional portrait of student learning, then more readily comparable assignments and evaluations will simplify the process.

Collecting assessment results from faculty members might seem to be the simplest task, but they have a number of different professional obligations and may need encouragement (or incentives, positive or negative) to spend the extra time required to conscientiously assess student work and to submit conclusions in a timely manner. Ensuring anonymity of both students and faculty may be particularly important for enhancing widespread participation in the collection process. A person or committee will need to be responsible for monitoring the process and ensuring that discussions occur to improve learning and thus “close the loop.”

Given these three questions to guide strategies for assessing general education outcomes in disciplinary courses, how might a course-level general education assessment process be implemented? The University of North Dakota in Grand Forks employs a course validation process connected to the process for approving general education courses. Faculty members select particular class assignments that address the general education outcomes associated with their capstones. They assess those assignments, analyze the results, and submit samples of student work and their analyses of student learning, on a standardized form, to the general education committee. The general education committee reviews the faculty analyses and samples to complete the validation process, provide feedback to the individual faculty member, and arrive at conclusions about learning in general education supported by the assessment information submitted.

North Dakota State University in Fargo relies on an embedded process in which assessment results from capstone experiences are reported as part of the regular department assessment reports to the assessment committee. Because the campus focus is on assessment for program improvement, there is considerable variation not only in how results are reported, but also in how regularly they are reported since some departments review each of their courses only once every three years. This system
maximizes faculty ownership of the process, but makes campus-wide comparisons difficult. As one of the Higher Learning Commission’s Pathways Pioneer institutions, the campus decided to gather a more comparative picture of student learning in capstones by asking departments to compare their capstones with the applied learning benchmarks in the Degree Qualifications Profile. This represents a step forward in consistency of information reported, and findings from the process will be available soon. It also benchmarks general education outcomes at North Dakota State University with national standards, a step consistent with some current trends in outcomes assessment.

The Cross-Campus Scoring Approach

Cross-campus scoring of general education outcomes using artifacts from capstones can offer institutions a strategy to accommodate both professional programs and the general education curriculum. This approach is especially useful for institutions in which general education outcomes are purposefully embedded in discipline-specific programs or for institutions at which a substantial number of professional programs, many with prescriptive accreditation standards, create a need to limit the proliferation of credit-hour requirements by aligning general and professional education.

There are a number of challenges and advantages to choosing this approach.

First and foremost, faculty members and administrators at an institution must determine how to manage the logistics of collecting and assessing student work products from classes across campus. At the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana, artifacts that illustrate student attainment of outcomes are gathered from all capstone courses through the Office of Institutional Research. These artifacts are organized for scoring, using faculty-generated rubrics, in a weeklong assessment process. The scoring is conducted by a committee of faculty members who have applied to take part in this activity and are compensated for the week of work. Thus, the cross-campus scoring requires considerable time and energy (collecting artifacts, organizing them, scoring). In addition, the institution spends financial capital in compensating faculty for the scoring. Dedicating these resources to the assessment process represents a significant decision on a campus, but making that resource commitment sends a clear signal about the importance faculty and administrators place on the general education program and the campus-wide assessment process.

There are other benefits to this scoring process as well. For example, at the University of Saint Francis, the scoring process, now in place for five years, has become a significant locus of professional development. Faculty members from across disciplines discuss what the general education outcomes mean to them, how they design assignments to address those outcomes, and how the outcomes are realized in their curricula. Faculty members from both liberal arts and professional areas take part in meaningful and rich conversations that help the institution improve the general education program and student attainment of general education outcomes.

The process thus engages faculty and administration, while also yielding results that are later communicated to the entire faculty during presentations at various events. They are shared with the president’s leadership team and appropriate faculty committees. In communicating the results to various stakeholders and constituencies, the notion is reinforced that general education and the professional curricula are not in opposition, but rather are working in alignment for the benefit of students.

University of North Dakota also employs the strategy of cross-campus scoring as a complement to the course-specific scoring process. Work products from various courses are submitted and scored in an
annual end-of-year process, with a focus on different general education outcomes each year until the cycle is completed. At University of North Dakota, faculty members are not paid for their participation in scoring, which occurs during a single workshop rather than across an entire week. As at University of Saint Francis, University of North Dakota results are shared widely. However, the primary use of data is to inform faculty conversations that occur during and after the scoring session with the aim of generating information that faculty members can use to rethink decisions about courses within their own department. Implications go beyond the capstones: faculty members recognize, for example, that concerns about higher order critical thinking skills uncovered through the scoring process reflect a need to consider how students are provided with opportunities to practice those higher order thinking skills across an entire course of study.

Lessons for Assessment Planning

Faculties at most institutions will want to incorporate both direct and indirect assessments of general education outcomes, and using disciplinary capstones as a focus for these assessment efforts can be an entirely viable strategy. Students in capstone classes can be asked to complete surveys indicating their perceptions regarding their attainment of the various general education outcomes. If capstones are required for all students, survey findings can be aggregated to provide a comprehensive portrait of students’ own perceptions regarding their general education learning.

Furthermore, most institutions will find that many of their general education goals are in fact very closely aligned with outcomes valued within the disciplines. Because of that alignment, capstone work products can easily be assessed, through scoring conducted either within individual capstones or via a cross-campus, end-of-year process. Even learning outcomes like ethics, usually regarded as difficult to assess, may be scored through artifacts from capstones if there is campus-wide consensus on the importance and the need to link the outcome to each of the various programs of study.

Moreover, the benefits of linking general education with majors and professional programs can be mutual. Students may be more inclined to value the general education component of their education when they see its value in the context of their own majors. And learning in the major can be strengthened by purposefulness in building on and reinforcing learning that occurred in general education courses, often taken in earlier years. Stakeholders on campus and beyond will recognize assessment findings as most interesting when they reflect outcomes achieved by the time of graduation and when learning outcomes are viewed as a cohesive whole rather than as discrete silos of learning.

REFERENCE


Joan Hawthorne is Director of Assessment and Regional Accreditation at University of North Dakota in Grand Forks; Larry R. Peterson is Director of Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Advising at North Dakota State University in Fargo; and Matt J. Smith is Dean of School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana.
In September 2010, under the sponsorship of the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS), faculty from nine institutions (two community colleges, a private professional college, three church-affiliated colleges or universities, and three public research-oriented universities) joined together to identify, document, and evaluate ways of assessing student learning at the about-to-graduate levels of liberal learning. Assisted by a Lumina Foundation Grant, they focused on authentic assessment of graduates’ best work in liberal education for the associate’s degree in arts or science (AA/AS) and the bachelor of arts degree (BA). The guiding question was “What assessments are worthy of our missions?”

This paper highlights three themes that emerged from this two-year project: (1) the necessity of developing faculty ownership of assessment activities, particularly developing high-quality liberal education assessments for community college students to better enable them to transfer to baccalaureate institutions; (2) assessment in general education capstones closely linked to institutional mission; and (3) assessment in capstones embedding liberal education outcomes in professional programs.

### Ensuring Faculty Ownership in General Education

Representatives from three diverse institutions—Portland State University, Miami Dade College, and Vincennes University—came together initially because of a common interest in community college assessment and how it might reveal student preparation for both work and transfer; the group soon focused on the issue of faculty ownership of an assessment process that is genuinely useful and authentically meaningful. Group members recognized that for assessment to fulfill the essential needs of higher education, the accreditors, the administration, and, most important, faculty instruction of the students, faculty had to experience both ownership in assessment and a significant investment in the process. Three conditions are required to achieve faculty ownership and investment. Faculty must (1) engage as classroom teachers, (2) be supported and supportive at the departmental, programmatic, and institutional level, and (3) embrace an ongoing conversation beyond the data. Case studies of the three institutions describe each of the necessary conditions, although all three studies reflect elements of each condition.

At Portland State University, Oregon’s largest and most diverse public university with a total enrollment of thirty thousand students, the assessment leadership has had to face the challenge of conducting meaningful and useful assessment in a senior capstone course in which students work in interdisciplinary teams to conduct real-world community projects. Ensuring faculty engagement is crucial to capstone success, and the process begins with the Capstone Director inviting faculty members who are prepared to meet the challenges of course design and instruction. Seasoned faculty members mentor new faculty members, one-on-one, supporting them through the development
process. Twice-yearly Capstone Retreats and monthly brownbag lunches offer faculty opportunities to support each other. A “small-group instructional diagnosis” activity is used to provide midterm formative feedback to faculty members, and a summative, end-of-term e-portfolio provides valuable information on both the course and program levels that stimulates pedagogical discussions and leads to the engagement of new faculty members in the process.

Miami Dade College’s case presents a picture of faculty being supported and supportive at the department, program, and institutional level. Miami Dade College faces the challenge of assessing the learning of more than 170,000 students taught by more than 800 full-time faculty and more than 1,800 adjuncts. The institution is committed to faculty ownership of the process and has given faculty members control of the process in a variety of ways, including two thirty-member assessment committees comprising mostly faculty who serve as liaisons, peer facilitators, and ambassadors of their learning outcomes initiatives. The institution has multiple full-time assessment administrators who offer professional development in face-to-face, online, and webinar formats. Assessment of the professional development process led to a Peer Facilitation Workshop, and the Campus Dialogue is a formal venue for faculty to share ideas on assessment and learning strategies. In addition, the institution has committed to assessment by making it a part of strategic planning and encouraging faculty and staff to participate in nationwide assessment conversations.

Vincennes University is a comprehensive, two-year college with an enrollment of 6,500 students on three campuses; curriculum and assessment decisions generally originate with faculty members from the campuses working jointly. The Vincennes University English Department story describes the importance of steering the assessment discussion away from external demands for results and making it an internal, collaborative dialogue about what faculty members value in terms of student learning. Re-envisioning assessment began with a fundamental review and discussion of faculty values for student learning, reflected in student artifacts. The dialogues about common composition values helped faculty members recognize a value in common literature outcomes, and they saw the importance of sharing ideas on how best to achieve liberal learning and prepare students for transfer using a common synthesis assignment. The dialogues shifted from how to collect data to how the rubric should be developed to define the desired student learning while leaving faculty members room for creativity in their assignments. The English faculty have succeeded in accepting that learning is a messy process that requires risk and works best when faculty members find ways to collaborate on student learning and support each other through the process.

For many faculty members and staff members, assessment remains an external mandate for coldly impersonal, data-driven evidence of student success. The stories of Portland State, Miami Dade College, and Vincennes represent a growing number of higher education institutions and their personnel who see assessment as a collaborative dialogue about student learning, whatever the outcome, and about the ways both instruction and learning can be improved. At these institutions, assessment is treated as an institutionally supported, essential component of the academic process, one that moves the conversation about assessment away from discussions of an imposed duty, perfunctorily performed, to a dialogue and activities that increase the intentionality of instruction.

General Education Capstones

Saint Joseph’s College in Rensselaer, Indiana, and St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas, are private, Catholic, liberal arts institutions that conduct senior-level assessment in a general education capstone
course. Saint Joseph’s College serves approximately 1,100 undergraduates. St. Edward’s University is a master’s-granting institution located in Austin, Texas, which serves more than 5,300 students, more than 3,600 of whom are traditional undergraduates. For both institutions, a four-year general education curriculum of required, interdisciplinary, core courses serves as a pathway to the capstone.

Institutional mission and an emphasis on intellectual skills designed to develop the student as a whole person and lifelong learner are essential to both capstones. The capstones of St. Edward’s University and Saint Joseph’s College evaluate students’ written and oral communication skills, information literacy and research skills, moral reasoning and value formation, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary and synthesizing skills. Both institutions also emphasize an international perspective, encourage students to attend to the history and current controversies of the world, and assist students in considering how they can assume leadership roles in transforming it. Both institutions utilize common rubrics to ensure these mission-derived skills are assessed similarly in all capstone courses. Further, faculty members at both institutions regularly participate in norming exercises to promote similar usage of the rubrics and increase the accuracy of the data collected.

The specifics of each institution’s capstones differ, as each is aligned with its own institutional mission. A two-part capstone arrangement at Saint Joseph’s College is designed to embody the integrative and interdisciplinary commitments of the core curriculum. In the fall of the senior year, students craft statements of their fundamental beliefs about the world, other people, and God, while also identifying the fundamental values to which they intend to appeal to make decisions now and later in life. The following semester, students research a contemporary issue, which is often linked to their major, and present orally and in writing the stand they take on the issue, a stand guided by the previous semester’s manifesto.

In the traditional undergraduate capstone at St. Edward’s University, students investigate a current, controversial, policy-based social issue. Students thoroughly research the controversy, analyze both the argumentation and moral reasoning of the stakeholders involved, and propose a solution. They interview two people with expertise related to the controversy and conduct a civic engagement activity. Students present the results of the research in written form, as well as in two formal oral presentations.

The primary strength of the general education capstone course at both institutions is that it is mission-driven. The capstone course provides an opportunity both to deliver the mission and, at the same time, to assess that delivery. A second strength of both Saint Joseph’s College’s and St. Edward’s University’s capstones is highlighted in the Pathway ➞ Community ➞ Compass structure that both institutions share. There is a distinct core curriculum pathway, guided by a capstone compass that all students follow, and this common educational program builds community. With common goals and shared experiences, both students and faculty are able to form a true collegio, and the institutions thus offer truly signature forms of undergraduate education. For example, at Saint Joseph’s College, students are expected to make an ethical commitment. St. Edward’s includes problem solving and civic engagement components in its capstone requirements. Such ethical engagement, in its varying forms at the two institutions, helps students understand how to apply their education to our diverse world and can indeed constitute a life-changing event.

Faculty members at both institutions have recognized assessment and programmatic factors as vital to supporting a general education capstone. First, faculty members must learn from the assessment.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees

This requires ensuring that rubrics gather meaningful data, and it requires a periodic review and use of the data. Second, because this form of capstone is cumulative in nature, it is important for students to be prepared for this final course. Key skills and proficiencies to be demonstrated in the capstone must be introduced early in the general education pathway. Both institutions have revised general education courses preceding the capstone course to ensure key skills, such as moral reasoning and oral communication, are sufficiently addressed before students enter the capstone course. Third, faculty development is also essential. Most faculty members are trained for proficiency in narrow, discipline-specific fields, but general education capstones call for a distinctively interdisciplinary approach. Faculty development, such as substantial orientation sessions, peer mentoring, course material archives, and workshops, ensure the capstone faculty members are sufficiently prepared to develop and assess students’ integration of a wide and diverse body of knowledge.

Saint Joseph’s College’s and St. Edward’s University’s capstones serve as compasses for liberal education and student learning. Core curricula extended over four years provide a pathway toward student success in the capstone. The capstone courses and, specifically, their rubrics measure the essential outcomes envisioned for all students at the institutions, outcomes that are closely tied to their missions.

Assessing General Education in Disciplinary Capstones

Assessing general education outcomes in disciplinary capstones can be a valuable strategy for campuses with numerous professional programs. Because these capstones are targeted toward their future careers, students can be highly motivated to produce their best professional work. Four of the nine AGLS institutions have discipline-specific capstones. The University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana (USF), is a Catholic university with 2,300 students. The University of North Dakota, Grand Forks (UND), and North Dakota State University, Fargo (NDSU), are public research-oriented universities, each enrolling about 12,000 undergraduate and another 2,000 graduate students. Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont is private professional college of 2,000 students whose distinctive capstones are team-taught by faculty members from each program and the Core Division, which houses all general education courses.

When assessing general education outcomes via discipline-based capstones, campuses need to agree on the degree of department autonomy in three areas: (1) Will common outcomes be assessed? (2) Will student work have common parameters? and (3) Who will evaluate that work? Assessing a common set of outcomes can provide a comprehensive campus portrait of learning in key areas; however, allowing greater faculty choice may encourage faculty ownership in the process. General education committees must approve the capstones at Champlain, USF, and UND. Both USF and Champlain use student work from their capstones to assess an agreed-upon set of general education outcomes in all of their capstones, whereas UND faculty must choose two of the campus’s four general education outcomes. NDSU instructors rely on department-based outcomes for their capstones, which vary from one-credit seminars to a sixty-credit internship.

Endorsing shared assignments or guidelines for student projects has the same tension between comparability and autonomy as agreeing on shared outcomes. USF, NDSU, and UND faculty members have the freedom to design appropriate capstone assignments. Champlain students create an in-depth professional work product, but they also complete two assignments with common prompts, which the teamed instructors for each capstone adapt to their specific course.
Evaluating the general education outcomes in the student work confronts the same tension. NDSU faculty members have the greatest autonomy, because individual instructors assess student learning, which is usually summarized in the department’s regular university assessment report. USF faculty members select student products to be assessed with a common rubric in a weeklong workshop. Faculty members at Champlain and UND employ both within-course and cross-institutional scoring of student artifacts. For within-course assessment, Champlain instructors use a shared rubric to assess the two common assignments. Students submit their work in electronic portfolios, and assessment results are gathered using an e-portfolio software. Champlain also utilizes cross-institutional scoring primarily as a formative process to test new rubrics, increase faculty understanding of assessment, and identify assessment practices to be improved. UND uses within-course scoring in conjunction with its cyclical process for validating general education courses. Faculty members disaggregate general education learning outcomes in their capstone courses and report evidence of student achievement. In addition, UND gathers samples of capstone student work for an annual single-day scoring workshop, focusing on different learning outcomes each year.

In addition to serving as the vehicle for an authentic assessment of common general education outcomes, such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and information literacy, discipline-specific capstones can be ideal for campuses with a significant proportion of professional programs because they can bridge the gap between specialized, practical training and general education.

Conclusion

Despite the great variation in creating and implementing capstones at institutions with a wide range of sizes and missions, the AGLS capstone project revealed how and why campuses can create authentic summative assessments for liberal learning outcomes—assessments that are “worthy of our missions.”

Michael E. Gress is Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Vincennes University in Vincennes, Indiana; Cory Lock is Dean of University Programs at St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas; and Larry R. Peterson is Director of Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Advising at North Dakota State University in Fargo.
Introduction

Assessment permeates virtually all aspects of life today. It appears in many practical aspects of the “real world” (e.g., the financial sector, the housing market, health care, and self-help books, among others) as well as in arguably all levels and many parts of the educational world, from elementary/secondary education to higher education. At Oakton Community College in the last several years, assessment has transformed from a more haphazard and sporadic exercise to a more intentional and sustained effort. Now involving more thoroughly designed and increasingly transparent course-, program-, general education-, and institution-level forms, assessment at Oakton has gone from theory to practice—from assessment thought to assessment action.

A growing number of assessment-savvy faculty and staff at Oakton represent this shift from thought to action. In the last five years, members of three different departments/programs at the college (Accounting, Basic Nurse Assistant Training, and Biology) have realized, first in discussions with departmental colleagues and then with each other as well as with other faculty and staff members, how critically important assessment is and will continue to be to effect change at the higher education level. Even more recently at Oakton, the guiding principle of assessment has been crystallized as one overarching goal: to impact teaching and student learning. The following information from these three departments/programs highlights some useful forms of “assessment in action” as exemplary examples of change from assessment skepticism to assessment success.

Accounting Department and “Assessment in Action”

Learning Objective Measured:  Students will be able to prepare journal entries, adjusting entries, and financial statements.

Rationale: This skill is the foundation of all accounting. It is critical that students are able to perform the basic accounting cycle before moving on to other accounting topics.

Methods of Assessment: There is a multiple-choice assessment exam on Desire2Learn (D2L) that will be taken by all students in Principles of Financial Accounting (ACC 153). At the end of the term, each instructor will bring the students to a computer lab to take this assessment. While instructors will give students their own homework, projects, and exams, this D2L assessment tool is standardized for all accounting students.
**Measurement Criteria/Target:** Students who score 70 percent or higher on this exam will have demonstrated success at this learning objective. Because ACC 153 course success rates are approximately 65 percent, our objective is for at least 65 percent of students to achieve 70 percent or higher on this assessment tool.

**Summary of Data:** The following table details the overall pass rates by term:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall Pass Rates</th>
<th>Spring Pass Rates</th>
<th>Total Yearly Pass Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011–Spring 2012</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010–Spring 2011</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009–Spring 2010</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008–Spring 2009</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007–Spring 2008</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of Results:** Accounting faculty developed an analysis of the scores for each instructor. Some instructors had success rates as high as 94 percent, while other instructors had success rates as low as 54 percent. After an item analysis was done, the Accounting Department chair met individually with the faculty members who had success rates below 70 percent. The frequently missed questions were discussed in detail, and these faculty members committed to making this material clearer in the next academic year. All Accounting Department faculty members acknowledge that this is a key learning objective, and the goal is that all sections of ACC 153 meet or exceed the 70 percent target.

**Actions Taken:** Accounting faculty members now know the types of questions that students missed. There were some specific topics that instructors will reinforce in a different way. For example, some will use more practice quizzes and others will use more in-class review to make sure that this important learning objective is met by more of their students. Also, because the majority of the faculty did meet the success target, two new learning objectives will be added to the assessment quiz for the 2012–2013 academic year.

**Basic Nurse Assistant Training (BNAT) Program and “Assessment in Action”**

**Learning Objective Measured:** Students will demonstrate the ability to perform personal care skills related to dining in the clinical/lab settings according to established criteria.

**Rationale:** Students need to reach an 80 percent mean pass rate on the Illinois state competency exam. The state competency exam is divided into six categories, with current Oakton BNAT students deficient in the personal skills subset, specifically the dining/feeding component.

**Methods of Assessment:** All twenty-four students in each of eight sessions of Basic Nurse Assistant Training (BNA 100) must take a particular written test. To prepare for the test, all BNA 100 faculty members and students utilize various clinical assessment tools, practice labs, and lab tests.
Measurement Criteria/Target: Students are expected to exceed an 85 percent mean score in the personal skills subset of the state competency exam. To maximize conditions for this level of success, BNA 100 faculty and students participate in both a mock demonstration in lab, graded with a departmental-developed rubric, and then actual live demonstration with patients in a clinical setting.

Summary of Data: The most recent data display a mean score of 86.22 percent in the personal skills subset. At the same time, the Illinois state level of competency testing has become more rigorous.

Analysis of Results: BNA 100 faculty members as well as students positively view the recent changes in preparation for the dining/feeding component of the personal skills subset. Faculty members report that students now are better prepared than they were in previous years for feeding in the clinical setting. Students report they enjoyed these more engaged/active forms of learning; they further report feeling a high level of confidence regarding feeding in the clinical setting.

Actions Taken: Based on these effective assessment practices and strong results, BNAT faculty members have agreed to incorporate the lab feeding module as a permanent change in lab curriculum. To achieve this goal, faculty members will use more hands-on simulated practice and testing sessions in the lab setting before meeting and working in the clinical setting. In addition, a new BNA 100 learning objective has been created: students will demonstrate the ability to perform communication skills related to documentation, reporting/recording of information in the clinical/lab setting. The rationale for this new learning objective relates to the Illinois state competency exam, in which Oakton’s BNAT students need to reach an 80 percent mean score (most recent data available indicate an 80.8 percent mean average for the communication subset). In focusing on documentation, particularly reporting and recording resident/patient information, BNAT faculty members and students will use such assessment methods as a written test, a clinical evaluation tool, and a lab assessment tool. To determine success with these assessment practices, BNAT faculty have set a measurement criteria/target to exceed 82.5 percent for 2012–2013. Piloted in spring 2012, this new assessment practice has yet to collect data from Illinois state competency testing. Nevertheless, developing/assessing this new learning objective has encouraged faculty members to collaborate, promoting department-wide “buy in” for such assessment and helping faculty members to identify differences in clinical sites related to documentation. Above all, Oakton’s BNAT students report that they feel more engaged in the learning process.

Biology Department and “Assessment in Action”

Learning Objectives Measured: Over the past five years, two student learning objectives in Human Anatomy & Physiology I (BIO 131) have been assessed: (1) compare excitatory and inhibitory synapses, and (2) differentiate between antibody and cell-mediated immunities. In addition, the Biology Department learning outcome “To Think Critically” has been assessed.

Rationale: years ago, the Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) faculty chose to break the Biology Department cycle of sporadically assessing courses based on the question, “What course have we not assessed yet?” Since 2008, A&P faculty members have conducted three years of student assessment; in the “off years,” they have worked on their action plans to improve teaching and student learning. The cyclical nature of A&P assessment is slowly improving student learning through improving pedagogy, modifying departmental policies, offering more opportunities for student learning, and fostering communication among science faculty.
Methods of Assessment: The assessment methods have evolved over the past five years. The assessment tools have included multiple-choice questions, multiple-choice questions with corresponding “explain your answer” sections, short-answer questions, and essay questions. The evolution of the A&P assessment tools is a direct result of data analysis and lively discussion among A&P faculty members. Since the inception of the cyclical assessment of A&P, at least sixteen faculty members have been involved at any one time, and more than 1,200 students have been assessed.

Measurement Criteria/Target: When a specific course learning objective was assessed, the benchmark was set at 70 percent. A&P faculty expected that students, on average, would earn at least a 70 percent on the assessment questions that were embedded in course exams. When critical thinking was assessed, A&P faculty members expected that students would score an average of 2 out of a possible 3 on the departmental-developed critical thinking rubric.

Summary of Data: With the multiple-choice questions only, students met, and in many cases exceeded, the benchmark criterion of 70 percent. Similarly, with the multiple-choice portion of the questions with explanations, students again met or exceeded 70 percent; at the same time, however, student success rates on the “explain your answer” portion were significantly lower than 70 percent. In addition, with the short-answer as well as essay responses, students performed significantly lower than the 70 percent benchmark criterion. On the critical thinking assessment, students earned an average of 1.5 out of 3.

Analysis of Results: These results have informed A&P faculty members that students are able to successfully answer multiple-choice questions written at multiple levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy. However, it is evident that when students are asked to explain an answer in writing, no matter at what Bloom’s level the question is, overall, students are not able to produce this sort of response effectively. Similarly, the students are not able to think critically at the level expected by A&P faculty members.

Actions Taken: A&P faculty members have successfully used the assessment results to drive change within classrooms, across the A&P curriculum, and within the Biology Department. A few of these changes include rewriting A&P course learning objectives to reflect the level of learning students are expected to achieve (e.g., application and higher on Bloom’s taxonomy); incorporating pedagogical changes in the classroom; developing and adopting Biology Department Learning Outcomes that focus on transferable skills; offering professional development; developing critical thinking standards; and offering a student success class titled Academic Success Seminar for Biology (COL 120). All of this assessment work has led to the creation of a five-year assessment plan for the Biology Department that will track science and health students through three to five courses on a single, integrated science topic.

Summary

Due in large part to these recent assessment actions and successes, these three departments/programs at Oakton expect to build on this assessment momentum. As they have been working increasingly successfully with both faculty members and students in their own disciplines, they have recognized how working within the department/program, seeking/accepting input from all faculty involved, and tailoring assessments to the needs of the individual department/program likely will lead to strong(er) success rates. Either in spite of or because of their different assessment objectives, methods, and actions, members of the three departments/programs realized both individually and
collectively that their own and many of their colleagues’ assessment actions and success are real. Along with a growing number of colleagues, they have continued extending their assessment efforts to reach course-, program-, general education-, and institution-level assessment at Oakton. In doing so, they have recognized how their focus on “assessment in action” links directly to clarity, creativity, and collaboration among Oakton’s faculty and staff engaged in assessment efforts, highlighting key elements of the college’s mission and the newly launched five-year strategic plan for 2013–2017.

Note
Steve McNamara, English Adjunct Faculty at Oakton Community College, contributed to the writing of this paper.

Donna Dickson is Assistant Professor of Basic Nurse Assistant Training, Leslie Van Wolvelear is Professor of Accounting, and Ruth Williams is Professor of Biology at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, Illinois.
Graduate and undergraduate education at Ursuline College contributes to the civic infrastructure in northeastern Ohio by preparing graduates for professional careers in nursing, business, education, social work, art therapy, and historic preservation. As a woman’s, focused, values-based college, Ursuline College has intentionally created an environment of continuous improvement that effectively integrates the assessment of programmatic and core learning outcomes and external indicators of success with its mission and identity. At Ursuline College, assessment is not an end in itself, but a means for achieving institutional mission through comprehensive participation of all stakeholders for continuous educational and institutional improvement and accountability.

Ursuline College’s culture of assessment results in sustainable contributions that enhance social and economic well-being in the region, promote students’ civic and academic learning, and enrich scholarship at the institution. The fundamental purpose of assessment at Ursuline College is to assure that graduates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions reflected by their credentials. The college has intentionally designed an environment of continuous improvement that relies on internally defined outcomes as well as external indicators of success, such as retention, graduation rates, impact on community, individual extraordinary contributions, and faculty–community engagement. Three overarching components are (1) assessment of value added through the core curriculum; (2) evaluation of mission integration and support through all institutional divisions; and (3) programmatic assessment according to internal and external measures. The coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) manages the ASL function and a committee consisting of faculty members, staff members, and administrators. This committee works in partnership with the coordinator to lead, monitor, and guide ASL activities and initiatives. The college has dedicated dollars invested to fund the assessment function and provides an annual budget for assessment activities at the program level in addition to funds for faculty development.

Ursuline College’s core curriculum, the Ursuline Studies Program, has seven learning outcomes, disseminated in every publication for students, faculty members, and stakeholders: (1) to communicate effectively, (2) to analyze and synthesize, (3) to interact socially, (4) to respond to beauty, (5) to make decisions based on values, (6) to solve problems, and (7) to take responsibility for society. These outcomes must be included in every undergraduate course syllabus and are guidelines at the graduate level. The goals are complemented by four core institutional values: (1) spirituality, (2) student focus, (3) respect for the individual, and (4) collaboration.

All core learning outcomes are assessed internally through an annual ASL initiative. Program learning outcomes are also addressed externally. For example, since 2003 Ursuline College has participated in the Council of Independent Colleges’ (CIC) consortium of institutions using the Council for Aid to Education’s Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Each year, the college tests every incoming full-time
traditional-aged freshman and every graduating senior to assess three particular cognitive skills for improvement through the liberal arts curriculum. Members of the college regularly attend the Higher Learning Commission’s Annual Conference as well as the Commission’s workshops on the assessment of student learning. In addition, faculty members attended CIC-CLA academies to learn more about the conceptual framework of the task-performance methodology. Faculty members also presented Performance Task assignments at the 2010 CIC-CLA Conference. Ursuline College utilizes the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to assess its student learning environment, and the college posts these data on its institutional Web site.

Ursuline College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and its programs are authorized by the Ohio Board of Regents. Six of its programs are accredited, monitored, regulated, assessed, and approved by state or national agencies, with licensure exams as part of the process for graduates to practice in their field. Standards associated with these agencies drive program curriculum, learning goals, objectives, outcomes, and performance metrics: (1) the college’s nursing programs respond to the Ohio State Board of Nursing, Collegiate Council for Nursing Education, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses; (2) Education’s professional assessment and monitoring agencies include National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Praxis Series™ assessments, which provide educational tests and other services that states use as part of their teacher licensure and certification process; (3) the Social Work program responds to the Council on Social Work Education and its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards; (4) the Art Therapy and Counseling program is accredited by the American Art Therapy Association; (5) undergraduate traditional business programs are accredited by the National Survey of Student Engagement; and (6) Legal Studies is approved by the American Bar Association for the preparation of professional paralegals.

The recognition and acceptance of Ursuline College’s Catholic identity is assessed through quantitative and qualitative surveys of all students, faculty members, and staff members. Data were compiled and evaluated by the College Catholic Identity Committee, consisting of faculty and administrators with specific disciplinary competencies in Catholic theology and spirituality.

The college-wide ASL effort, which began in 2002, now includes every major and degree at the college for all undergraduate and graduate students. ASL occurs annually for all programs, implementing an iterative cycle designed for continuous improvement. All academic programs have a fully developed curriculum map identifying key program outcomes as well as where they are introduced, reinforced, and assessed; an assessment map that indicates when and how each key outcome is assessed; and a plan that operationalizes the assessment. An annual review process yields data on teaching effectiveness, program content, new learning needs, and student achievement. The college uses the process to identify and request necessary resources.

In the Division of Student Affairs, the departments of Athletics, Campus Ministry, Counseling and Career Services, Multicultural Affairs, Residence Life, Student Activities, and Student Development, Leadership, and Orientation also engage in assessment of student learning. Student Affairs utilizes all of the measurement tools and reporting methodology available through the college’s ASL design to ensure alignment with the efforts of Academic Affairs. The Office of Campus Ministry coordinates all service-learning opportunities. Service-learning must be attached to a specific course and approved by faculty members. Both the student and the site supervisor have an opportunity to evaluate the learning that takes place. The Office of Counseling and Career Services assists in facilitating the
learning that occurs in the Academic Internship Program. Students who complete an internship are required to demonstrate the learning that takes place off campus, starting with setting learning objectives with their on-site supervisor. Students evaluate their growth and development while at the work site and their employers do the same. The Office of Student Leadership, Development and Orientation provides an effective learning environment for students that aligns with Ursuline College’s stated learning outcomes. Two areas in particular are the focus of Student Leadership: the Orientation Team and the Founders Week programming and events team. Students must be able to apply expected outcomes of an Ursuline College education. Through the various programming and activities, they demonstrate measured levels of learning. The Office of Residence Life uses the residence halls as learning laboratories. Each year a comprehensive survey is conducted to gauge student satisfaction with “life in the halls,” including student interaction with the Residence Life assistants. Based on data obtained from survey results, the Residence Life director evaluates expected learning outcomes for the Resident Life assistants. Outcomes are evaluated each semester using a new evaluation document. The Office of Multicultural Affairs has taken the lead in serving as the on-campus laboratory to teach and measure student cultural sensitivity and awareness. Pre- and posttesting are employed. Results are used for quality improvement efforts.

Ursuline College examines levels or stages of moral reasoning development in their students. The Defining Issues Test 2 is administered to a sample of students at all levels (Freshman–Graduate) to assess four of the seven learning outcomes: (1) taking responsibility for society, (2) making decisions based on values, (3) analysis and synthesis, and (4) problem solving. Through the internal college process, Academic Program Review, each college program, undergraduate and graduate, is reviewed every seven years by a committee composed of faculty members and support service administrators. Additional areas addressed by the Academic Program Review committee include diversity of students and faculty, enrollment, market need, financial viability, and job placement.

To assure the academic integrity of all programs and majors, any curricular changes in programs or courses must be submitted and approved by the graduate and undergraduate Curriculum Committees, which make recommendations to the college’s president and the vice president of Academic Affairs.

To determine the extent to which outcomes are successfully met, the college intentionally and consistently aligns its programming efforts, curricular designs, and student learning assessment activities with its mission, vision, values, and core learning competencies. Ursuline College’s practice of self-reflection and contemplation provides a framework for outcomes assessment that is unique to the institution. This practice is demonstrated in a continuous assessment and quality improvement infrastructure. The vital components of this infrastructure consist of processes and guidelines providing environments for student outcomes examination, assessment, and evaluation. Monitored and measured by a series of iterative processes and feedback loops, student learning and success outcomes are a function of daily operations and make evident Ursuline College’s culture and practice of reflection and contemplation. Efforts are integrated at both the macro- and micro-levels to provide a holistic view of student outcomes within and across the institution.
At the macro level, the college employs four processes:

1. **Academic Program Review** examines newly proposed and existing undergraduate and graduate programs and analyzes their viability. Programs are routinely scrutinized to ensure ASL efforts are defined, developed, and active.

2. **Curriculum Review** ensures that the general education curriculum of the college and the curricula of the various programs meet the needs of the students and are consistent with the college’s mission and educational philosophy. Courses are routinely scrutinized to ensure that appropriate strategies, such as assignments, metrics, rubrics, and teaching and learning methods, are developed, designed, and active.

3. **ASL** maintains the continuous and systematic assessment of student learning to assure the attainment of the Ursuline College’s academic goals. An annual process is in place. All programs are required to have an assessment plan, curriculum map, and defined points for program level outcome assessment actions on file. Data are collected and interpreted annually. A gap analysis is performed. Measures to close gaps are recommended. Actions such as changes to coursework or assessment strategies are proposed and planned. Output drives program level strategic planning. Data also become vital components of institution-wide self-study activities.

4. **Institutional Research** provides reliable and timely information to academic and administrative units in support of the college’s policy and decision making and performs data collection and distribution resulting in official college statistics to satisfy both internal and external reporting needs. Data are collected, reviewed, and interpreted annually. Recommendations for improvement or change are made. These data serve as input in the institutional strategic planning processes.

At the micro- (course) level, in-class teaching and learning activities are performed. Outcomes generated at the course level become vital foundational components of program-level ASL.

Established success levels and course-concept positioning (concept introduction, reinforcement, assessment) drive post-course actions. Ursuline College recognizes success measures as discipline-specific and relative to and dependent on established industry and professional standards. Therefore, each program or discipline articulates specific desired success levels and establishes actions for improvement and accountability as needed.

To organize data reflecting varying types of student assessment and success, learning, and performance outcomes, Ursuline College employed a modification of Donald L. Kirkpatrick’s Four-Level Evaluation Model as a guiding framework: reaction, knowledge, behavior, and results. Each level guides the understanding and utilization of collected data. In this context, multifaceted, multiple types of data are examined and assessed collectively to determine various dimensions of student learning, student success outcomes, and institutional effectiveness. Table 1 provides “level” definitions and examples of outcomes utilized at Ursuline College.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Category</th>
<th>Examples of Ursuline College Assessment Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Level 1: Reaction** | National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)  
This level seeks to answer questions regarding learner perceptions and satisfaction. Also important for quality assurance and course or program improvement.  
Student rater teacher evaluation  
Retention rates |
| **Level 2: Knowledge** | Tests, exams, and quizzes  
Licensure exams pass rates such as NCLEX, LSW, Praxis™, CLA |
| **Level 3: Behavior** | Field experiences such as clinic (Nursing) and field work (Social Work)  
Student teaching  
Internships  
Presentations/shows |
| **Level 4: Results** | Graduation rates  
Graduate exit surveys  
Alumnae survey data  
Graduate employment data |

Ursuline College demonstrates in practice an application of self-reflection and contemplation in the ASL function. The multifaceted nature of the college presents opportunities and challenges. The integrated processes and functions, feedback loops, active alignment, and college–community engagement provide a unique and rich infrastructure designed to support a holistic approach toward student development. Reflection and contemplation in concert with the mission, vision, values, core learning competencies, and processes lead Ursuline College’s ASL efforts.

Depending on the nature of the information, all stakeholders in the Ursuline College community are informed about assessment outcomes, and most participate in the utilization of this information for continuous improvement. First, data are collected as required by state or federal law and updated regularly on the Ursuline College Web site. Second, the college collects and disseminates ASL information in the annual program reports by the school deans. This information is utilized to promote program improvement so that Ursuline graduates and their employers will be assured of the value and integrity of Ursuline College degrees. It is disseminated to those responsible for program improvements at the program and school levels, with supervision by the vice president of Academic Affairs and the Academic Affairs Committee of the board of trustees. Third, ASL data are used to meet external accrediting standards and reported as required by the accrediting body. Licensure pass rates are generally publicly available on the college Web site or in the college’s publications. Finally, promotional materials used to recruit students or advance the college’s interests in the region publish both quantitative and qualitative data about the effectiveness of the programs and student achievement related to program success. Table 2, below, summarizes examples of how stakeholders are informed about the success of majors and of programs and of the Ursuline Studies Program (the core learning outcomes).
The very nature of Ursuline’s comprehensive assessment program demonstrates that the college uses the assessment outcomes for improvement at every level. The deans of each school at Ursuline College use the annual program assessments in consultation with the program directors and the assessment coordinator to evaluate whether any changes are necessary to programs. Changes include, but are not limited to, developing new courses, removing outdated courses, developing a new degree or certificate, strengthening admissions requirements, and enhancing field experiences. In addition, faculty development is a direct outgrowth of ASL at the program level function. Training and development opportunities are provided to the faculty throughout each academic year. Some examples of topics include: teaching writing; writing across the curriculum; technologies for teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Publication Media</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics, enrollment, retention rates, student–faculty ratios</td>
<td>Ursuline College Web site; also provided to state and federal authorities as required by law</td>
<td>Public, students, faculty members, administration, board of trustees, advisers, employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensure pass rates</td>
<td>Accrediting or licensing body; college Web site; promotional materials</td>
<td>Faculty members, students, board of trustees, advisers, and employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Learning Assessment—core learning outcomes of Ursuline Studies Program</td>
<td>Direct communication of results to CIC stakeholders</td>
<td>Members of CIC-CLA, Assessment Committee members, college administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Survey of Student Engagement data</td>
<td>Ursuline College Web site</td>
<td>Public, students, faculty members, administration, board of trustees, advisers, employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of student learning at the program level</td>
<td>Annual reports prepared by schools or programs: Nursing, Graduate and Professional Studies, Arts and Sciences, and Ursuline Studies</td>
<td>Faculty, upper-level administrators, and board of trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate and undergraduate curriculum committee reviews</td>
<td>Recommendations made to vice president of Academic Affairs and president, with reporting responsibility to Faculty Assembly</td>
<td>Faculty members, upper-level administrators, and board of trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Program Review Committee</td>
<td>Recommendations made to President’s Council, with reporting responsibility to Faculty Assembly</td>
<td>Faculty members, upper-level administrators, and board of trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Placement Rates</td>
<td>Office of Career Counseling, Alumni Affairs, individual and college-wide publications</td>
<td>Students, faculty members, employers, board of trustees, program advisory boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student course evaluation of faculty members</td>
<td>Confidential between dean and faculty member</td>
<td>Dean and faculty member (for performance improvement only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic mission and identity survey</td>
<td>Community Day, Catholic Identity Committee, upper-level administration, individual communication to board of trustees</td>
<td>Faculty members, staff members, college administration, board of trustees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and learning; developing and using rubrics; planning and implementing assessment of student learning; developing performance task assignments for critical thinking and problem solving; and teaching online.

**Conclusion**

Ursuline College’s culture of assessment assures that graduates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions reflected by their credentials. The college cultivates an environment of continuous improvement that relies on internally defined outcomes as well as external indicators of success. Everyone at the college is invested in the assessment programs, from the institutional research staff to faculty advisors and program directors, deans and directors, and the most senior-level administrators and board of trustees. Ursuline College can point to well-designed assessment cycles that are intrinsic to its mission to educate men and women for leadership and service in northeastern Ohio and the nation. At Ursuline College, assessment is not an end in itself, but a means for achieving institutional mission through comprehensive participation of all stakeholders for continuous educational and institutional improvement and accountability. Through the ASL efforts described in this paper, Ursuline College demonstrates a cultural shift from compliance to intention. The college’s efforts focus on learning assessment strategies that resulted in a successful comprehensive reaffirmation of accreditation visit. These strategies provide an institutional framework for assessing the whole student, allowing for cognitive and affective data collection and analyses linked to college-wide learning outcomes in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

**REFERENCE**

Kirkpatrick Partners. The Official Site of the Kirkpatrick Model.  

*Marilynn N. Butler* is Associate Professor of Business and Coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning at Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio.
In fall 2011, the faculty of University of Wisconsin–Parkside approved a set of shared undergraduate learning goals. Before this time, the university had a set of general education goals: communication, reasoned judgment, and social and personal responsibility. However, these goals had been applied mainly at the lower level within the context of the General Education program. The shared learning goals that the faculty adopted were the General Education goals; however, these goals were adopted with the intention that they be enacted and assessed at the upper level through the academic major, thus providing a way to link students’ undergraduate learning experiences at the lower and upper levels. We hope to show the linkage for students of the learning foundation provided through our General Education program and more specialized knowledge and skills gained through the academic major.

The adoption of shared learning goals also provided an opportunity for academic programs to revise and update their academic assessment plans as part of aligning their learning goals for the academic major with the institutional shared undergraduate learning goals. To facilitate this process, an Assessment Liaison program was developed and implemented through a collaborative process among the Academic Achievement Assessment Committee, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Teaching and Learning Center, and our Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) Academy for Assessment of Student Learning team (also known as our HLC–Student Learning Outcomes (HLC-SLO) team). Using a “train the trainer” model and building on existing resources and organizational practices, the Assessment Liaison program provided a way to work directly with academic programs to provide support and structure to help them in updating their assessment plans.

Institutional Context

The University of Wisconsin–Parkside is a comprehensive university with an enrollment of 4,766 undergraduate and 121 graduate students. When the Assessment Liaison program was developed, the university had twenty-eight undergraduate baccalaureate degree programs and three graduate programs. Most of these programs are housed within specific academic departments, but there are a few interdisciplinary programs that operate across departments.

Over the past decade, our university has undergone many significant changes with respect to assessment of student learning, with responsibility shared among various governance groups and academic support offices. The university’s general education learning goals mentioned above were approved in fall 2005. Responsibility for the administration and assessment of the General Education program lies primarily with the director of General Education and the General Education Committee. In 2009–2010, the Academic Achievement Assessment Committee (AAAC) shifted its mission from focusing on general education learning outcomes as there was already a distinct General Education
We're in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development

committee addressing this to addressing learning outcomes at the broader institutional level. To support this shift, the director of Assessment and Academic Planning, with the support of the AAAC, applied for admission to the HLC’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. The university also has a Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), which has active responsibilities in faculty professional development.¹ Among the many services that the TLC offers are regular workshops that have included training related to assessment, professional development events for disseminating institutional and national assessment practices, and support for external grants related to academic assessment. In addition, the TLC maintains an active Web site that functions as a repository for information. Finally, the newly formed (2011) Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) provides additional personnel with expertise in assessment and online resources on assessment.⁴

Although several committees and offices have been identified, in reality, there was overlapping membership across the various groups, thus providing for more efficient communication and idea sharing. For example, the director of Assessment, the director of the TLC, and the assistant vice chancellor of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness are all members of the AAAC, the HLC–SLO group, and the General Education Committee. Two members of the AAAC were recruited to be on the HLC–SLO group. And, given the importance of General Education, the General Education director was invited to be a member of the HLC–SLO group.

In the opening of this paper, we noted a key organizational exigency that prompted the development of the Assessment Liaison program: the approval of shared institutional undergraduate learning goals. Another key external exigency, however, was the self-study process and upcoming reaffirmation of accreditation visit, scheduled for spring 2013. While ideally we would have liked for our process to be driven mainly by an appreciation for assessment, in reality, there were multiple factors driving our process. However, this helped our process in that there were multiple reasons for departments and programs to participate in the Assessment Liaison program, including newly approved institutional learning goals, stipend support for individuals selected as liaisons, self-study, and overt verbal support of key administrators. While these factors provided motivations for participation, we needed to draw in other resources for successful implementation.

Dissecting Our Organizational Process

Our project intersects with a number of challenges faced in implementing organizational change in a university system. First, as in any loosely coupled system, there are loose linkages between groups (Weick 1976). Therefore, one of our challenges was creating a structure to strengthen ties and communication with respect to academic assessment. Creating a new program, the Assessment Liaison program, literally forged specific network ties where none had existed previously. Second, focusing on organizations from a “micro-” or “practice-” oriented level, to successfully implement change, we needed to address not only motivation but also skill by providing appropriate training (Beebe, Mottet, and Roach 2004).

The Assessment Liaison Program

The Assessment Liaison program was supported by a campus Strategic Fund grant to the office of the director of Assessment and Academic Planning. The intention of the grant was to provide compensation to liaisons given the training workshops and additional service that they would be engaging in as part of the program.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development

At the end of the fall 2011 term, academic departments and programs were asked to designate an assessment liaison, who would be responsible for leading their department or program in updating and revising their assessment plans to show the alignment of the learning goals for majors with the newly approved shared learning goals. The goal was to have departments and programs submit an assessment plan by the end of spring 2012, using a template developed by the AAAC and HLC–SLO team. The assessment worksheet asked for liaisons to identify academic-major learning goals and academic-major learning outcomes; show the alignment of outcomes with shared university learning goals; develop a curriculum map; identify forms of assessment or measurements for learning outcomes; and develop a timetable for how the program would assess each learning outcome over a maximum seven-year cycle. This worksheet was developed by the HLC–SLO group and the AAAC and made available to liaisons through the respective Web sites of the OIE and TLC.

The request for a designated assessment liaison originated from the AAAC and was announced and explained by the director of Assessment and Academic Planning and chair of the AAAC within the context of a meeting of the provost with department and program chairs. During the meeting, the provost also directly and emphatically expressed her support of this effort and its importance to the institution. Although the assessment liaison was to be a tenured faculty member, in some cases, departments or programs designated an untenured faculty member as liaison. Most departments and programs submitted names in a timely manner. There was only one instance of a resistant department; the dean responsible for the department quickly interceded to reiterate the importance of the program, and the department promptly designated a liaison.

The academic departments and programs were at various points in the process of developing their own assessment practices, with some programs having established systematic practices involving the semester assessment of programmatic student learning goals and other programs engaging in such assessment at longer intervals. In addition, because faculty members had varying knowledge of assessment, assessment workshops were designed to provide training to help liaisons lead their departments in completing the assessment worksheets. The training sessions operated on a train-the-trainer premise, providing the training to liaisons, who would then work with their departments.

We began our assessment training with a campus event by inviting nationally recognized assessment expert Susan Hatfield to give a campus presentation on assessment and conduct two workshops. Dr. Hatfield’s visit was supported by the provost’s office, and her campus-wide presentation was introduced by the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. (And of course, we provided food and refreshments for those who attended Dr. Hatfield’s presentations.) Dr. Hatfield’s visit occurred just before the start of the spring 2012 semester. Just after the start of the semester, a meeting was held with the liaisons to provide an overview of the assessment worksheet and training sessions. A workshop series was designed in collaboration with the AAAC, HLC–SLO, OIE, and TLC. Each workshop was offered twice to accommodate participants’ diverse schedules. The TLC Web site was also used as a repository for workshop training material, such as handouts and Microsoft PowerPoint presentations. Following is the liaison training schedule:

- 1/18/2012—Kick-off event: Susan Hatfield presentation
- 2/3 or 2/17—Workshop 1: Learning Goals
- 3/2 or 3/30—Workshop 2: Curriculum Mapping
- 4/6 or 4/13—Workshop 3: Program Improvement
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development

The workshops were run collaboratively by two or three individuals from among the director of Assessment and Academic Planning, director of the TLC, assistant vice chancellor for the OIE, director of General Education, or members of the AAAC. Given that it was difficult for all of us to attend the presentations, we rotated responsibility for presenting based on our schedules.

In addition to the workshops, members of the AAAC were assigned to each liaison as a mentor to check in and help keep him or her on track. By the end of the spring term, twenty-nine of thirty-one programs had submitted their revised assessment plans. At its last meeting of the academic year, the AAAC met to review ten of the plans. The remaining plans were reviewed during the summer by a subcommittee of the AAAC consisting of the assistant vice chancellor for Institutional Effectiveness, the director of Assessment and Academic Planning, and the director of the TLC.

In the fall 2012 term, we had established the goal of completing one assessment project for each program or department. Again, to provide support for this process, we developed a series of assessment training workshops. The key objective of the fall workshops differed from those of the spring workshops in that the fall workshops were intended to provide information and examples of how to gather assessment data. To this end, assessment liaisons who had already made substantial progress on their assessment projects were invited to share their work. By having faculty hear their colleagues describe “local” examples provided a more concrete way for faculty liaisons to learn about the various methods for gathering data. Two faculty presenters were invited per workshop (representatives were from Biological Sciences, Communication, Computer Science, and Psychology). The faculty presenters also happened to be current or former members of the AAAC, and three of the faculty members had previously received assessment mini-grants. In addition to these examples, information was provided on support services available to faculty members to help them in their assessment projects. Two representatives from the Learning Technology Center also presented on resources available through our Learning Management System, Desire2Learn. And, our recently hired institutional planner also discussed with faculty the ways he could support their assessment work and the resources available to them through the OIE. Also, the fall workshop was intended to provide an update to the liaisons on regarding assessment expectations. While these had been communicated previously, the discussion at the workshop was intended to provide a reminder to liaisons and to respond to questions.

Conclusion

Overall, we feel that our Assessment Liaison program has been highly successful. For example, 94 percent of assessment plans were submitted. And although we were only able to provide financial compensation to liaisons for the spring 2012 semester, liaisons still actively participated in the fall 2012 follow-up workshops. We feel that the confluence of several factors were important for our successes, which include the following:

- Close collaboration among governance and faculty groups and academic support offices
- Recently approved institutional shared learning goals
- Overt and visible support of administrative leadership (provost, dean)
- Support through training that was developed through feedback from various organizational stakeholders
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development

- Self-study and upcoming reaffirmation of accreditation visit
- Establishment of prior foundations, such as assessment mini-grants that in turn helped to provide models for other departments and programs

We experienced many successes, but we acknowledge that we have some challenges in sustainability. For example, given institutional budgetary constraints, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to provide financial support to liaisons in the future. Also our self-study provided extrinsic motivation. After our self-study, we need to have inculcated a culture of assessment and revise existing institutional models of rewards for sustainability. These are ongoing issues that are being discussed by the AAAC and our HLC–SLO group, as well as with the provost, thus at least continuing our model of collaboration and gaining perspective from multiple stakeholders.

Notes
1. Since the development of the Assessment Liaison program, the university has begun the process of transforming from a two-year college to a four-year college model. In addition, new majors have been proposed, and one major, Liberal Studies, is undergoing substantial revision.
2. See [www.uwp.edu/departments/general.education/](http://www.uwp.edu/departments/general.education/).
5. A seven-year cycle was identified to correspond with our campus’s cycle for program review, the reasoning being that such a cycle would ensure that programs would have assessment data for all of their learning outcomes to provide with their program review data.

REFERENCES


Theresa Castor is Associate Professor, Communication and Chair, Academic Achievement Assessment, Kimberly Kelley is Assistant Vice Chancellor, Institutional Effectiveness, and James Robinson is Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, at University of Wisconsin–Parkside in Kenosha.
Recipe for Success

Following its 2006 reaffirmation visit, the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) evaluation team concluded that a “culture of institutional assessment is not embraced nor valued” at Arapahoe Community College (ACC). The team’s recipe for success in engaging the ACC community in the development of institutional assessment began with its advice to measure general education outcomes at the institutional level. The recommendations of the evaluation team prompted the formation of an Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) and the design of an Institutional Effectiveness Model for college operations. The IEC conducted a review of ACC’s assessment methodologies and surmised that while assessment was occurring throughout instructional and administrative areas, the information gained from assessment was not being properly documented nor equally applied across the institution toward the improvement of learning outcomes.

In June 2008, ACC adopted a collaborative strategic planning process, resulting in the identification of five strategic directions, one of which is Student Success. In support of Student Success, a group of faculty members and staff members developed learning outcomes for life success, which replaced what were formerly identified as general education competencies. The strategic goal associated with this initiative is to integrate learning outcomes into all programs and areas of the institution. Our guiding principle is, “We all have a piece of the student learning pie,” whether it be through the stimulation, support, or facilitation of student learning. Institution-wide assessment of these outcomes determines the extent to which they have been embraced by faculty members, staff members, and students and the degree to which assessment results are driving improvements in institutional effectiveness.

ACC has a “targeted taste” for the “student learning pie” being assembled; that is, hypotheses have been formulated with regard to assessment of the instructional and administrative and educational support units (AESUs). ACC’s hypothesis regarding instruction is that instruction contributes to student learning and is measured via the student’s classroom experience. In terms of AESU processes, the hypothesis is that process improvement facilitates unit and institutional effectiveness. A two-step assessment is involved: (1) the evaluation of unit process development with regard to specific learning outcomes and (2) the impact of resulting unit process improvement on institutional effectiveness. In measuring the impact of AESU process improvement on institutional effectiveness, assessment leaders consider direct measures of AESU process improvement, such as financial efficiencies, reduced legal liability, and increased productivity, as well as indirect results garnered from student satisfaction surveys, retention rates, completion rates, and the like.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)

Philosophy

In keeping with the “pie” metaphor, ACC assessment leaders equate our philosophy of institutional effectiveness with the crust of our “student learning pie.” A pie isn’t a pie without the crust; it is just a loose mixture of flavorful ingredients. The same is true for ACC’s model of institutional effectiveness: the careful blending of best practices in instructional and AESU assessment provides the foundation for institution-wide improvement. ACC’s philosophy of institutional effectiveness is grounded in the work of Karen W. Nichols and James O. Nichols (2000), who maintain that overall institutional effectiveness entails documentation of how well the instructional side of the house is accomplishing its educational purposes as well as how all other units are accomplishing their objectives toward fulfilling the overall mission of the institution—student learning.

In addition to the recommendations of the 2006 HLC evaluation team, a number of assessment-related experiences informed ACC’s philosophy of institutional effectiveness: during the 2007–2008 academic year, the Vital Focus Project was implemented at ACC; in spring 2008 ACC’s collaborative strategic planning process was initiated; a cross section of college employees attended the 2010 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators’ Assessment and Retention Conference and the 2010 HLC summer Assessment Workshop, “Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy.” Discussions resulting in the new HLC Criteria (efficiency and effectiveness of component parts of the institution) and participation in the HLC’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning also played a role in defining the elements of ACC’s Institutional Effectiveness Model. The college’s Program Assessment Committee (instruction), the Core Assessment Team (participants in the HLC’s Academy), and ACC’s Leadership Team combined these ingredients to form the crust of ACC’s student learning pie.

Focus of Institutional Assessment

It’s the filling that makes us love the pie! ACC’s institutional learning outcomes have been dubbed the filling for our student learning pie. As noted above, a group of faculty members and staff members developed ACC’s institutional learning outcomes (formally called the Institutional Learning Outcomes for Student Enrichment and Process Improvement). The outcomes address the knowledge, skills, and values that are fundamental to the personal and professional growth of ACC students, employees, and citizens in the broader college community, with the ultimate focus (or priority) of preparing learners for life success. ACC’s learning outcomes address communication; information management; personal development; responsibility and accountability; quantitative reasoning; and cultural awareness.

The group charged with stirring the filling—that is, determining how the learning outcomes would be assessed across the curriculum and integrated into AESU processes—was the Core Assessment Team, which was assembled in late summer 2011. ACC joined the HLC’s Academy in fall 2011, and the Core Assessment Team that attended the November 2011 Roundtable designed an action plan and immediately began working toward the goal of implementing a systematic, comprehensive institutional assessment model that is cohesive, user-friendly, and sustainable.

Implementation of the Model

The key to properly spreading pie filling is to make sure it is distributed evenly over the inner crust of the pie. The metaphor carries over to the implementation. Our “chefs,” the key players in successful implementation of the college’s Institutional Effectiveness Model, are the members of the college’s
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

We're Movin' on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)

Leadership Team, Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Program Assessment Committee (instruction), and the Core Assessment Team (assessment coaches).

In implementing the Institutional Effectiveness Model, the methodology for the assessment of AESUs mirrors a very effective methodology for the assessment of instructional programs. In the case of program assessment, instructional program leads work with their department chairs to design their assessment plans; they then report the results of their assessment to their department chairs, who submit this information to the Program Assessment Committee. The Program Assessment Committee provides feedback to the assessment report writers and performs a meta-analysis of assessment data on institutional learning outcomes to analyze the relative strength of the learning outcomes across the curriculum. Results are used to modify the curriculum and inform the development of instructional assessment plans for the next academic year.

Members of the Core Assessment Team serve as assessment coaches for approximately thirty-six AESUs across the college. Leads from each unit work with their Leadership Team representative or supervisor and their assessment coaches to design their assessment plans. Initially, AESUs were each charged with creating a mission statement for their area that would flow from the college’s institutional mission statement. Assessment of the units entails aligning specific processes with the basic skills of the learning outcome in question. Both instructional programs and AESUs report results to the IEC, which, in turn, shares the results with the college’s Leadership Team. Instructional programs and AESUs proceed to implement changes, if called for, in their classrooms or AESU processes. ACC refers to this standard assessment cycle—plan; assess; report/revise; implement—as the “cooking time” required to achieve the best possible final product.

Guidelines

As previously noted, ACC has had in place an effective system of instructional assessment for more than ten years. Considering the steep learning curve for assessment in AESUs, having a time-tested instructional assessment model in place has proved invaluable in the design of an AESU assessment model and implementation of ACC’s Institutional Effectiveness Model. Guidelines for assessment differ slightly between instructional assessment and assessment in AESUs. Instructional assessment requires that programs assess at least two measurable program or discipline outcomes and at least two institutional learning outcomes each year. Through a college-wide collaborative process, information management and communication were selected to be the first institutional learning outcomes to be assessed in the AESUs. To date, the process assessment has been implemented according to the following guidelines:

- **Year 1:** Assess the effectiveness of one process that contributes to the information management learning outcome against an established benchmark, or establish a benchmark.
- **Year 2:** Assess one process that contributes to the information management learning outcome and one process that contributes to the communication learning outcome against an established benchmark, or establish a benchmark.

If measurement of the information management outcome in 2011–2012 resulted in the AESU failing to meet an established benchmark, or if a benchmark was being established, strategies were to be designed to address process deficiencies. In those cases, the information management outcome will
be reassessed in 2012–2013 or evaluated against the newly established benchmark. It is through the instructional meta-analysis of institutional learning outcomes and the comparative assessment of AESU processes as they align with institutional learning outcomes and affect institutional efficiencies that ACC will achieve a comprehensive institutional assessment process that will provide essential data for facilitating institutional effectiveness.

Assessment of the AESU Assessment Process

Returning to the pie metaphor, the creation of the ACC Institutional Effectiveness Model required an assessment of methodology, allowing for “venting” regarding pie ingredients, the chefs involved, and the technique for blending everything together. Early in the launch of AESU assessment, the Core Assessment Team (the assessment coaches) requested feedback from assessment leaders in the various units toward improving implementation. Once assessment reports were filed, the assessment coaches again requested feedback from implementers. Some of the responses could be considered “burned on pie filling”; some could be considered added benefits, or the “whipped cream topping.” While ingredients were being assembled, the assessment coaches learned the important difference between blending and “stirring things up”—literally. First, AESU assessment at ACC is not assessment of employee performance. Second, the impact of improvement in processes cannot be directly measured as a result of AESU assessment; and third, there is a steep learning curve for some AESU supervisors and employees.

Although the college has the above-mentioned well-designed, time-tested instructional assessment model, the added benefit of launching the AESU assessment process was including those in the units in the discussion of student outcomes. Surprisingly, AESUs had not heretofore had a forum through which they could discuss the design or impact of their processes as these supported or facilitated student learning or affected institutional efficiencies. The opportunity for AESUs to “report out” assessment information regarding their processes facilitates communication among the units and increases morale in employees who discover and document their contributions to student learning. Reviewing institutional processes also offers employees in AESUs a great opportunity to model professional behavior for the college’s students. In addition, by virtue of the design of the AESU assessment process, empirical documentation of success in improving institutional processes and positively impacting the institution’s “bottom line” is now possible.

Sustaining the Model

The need for a more streamlined way of collecting, tracking, and storing assessment information was clear from the outset, for assessment of both instructional units and support units. The ultimate goal of documenting and electronically filing assessment reports from across the institution resulted in the purchase of an assessment management system (Tk20) in the summer of 2012. Tk20 is providing those implementing assessment of instructional and administrative and educational support units with a means to aggregate and analyze assessment reports and to produce a data-driven evaluation of student learning at the college and the services that support it. Practically speaking, it enables them to enter their data directly into the system and view data from other areas of the college. It provides administrators the ability to prepare and publish assessment reports (“canned” and customized) at various levels throughout the institution. This technology allows quick, easy access to documentation
of progress toward the achievement of institutional learning outcomes and improved institutional effectiveness. Tk20 is the storage unit—refrigerator, if you will—for the countless details associated with the design and implementation of ACC’s Institutional Effectiveness Model.

Conclusion

ACC is “movin’ on up” toward embracing a culture of institutional assessment. Every area of the institution is beginning to understand and value its contributions to student learning. We all have a piece of the pie!!

REFERENCE


Cheyne Bamford is Chair, Program Assessment Committee, Donna Chrislip is Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness, and Diane Hegeman is Vice President for Instruction at Arapahoe Community College, in Littleton, Colorado.
This paper will discuss the culture change at Tulsa Community College (TCC)—from one of data denial to application of evidence—which was led from 2009 through 2012 by the Learning Effectiveness Sub-Council (LESC, a sub-council of TCC’s Academic Council). The LESC includes faculty from all four campuses and represents university transfer areas and workforce development areas. The LESC also includes representation from the associate deans, the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, the deans of University Transfer and Workforce Development and the campus provosts.

In January 2009, during TCC’s most recent reaffirmation of accreditation visit, Higher Learning Commission (HLC) reviewers made the following comments regarding TCC’s assessment process:

The absence of measurable program and learning outcomes assessment is a barrier to making effective assessment of student learning possible. Without the implementation of an intentional, systematic, and overarching assessment plan, the college will be unable to evaluate the acquisition of learning outcomes by the conclusion of the students’ program of studies.

At the time of the 2009 visit, TCC’s assessment of student learning was focused on developing course-embedded assessments of general education goals. These assessments were managed by individual faculty members, though it is clear that meaningful assessment was not taking place regularly in classroom-based instruction, and no useful data were being collected, collated, and communicated. Further, it was unclear whether any assessment was taking place in online instruction at all. In response to this critique, TCC developed a new college-wide assessment plan.

Development of a new plan was a gradual process, necessitating a shift in TCC’s institutional measures of learning. The LESC spent the first year developing, with extensive faculty and staff input, a college-wide learning outcomes plan, which included a cyclical system for gathering and disseminating assessment data results and program improvement decisions, as well as tools for developing and reporting on an action plan for improvement. These tools—Forms A, B, C, and D—guided academic divisions toward assessment planning and evaluation. Each of the forms included pertinent examples. The academic units collaborated college-wide to articulate common discipline/program goals and to identify the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to demonstrate progress toward those goals. The units chose one or more courses that require these skills, knowledge, and abilities; selected a common assessment activity that measures these skills, knowledge, and abilities; agreed upon common criteria to evaluate student learning against stated objectives; designated the desired level of proficiency expected; and estimated the percentage of students expected to demonstrate proficiency.

Unfortunately, throughout the planning and implementation of the new assessment system, from 2009 to 2012, the LESC faced early challenges that arose from TCC’s organizational structure as a multi-campus system. TCC has one program associate dean (AD) per campus; for example, there are four...
associate deans for the Business, or Psychology, or Mathematics departments. Yet there is no college-wide discipline dean with oversight for any area. Because of this distributed structure, associate deans took the lead in facilitating the discipline meetings, allocating responsibility for certain program areas to one associate dean. In so doing, they organized themselves according to a functional interest rather than through a reporting structure (e.g., the AD of science and math at the West Campus oversees the veterinary technician program, which resides at West). During the spring 2011 semester, the ADs convened faculty meetings, responded to faculty questions and concerns, and solicited the support of the LESC as needed to implement the assessment plan. For the most part, it worked well. Because this was a new process, however, uncertainty arose as to responsibility for completing assessments, reporting results, and finding ways to overcome challenges. Campus meetings were also conducted by LESC members throughout the year in an open venue for faculty members, staff members, and administrators.

In addition, during the past two years, debates and critical conversations (not always constructive) occurred at many faculty meetings. In some cases, faculty members united in thought and agreement; in others, agreement to disagree carried the day. Yet even the negative views were seen to contribute to the positive result. For example, one major benefit of this focused effort by ADs, backed by the central administration, has been that TCC has seen greater communication among faculty members in the same disciplines but on different campuses. This promotes more effective assessment and much greater consistency in delivery. Meetings and training opportunities have focused on conversations about student learning outcomes and how to write and measure them.

By the end of AY 2011, 90 percent of the college's academic divisions had determined program outcomes and had begun gathering data on the three program outcomes for student learning, providing the LESC the summary and analysis of the results on February 1, 2012. The offices of TCC's deans of University Transfer and Workforce Development, who have college-wide responsibilities, have gathered data from the associate deans and compiled the results. Included in those results was a plan for improvement, which could contain four routes to other areas in the college: (1) a curriculum committee for curricular changes; (2) a faculty development committee for instructional changes; (3) an academic council for interdivisional changes; or (4) other. The cycle of data gathering, analysis, and plan for improvement will be completed on an annual basis.

Another success came through a major shift in faculty expectations. The “dead” week before spring classes begin—a time when faculty members were formally on contract but never had to appear on campus—was used to review and reinforce TCC’s commitment to assessment. Specifically, the LESC organized a mandatory meeting for “Learning Effectiveness and Planning” (LEAP) for the first week of January 2012. Having already determined their program outcomes (with methods of assessment) and taken data by the end of the fall semester, faculty members were asked to meet with colleagues in their disciplines on LEAP Day to review data, analyze assessment results, and propose improvement plans. The LEAP event was met with some resistance but actually proved positive. Following are examples of assessment results exhibited during and after LEAP Day (note how results were used to support continuous improvement):

1. Faculty members teaching in Native American Studies assessed a fundamental issue in this discipline, namely, the contexts within which Native American tribal identities are constructed. Following the assessment, the faculty revised the curriculum to emphasize general concepts...
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence

included in the assessment criteria, rather than simply presenting the specific content that constitutes the concepts. This emphasis should provide a general conceptual checklist to guide students as they present particular examples of the concepts in their responses.

2. The Sociology assessment tool administered in spring 2011 was a set of three standard questions. The reporting faculty members saw that students had exceeded the initial goals of 65 percent success on all three questions. However, on-campus class results were found to be higher than online results, a discrepancy that led the faculty members to add more emphasis on social theory in the online course notes. Also, the faculty members revised and added material, especially on conflict theory, to be added to all online sections, for both eight- and sixteen-week sections.

3. In the Speech assessment, students were expected to demonstrate appropriate skills in extemporaneous oral presentation, with a mastery level of 70 percent or above. Students so far exceeded this goal that, based on the results, the Speech faculty concluded that the rubric did not accurately measure the criteria they intended to assess. Hence, they divided the goal into more specific measurement areas. As a result of the rubric changes and additions, the assessments are now more parallel across all campuses.

4. The English faculty members teaching Composition I (ENGL 1113) found that 80 percent of the assessed students scored in the less-than-satisfactory range, leading to a revision of the curriculum. Specifically, faculty members refined the Composition I curriculum to include more activities requiring reading, summarizing, and responding to reading. The full-time English faculty members also met with adjunct faculty members to review grading standards and curriculum.

LEAP Day 2012 marked the end of the first complete (that is, full-year, all-hands) cycle of student learning outcomes assessment under the new plan. Faculty members in the various academic units collaborated college-wide to accomplish the following: articulation of common discipline/program goals; identification of the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to demonstrate progress toward the goals; selection of one or more courses that require these skills, knowledge, and abilities; selection of a common assessment activity that measures these skills, knowledge, and abilities; agreement on common criteria to evaluate student learning against stated objectives; designation of a desired level of proficiency; and estimation of the percentage of students expected to demonstrate proficiency. A second LEAP Day, focused on writing solid student learning outcomes, was planned for January 2013. After two successful days, it is expected that LEAP will be an annual event.

These results were promising, but faculty members in various disciplines expressed continued confusion over the scope and purpose of this general assessment project at TCC. Hence, the college found it useful to provide ongoing faculty support for assessment practices, data analysis, and program evaluation. Most notable, as a result of the proposals the Faculty Development Sub-Council and the LESC presented to the Academic Council, in summer 2012 the college approved the appointment of a faculty director for a newly created Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to be focused on the scholarship of learning and teaching. The CELT director works with four campus coordinators (one per campus), known as CELTS (either “Selts” or “Kelts”), who are faculty members interested in developing faculty development opportunities and research-based practices. The college provides three credits of reassign time per semester for faculty mentors for each campus.
The first CELT-sponsored Mini Conference for faculty members was organized in November 2012 on Northeast Campus. The “Stayonference” offered sessions on library use and research and shared ideas for teaching and learning using Web 2.0 tools.

In addition to creating the positions of faculty director and campus coordinators, the college approved the appointment of a dean of Academic Assessment, a new position, who is charged with working with faculty members of all academic divisions to plan for, develop, gather, analyze, and form responses to the assessment of student learning outcomes. The dean works with four Student Learning Fellows, or SLFs (or “selfs”), who are faculty members expected to provide ongoing support to academic divisions in developing discipline and program assessment plans. The college also provides three-credits of reassign time per semester for the SLFs for each campus. The SLFs and the dean offered four “How’s Our Progress?” (HOP) Assessment Workshops, one on each campus, throughout the fall 2012 semester. The HOP workshops were an opportunity for each faculty member to review his or her own discipline’s progress in assessment and to focus on practicalities of assessing student learning. The workshops for the spring 2013 semester will focus on using the data management tool the college has purchased to support assessment. Other next steps to be managed by the dean and the faculty director include the following:

- Better assisting faculty members with data analysis, interpretation, and action plans
- Investigating Student Services or other cocurricular assessment
- Building capacity for faculty engagement at all levels
- Building an assessment website with resources
- Creating development opportunities (e.g., workshops, trainings) for faculty members and administrators
- Awarding recognition for best practices of assessment
- Reviewing general education goals and assessments
- Providing more systematic feedback to faculty members about their assessment results
- Tracking common course outcomes (i.e., course or curriculum mapping)

Within the next few years, TCC will be able to point to common course outcomes for all multi-sectioned courses. Progress is being made because faculty members and administrators are now talking frankly and candidly about assessment and how to best approach it (and even many of the original naysayers have joined these conversations). General understanding of the vocabulary and processes of assessment has grown. Faculty resistance to systematically assessing for student learning at a program/discipline level has lessened. This is a huge cultural shift at TCC, a re-orientation toward use of concrete data and other evidence of learning.

Steven Harmon Wilson is Dean of Academic Assessment, Angela Summers is Faculty Director of Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching and Associate Professor of Nursing, and Jeanne Urie is Student Learning Fellow and Assistant Professor of English at Tulsa Community College in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
At Western Illinois University, the interim associate provost and the coordinator for assessment work toward the achievement of the assessment of student learning goals across the university. One of the ways the results are clearly reported to constituents and stakeholders for accountability and improvement is through a remarkably simple but effective method: our four-step model. We have implemented this simple model of assessment of student learning with remarkable success over a six-year period. The culmination of this process is the use of a straightforward tool to summarize annual assessment conducted at Western Illinois University, report to our internal stakeholders, and easily compare progress—or change—over time.

Four-Step Model of Assessment of Student Learning

The four-step model of assessment of student learning is non-negotiable: all programs must assess and report on all four elements annually, regardless of program specifics, such as accreditation. The four steps, or parts, of the process are

1. **Learning Outcomes**: a list of expected learning outcomes for each major, graduate program, or post-baccalaureate certificate
2. **Direct Measures**: direct measures for each learning outcome (indirect are optional)
3. **Results**: results of data collected through measurement techniques
4. **Impact**: description of the way that results are used to improve student learning

The beauty of this model is the simplicity. There are few stipulations, although those are firm. For example, each learning outcome must be reported through the four steps. For clarity of reporting and to ensure that each learning outcome clearly follows through all four steps when reviewed, we require that reports be written using the following template:

1a. Learning Outcome #1
1b. Direct Measure
1c. Results
1d. Impact
2a. Learning Outcome #2
2b. Direct Measure
2c. Results
2d. Impact

We also require at least one direct measure for each learning outcome. Outcomes can share a direct measure, and programs are welcome to collect assessment data on indirect measures that are relevant to them. Nonetheless, we require direct measures for each learning outcome listed in the plan for assessment of student learning submitted by a department for each major, graduate program, and post-baccalaureate certificate.

Each program is required to conduct an assessment of each of its learning outcomes on at least an annual basis and to report the results annually to the college dean and to the provost's office. Although the interim associate provost and the coordinator for assessment facilitate the process, departments develop plans that fit their needs and have the time and freedom to rework assessment plans when necessary. We require each department to have a working plan for assessment of student learning on file in the provost's office and to submit a revised plan when changes arise.

**Recent Focus on Impact: Developing the Matrix**

Assessment of student learning outcomes in majors was initiated on our campus more than 13 years ago. In 2010–2011, we completed a Higher Learning Commission review and received strong approval in assessment of student learning. However, we are intent upon solidifying the fourth and final step, impact, within our institutional culture. The self-study process was an extensive review of our current situation, and we came to the realization that the impact of assessment of student learning was our weakest link. Although evidence of the impact of assessment in all areas from general education to curriculum revision in major programs was witnessed, it was not systematically collected and reported, nor was it collectively informing the process of assessment of student learning.

We needed a tool that would allow us to reflect on what we gathered, apply that knowledge to prompt change, and drive further assessment processes at the university level while holding individual departments accountable at the program level. To this end, in 2009 we developed a tool to assist with accountability and improvement of the implementation of the fourth step, impact: the assessment matrix that appears at the close of this paper. As of this writing, this tool has gone through three implementation cycles (we have used it for three years), has been extremely effective, and received a positive response from the campus community.

**The Matrix and Its Form**

The matrix serves to emphasize what Western Illinois University values most in assessment of student learning. It clarifies assessment practices and reports across campus, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and generates much useful discussion each year. We intentionally combine undergraduate, graduate, and teacher education reports into one matrix while still categorizing based upon their differences. In response to our emphasis on carefully considered learning outcomes measured thoroughly each year, direct measures for each learning outcome, clear results, and meaningful impact indicated (our “four step model”), we have evaluated department reports and practices in ways such as “effective,” “meets requirements minimally,” “no direct results,” and, in a very few cases, “no report submitted.”
Departments identified as “effective” do an excellent job of following the four steps, with an emphasis on direct measures for each learning outcome. For example, many departments administer standardized exams in their programs, require internships, or utilize course-embedded methods (e.g., combination of assignments, papers, or exams) that are naturally occurring within course work. Often, the use of a rubric is necessary for effective assessment. Graduate programs requiring an exit option would also utilize a rubric based upon the learning outcomes. The above, when combined with direct results organized by learning outcome and concluded by a discussion of the impact of assessment data, constitute “effective assessment.” As grades are not accepted as a means of assessment of student learning by the Higher Learning Commission, the submission of grades or grade-point-averages (GPA) is tallied as “non-assessment.” When we meet with departments, we work to remedy their use of grades or GPAs promptly.

**Using the Matrix to Elicit Change**

At Western Illinois University, we are now focusing on the final step in our model: impact. In this stage of the assessment cycle, academic programs reflect upon both the evidence of student learning and the process of collecting the data, taking time to consider the results as well as the extent to which the outcomes are on target and direct measures are effective. Reflecting on the process as well as the results informs the many forms the fourth step may take, from departmental conversations to necessary changes in syllabi and assignments or large-scale curricular changes. The cycle is continuous, however, and once impact is implemented, the cycle begins again, with changes integrated into the process as the annual cycle continues. Effective assessment of student learning also includes an evaluation of how the implemented alterations affect the program and whether further adjustments need to be made in the future as a result. Determining the success or failure of such changes is a key component of the process, and one that can happen only with continued reflection.

**Notes**

1. The matrix is helpful in encouraging those departments that lag behind to submit their materials. Although there are few such cases, the stark statement “no report submitted,” distributed university-wide, is often impetus enough to generate a report. The ranking system also encourages departments to do a thorough, consistent job throughout the assessment cycle prior to the report.

2. A more comprehensive view of assessment at Western Illinois University, our matrix, and other supporting documents may be found on the assessment of student learning Web site, at [www.wiu.edu/studentlearning](http://www.wiu.edu/studentlearning).
## College of Fine Arts and Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Effective Assessment</th>
<th>Requirements Minimally</th>
<th>No Direct Results (Indirect Only)</th>
<th>No Results</th>
<th>No Report Submitted</th>
<th>Grades Reported (Non-Assessment)</th>
<th>Plan Fits Report</th>
<th>No Updated Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art (BA) (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art (BFA) (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Teacher Education (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication (G)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Sciences and Disorders (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Sciences and Disorders (G)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Studies (G)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music (Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Music) (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music (Teacher Education)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music (G)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Theatre (BFA) (U)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Adapted from the original matrix developed by Judith M. Dallinger.

**Lori M. Baker-Sperry** is Professor of Women’s Studies and **Nancy P. Parsons** is Interim Associate Provost of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies at Western Illinois University in Macomb.
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix

Julie Weissman, Nancy Hellerud, and John Watts

Although the assessment movement was initiated more than twenty-five years ago, it still leaves many faculty members perplexed and frustrated. Assessment may be seen as not connected to the things that matter to faculty and, in fact, not connected to anything at all. This paper offers a different approach to working with faculty members on student learning outcomes assessment (SLOA). It proposes ways to reframe assessment that will create buy-in from faculty members by helping to resolve issues they face. The discussion here centers on efforts at Webster University and suggests activities and questions that may enable other colleges and universities to reframe assessment in the same way.

The Problem

When accreditors and university administrators speak to faculty members about SLOA, what those faculty members tend to hear is that they are not doing their jobs. Faculty members are asked, “Are your students learning?” and then they are asked to prove and improve student learning. This approach assumes that faculty are not doing their best to help students learn. They may perceive such words as accountability, evidence, data, prove, and improve as accusing them of being less-than-optimal teachers until they provide evidence otherwise. To do so, they are asked to use methodologies that may be unfamiliar to those in disciplines outside the social sciences. Rubrics with scales and means applied to direct measures of student learning may be a foreign language to some. “Student performance” has a very different meaning to a theater instructor than to an instructor who is steeped in SLOA.

Even if faculty members gather and analyze assessment data, they may still not know what to do with the results. Determining if there is a problem in student learning, where the problem lies, and what to do about that problem requires types of interpretations of results and discussions at department meetings other than the usual business. Instead of SLOA being seen as a process to fix a problem, it may be seen as creating a problem, particularly additional work imposed by others that has limited value.

Ewell (2005) suggests using SLOA to “work on real problems somebody has.” This is appropriate and seems like common sense but may be perceived, again, as asking faculty members to improve student learning. Where do they start? How do they discover the problem? An instructor is used to focusing on individual students, looking at a student’s pattern of learning across measures in a class to give a grade. An instructor recognizes when an individual student is not learning. Faculty members are not used to focusing on students collectively, looking at their patterns of learning across measures of student learning outcomes, especially beyond their own course sections.
Setting the Stage

In July 2010, Webster University created the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and hired a director. One of that director’s first tasks was to compile evidence from the departments to comply with a progress report mandated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on assessment as a result of the previous accreditation visit. The OIE director communicated to the academic units what was needed in the progress report to satisfy the HLC. She defined the purpose and process of SLOA and a rubric for evaluating assessment plans and reports. However, these activities carried the traditional message to faculty that SLOA was about gathering evidence to improve student learning, particularly to comply with accreditation requirements. As the director came to learn more about Webster and its challenges, she came to realize that there needed to be a different approach to SLOA.

The OIE director soon learned that, throughout its history, Webster University has been deeply committed to student success and to excellence in teaching. In fact, Webster University’s mission statement includes the university’s student learning outcomes of “global citizenship” and “individual excellence” and its commitment to ensuring “high quality learning experiences”: “Webster University, a worldwide institution, ensures high quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.” Being “worldwide” means the university has multiple locations in the United States, in cities and on military bases, and in Europe and Asia, as well as various delivery systems and students who move from one location to another and from on-ground to online and back again.

As the OIE director worked with departments to prepare their assessment reports, she saw that faculty members were not resistant to doing SLOA; they were just perplexed about how to do it and what to do with the results. The purpose and process statements she had developed were not communicating sufficiently to assist instructors. Faculty members struggled to write good student learning outcomes, especially at the program level, and they struggled with analyzing and using SLOA results. They also faced the challenge of incorporating SLOA across the world of Webster.

One of the director’s first actions was to form the University Assessment Committee with the following mission:

The Webster University Assessment Committee provides a forum to share successful practices; fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue on assessment, curricula, and pedagogy; discusses assessment software options; and recommends a framework for reporting on assessment results.

Together with the University Assessment Committee, the OIE director began to plan how to reframe SLOA to meet the unique challenges facing Webster, specifically faculty members worldwide who needed to understand the value of SLOA, to be trained in doing SLOA, and to have access to participate in SLOA.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix

The Fix

To get stakeholders to buy in to a process, they must see that process as providing value to what they do. Instead of viewing SLOA as the problem, the fix was to have Webster faculty perceive SLOA as a process to address their curricular and pedagogical problems. The OIE director set about discovering the problems that faculty members face. Following are five steps she took in this direction, along with suggestions for how these steps can be carried out at other colleges and universities and examples from Webster University.

Listen

The first step was to listen to faculty members’ complaints, challenges, and problems that center on curricular and pedagogical issues. For example, are faculty members concerned about students being prepared for the work in their classes (research papers, group work, or presentations)? Are they concerned that their students are prepared for capstone experiences, including projects, theses, and dissertations? Do students have difficulty with particular courses? Do they view any courses as barriers to completing a particular major?

At Webster, the OIE director heard faculty members discuss problems like these that indicated challenges to what she termed “curricular coherence” at the course and program levels. Webster faculty members had this to say about course-level coherence:

- The course I’m teaching is also taught in Vienna, but I hear from students that the syllabus is very different there. Why are we teaching different things? What’s the purpose of this course?
- My students tell me that their friends taking other sections of my course don’t have to write research papers. Isn’t writing research papers an essential component of this course?

Typical comments about program-level coherence were as follows:

- In the first weeks of my class, I end up introducing and teaching material that I assumed was covered in a previous course. How do I find out what was taught in previous courses?
- I teach our program’s capstone course. Students have to do a final project. They are rarely prepared to do so. Why weren’t they taught how to do these types of projects in previous courses?

At the course level, it appeared that sections of a course did not have the same student learning outcomes or assessment measures. At the program level, the comments indicated that courses may not have been sequenced appropriately and students may not have been prepared for capstone courses.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix

Inquire
The second step was to determine one or more key issues from the feedback received and then ask faculty members if they also would rank those as the key issues. There are a number of ways to approach faculty members for this feedback:

- Invite yourself to meetings where faculty members are present. Ask them questions to discover curricular and pedagogical issues they face.
- Ask the members of your assessment committee. If you do not have one, form one. Set it up as a learning community rather than as a monitoring committee.
- Talk with the staff members in your teaching center. Ask them why faculty members come to the center and what kinds of help they need.
- Ask faculty members to share their syllabi with you and with each other. Focus on the student learning outcomes. Are student learning outcomes the same from one section to the next? Are student learning outcomes being duplicated from one course to another?
- Ask a department to explain its curriculum to you. How are the courses sequenced? Are the course outcomes related to the program outcomes? Are the outcomes being communicated to students?
- Hold focus groups or informal discussions with students. Are students complaining that the workload is different from one section to another of the same course? Are students complaining that their faculty members are not engaging them—for example, that instructors use only lectures as a teaching method? Do students understand why they need to take required courses in a major?
- Conduct research, for example, on course-taking patterns and grades students receive in certain courses to discover if they are stumbling blocks to student success.

At Webster, the OIE director talked with the University Assessment Committee and staff members from the Faculty Development Center to discover if curricular coherence was the key issue Webster faced that SLOA could help resolve.

Propose
The third step involved using existing committees and structures to propose the idea of reframing SLOA as a problem-solving process for the issues that faculty members have identified. At Webster, the OIE director began to rework SLOA materials to focus on using SLOA to address curricular coherence. She used the members of the University Assessment Committee and the Faculty Development Center as sounding boards for her materials. Given Webster’s mission statement and the challenges it presents, she redefined SLOA as a collaborative process of inquiry to ensure high-quality learning experiences for Webster students worldwide.

Test
The fourth step involved trying out new definitions and materials for SLOA wherever faculty are present, especially at conferences and workshops on teaching and learning. Huba and Freed (2000, 72) suggest testing whether the curricular or pedagogical problems that have been identified have a “compelling interest” for faculty.
Beginning in summer 2012, Webster’s OIE director began to give presentations at Webster faculty conferences, curriculum committees, conferences with off-campus site directors, deans’ meetings, and at other venues with faculty about reframing SLOA to examine curricular coherence. The reframing of SLOA as a problem-solving process and the new definition have resonated with faculty members as they work effectively to deliver high quality learning experiences to Webster students worldwide.

**Implement**

The fifth step involved working with faculty members, repeating, wherever and whenever possible, that SLOA is a problem-solving process that can be used as a tool to address identified issues. As Ewell (2009) outlines, work with faculty members to imagine the results if they do use SLOA as a problem-solving tool.

Discovering the challenge of curricular coherence across the world of Webster led to the development of revised materials to use in talking with faculty members about the value of SLOA as a problem-solving process. The OIE director posed the following questions to faculty: What does Webster University look like when we achieve curricular coherence? How do faculty and students benefit from curricular coherence?

To reach faculty worldwide for training and participation in SLOA with the focus on curricular coherence, two initiatives are under way at Webster. From the discussions of the University Assessment Committee came the idea of a Web-based “how to” guide to SLOA, called “Navigating the World of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment.” This guide is the result of collaboration among members of the University Assessment Committee, including the OIE director, Library staff, Faculty Development Center staff, and faculty members in the disciplines of Video Production and Advertising. To facilitate faculty participation in SLOA worldwide, the university purchased an assessment software system, Tk20. This system will facilitate data gathering, analysis, and reporting across the world of Webster. It will also assist with curriculum mapping, in which faculty members prepare a grid that demonstrates the relationships between course and program outcomes.

**Conclusion**

Before beginning and throughout the reframing of SLOA at Webster University, it was crucial to acknowledge that faculty members are dedicated to teaching excellence, student success, and continuous improvement of their teaching in their classes. Focusing first on using SLOA to examine curricular coherence moved the attention away from individual faculty members and their success as teachers. Few departments, unless mandated, examine their curricula on a regular basis. Through listening and inquiry, it is possible to discover the specific curricular problems that exist. Of course, discovering the problem is just the first step. Faculty members then have to be instructed on how to do SLOA and how to use the results.

Currently, Webster is focusing on one key issue, curricular coherence, that SLOA can help resolve. At other institutions, there may not be one unifying issue. Curricular and pedagogical challenges may vary across the institution. The key is to discover the challenges and to help faculty use SLOA to address them.
REFERENCES


http://learningoutcomesassessment.org/documents/PeterEwell_008.pdf.


Julie Weissman is Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Nancy Hellerud is Associate Provost, and John Watts is Instruction and Liaison Services Librarian to the School of Education at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri.
Adult students want to know how well they are meeting academic expectations and how they can improve their performance. A 2012 Noel-Levitz national survey found that adult students report instructional effectiveness and academic advising to be the two most important priorities of their higher education experience. These needs are reasonable and pragmatic for the adult learner, who is often simultaneously working and engaged in family life (Offerman 2010). Unfortunately, rarely are these needs sufficiently met, with many students having a difficult time articulating the value of their college experience beyond the credential it produces (Tagg 2003).

A major obstacle for students is identifying and articulating their academic accomplishments and challenges. Earning a grade of “A” tells students something about their success but does not specify the competencies demonstrated. More problematic than the generic, and often normative, nature of course grades is the frequent non-alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Accrediting agencies and administrators are aware of this risk and have successfully focused on systems for improvement, but these gains have not yet resulted in a broadly integrated student learning experience (Provezis 2010). It is understandable that progress has been slow, given the difficulty of establishing alignment, which often involves specifying curricular goals, models of student cognition, performance standards, methods of observation, instructional strategies, contextual demands, and appropriate interpretations (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, and Glaser 2001; Maki 2010; Wiggins and McTighe 2001). Further, faculty members may be unaware of intentional course design approaches themselves, making it difficult to help students draw clear connections between the content and professional applications of course room activities. The effect across higher education has been remarkably little systematic development in teaching and assessing the most common undergraduate learning outcomes (Bok 2008). For students, the result is a disjointed academic experience that breeds cynicism, undermines motivation, and devalues degrees.

Since 2006, Capella University has been attempting to address these challenges by aligning course assessments with curricular goals in order to report on each learner’s demonstration of course-level competencies. A competency map displays to students their status and progress toward demonstrating each competency. Students can use the competency map to conceptualize their academic experience, communicate accomplishments, and focus their future studying habits. The information on the competency map also helps several other stakeholders focus on students’ academic accomplishments and needs. Faculty can use the competency map to monitor change over time, personalize formative feedback, and identify systemic challenges across students. Academic advisors can use a competency map to collaborate with students on setting long-term mastery goals and creating educational plans to improve academic performance. Initial results from learner focus groups, a proof-of-concept with faculty, and an operational self-paced pilot have refined the usability of the competency map and confirmed its utility.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths

Learner Focus Group

In the second academic quarter of 2012 and the first quarter of 2013, we presented a sample of learners with several designs for a competency map and questioned them about each design’s potential utility. Learners in these sessions reported several reactions, such as the following, that helped guide the design of the competency map:

- Learners valued knowing how well they were meeting faculty’s performance expectations but were not as interested in comparing their performance to peers.
- Learners valued seeing the relationship between the curriculum, instructional activities, and assessments, especially relative to forthcoming assessments and future courses.
- Learners wanted a clear path for action in response to a low competency status, such as displaying their instructor’s contact information.

Proof of Concept with Faculty

Throughout third and fourth quarters of 2012, a small group of faculty members teaching general education courses were provided with an early form of the competency map reports. These reports were data files for each student in their course, listing the faculty member’s criterion judgments and the student’s current competency status. Faculty members were asked to review these files throughout the quarter and incorporate insights into their communications with each student. Faculty members were provided with an annotated list of instructional resources that could be incorporated into their feedback. The goal of this proof-of-concept was to test scaling the analytic techniques involved in calculating a learner’s competency status and to evaluate the faculty members’ change-management needs. The faculty members’ feedback on the proof-of-concept project was solicited formally via a conference call listening session and a short survey. The list below highlights some of the common findings from this feedback:

- Many faculty members struggled to incorporate the learner-specific data files into their teaching and assessment practices. Suggested enhancements included offering an enhanced visual display, incorporating the report data into their workflow, and providing an aggregated report across all learners in their course.
- Faculty members believed that they received accurate information about each learner’s demonstration of the course competencies. One faculty member reported comparing the report’s data with his or her own stored information and found these sources to match, suggesting the report was accurate.
- Survey results revealed that all but one respondent believed that this information would improve their teaching effectiveness. For example, one faculty member reported, “I would use the analytics to ascertain ‘trouble spots’ for learners and provide additional coaching based on this information.”

Operational Self-paced Pilot

In the first quarter of 2013, four undergraduate business courses and four master’s of business administration (MBA) courses were redesigned to require demonstration of competency. After faculty
members marked each assessment, learners received an e-mail stating their current competency status. These e-mails calculated competency status by utilizing each course’s criterion-to-competency alignment documentation. Learners who struggled to demonstrate a competency at acceptable levels were notified via e-mail and flagged for outreach via their academic adviser. Preliminary results have shown positive learner reception to these courses and successful operational business processes.

Conclusion

Conceptualizing the personal and professional changes resulting from a higher education program is a challenge. A helpful step institutional leaders can take is to align and document the relationships between their program’s curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Based on our experience, this information can form the basis for helpful multi-stakeholder reports on student learning. As additional institutions implement similar initiatives, it is our hope that measures of competency demonstration will be incorporated into the operations and governance of higher education.

REFERENCES


Deborah Bushway is Vice President of Academic Innovation, Genevieve Feliu is Faculty Chair, and Jeff Grann is Associate Director of Assessment and Learning Analytics at Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
The purpose of this paper is to introduce the Problem-Solving Analysis Protocol (P-SAP) and the Cognitive Learning Scale (CLS), two instruments that may be used to assess cognitive outcomes of experiential learning related to problem solving, critical thinking, and student perceptions of academic learning. The P-SAP uses a written problem-solving protocol to assess critical analysis and problem solving. A real-world issue relevant to the course material is presented to students with a set of follow-up questions related to consequences, causes, and solutions. The protocols are scored using two global rubrics, one that measures locus of problem solving and the other that measures complexity of problem solving. The CLS is a nine-item pretest-posttest that uses a Likert-type rating scale. The pretest CLS uses the stem, “Typically, course requirements that go beyond participation in class and assigned readings”; and the posttest CLS uses the stem, “In this course, course requirements that went beyond participation in class and assigned readings.” The set of statements are the same for the pretest and posttest and include items such as the following: do/did “help me to spontaneously generate my own examples of principles and concepts I am learning about in class” and do/did) “not teach me how to apply things I learned in class to real problems” (reverse scored). Both instruments were originally developed for research on the effects of service-learning, but they have more recently been applied to outcome assessment.

This paper includes findings from research studies that have used the tools—including available reliability and validity measures—as well as the manner in which the tools have been used to assess student learning. Elsewhere, the authors have written more extensively about assessment of cognitive outcomes of service-learning. In the electronic journal Research and Practice in Assessment, Steinke and Fitch (2007a) review a variety of tools that can be used to assess knowledge application, intellectual development, critical thinking, and problem solving as outcomes of service-learning. Both the P-SAP and CLS are included in this review. Fitch, Steinke, and Hudson (2013) discuss research and theoretical perspectives on cognitive outcomes of service-learning, specifically, transfer, problem solving, and metacognition as cognitive processes related to critical thinking and intellectual development. The P-SAP is included as one of several tools and strategies that can be used to assess service-learning outcomes.

Review of Research Studies Using the Instruments

The authors have used both the CLS and the P-SAP in several previous research studies. The results of the P-SAP reported here involved coding each individual question for both locus and complexity rather than generating a global measure of each. Steinke, Fitch, Johnson, and Waldstein (2002) conducted an interdisciplinary study of service-learning courses across twelve small colleges. Predictors included
variables that prior research has identified as best practices in service-learning, such as reflection, quality of service-learning placement, community engagement, diversity within the service-learning experience, and student voice/choice. Outcomes included cognitive learning (as measured by an earlier version of the CLS), intellectual development, civic engagement, spiritual and ethical development, and community impact. All five predictors were significantly related to cognitive learning but much less so for the other outcomes.

Steinke and Harrington (2002) used an earlier version of the CLS as well as an open-ended measure of shared knowledge between the instructor and the student in response to an open-ended protocol. This protocol was a precursor to the P-SAP. The open-ended measure showed good inter-rater reliability between two independent coders with a correlation of $r(183) = .86$, $p < .001$. Scores on both measures were highly correlated and both were positive indicators of cognitive learning in natural science service-learning courses.

The development of the P-SAP is described in Steinke and Fitch (2003), where results from tests of reliability and validity are reported. Using responses to the P-SAP from a range of courses in different disciplines, this study found good inter-rater reliability between two independent coders with a correlation of $r(23) = .77$, $p < .001$. An earlier, eight-item version of the CLS showed good inter-item scale reliability with Alpha = .87. Further, the P-SAP measures were significantly related to other measures specific to intellectual development and cognitive learning.

Further research on both the CLS and the P-SAP is reported in a paper by Steinke and Fitch (2007b), where they analyzed the results of both instruments as used in three pairs of courses from three different disciplines. Each pair included one service-learning course and one comparable course with a non-service-learning, active-learning assignment. Based on the research done previously, an item specific to depth of understanding was added to the original eight-item version of the CLS, and the final nine-item version of the CLS was used in this study. Both the pretest and the posttest CLS showed good inter-item scale reliability with Alphas = .86 and .83, respectively. On the P-SAP, the percent agreement between two independent coders across the total number of variables coded showed an overall agreement of 84 percent. The responses of students in service-learning classes were compared to the responses of students in the comparable non-service-learning classes for both measures. Results revealed that students in service-learning classes scored significantly higher on the posttest CLS than students in comparable classes did, and the CLS means increased over the semester for service-learning students but decreased for those in comparable classes. The findings were particularly striking because the non-service-learning classes included active-learning projects. Students in service-learning classes also scored significantly higher on the P-SAP locus and complexity measures than students in comparable classes did. These results demonstrated consistent findings between direct and indirect measures of cognitive learning, although, as is consistent with other findings in service-learning, the effect size for the indirect, self-report CLS measure was larger than the effect size for the direct P-SAP measure. In addition, course grade point was positively correlated with all P-SAP measures, and posttest CLS scores were positively correlated with all P-SAP measures except one. These results provided evidence of construct validity for the cognitive skills captured by the P-SAP.
Recent Developments in the Instruments for Use in Assessment

Given that the instruments were both originally developed for research on course-based service-learning, some modifications and further testing have been done and are in progress to adapt the measures to student learning outcome assessment across a range of curricular and co-curricular programs. Institutions that have used the instruments come from various states and include community colleges, universities, and liberal arts colleges. It is important to the authors that those who use the instruments feel comfortable adapting them to their own assessment needs and program outcomes.

The CLS has remained a nine-item pretest-posttest scale, but modifications are being tested on the stem for more flexibility and greater clarity, depending on the context in which it is used. For example, some users of the scale wish to specify the type of course requirements that go beyond participation in the class and assigned reading or give several examples of what these might include. Those who use the CLS for co-curricular programs have needed to make minor edits to both the stem and the items, including substituting the word program for class. In some cases, it does not make sense to include both a pretest and a posttest, so only the posttest is used.

The P-SAP now includes a global scoring rubric for greater ease of use in assessment and is being tested for various ways to integrate it into assessment, including assessment within course assignments. The authors have experimented with embedding the instrument into their courses, both as a class reflection tool and as a question included in the final exam. This has allowed the instrument to generate pretest and posttest responses by being embedded as a class exercise at the beginning of the course and as a final exam question at the end of the course. Those at other institutions have used it to assess more institution-wide outcomes, such as general education outcomes or outcomes specific to the strategic plan by administering it to incoming first-year students, mid-level students, and graduating seniors. In this case, students may need to take it only once.

The shared vision of the authors for both instruments is that they continue to be developed and that those who use them share what they learn so that others can adapt them to be most effective for assessment. In this way, the vision for their use and development is similar to the way that the current rubrics from the Association of American Colleges and Universities are being used and adapted on individual campuses. Ultimately, making available a variety of valid, reliable, and flexible assessment tools should contribute to the continued improvement of student learning overall.

Notes
1. Participants who attended the conference session were guided through a process that helped them (1) identify the strengths, limitations, and appropriate uses of the P-SAP and the CLS; (2) specify how to score and analyze data generated from the two instruments; and (3) apply the use of the instruments to their home campuses. Both tools are available for use at no charge by contacting Peggy Fitch at fitchp@central.edu; the authors simply request that those who use them share their findings in order to contribute to the ongoing development of the tools.

2. Those most likely to have an interest in these tools are those whose role is to assess relevant cognitive outcomes for undergraduate or graduate students in academic or co-curricular programs, particularly those that may involve service-learning or other experiential learning approaches.
REFERENCES


_Peggy Fitch_ is Vice President for Student Development at Central College in Pella, Iowa. _Pamela Steinke_ is Assessment Coordinator at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois.
An Overview of the Wisconsin Technical College System

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) is a system of sixteen technical college districts in Wisconsin. The WTCS offers more than three hundred occupational training programs. In 2011, more than twenty-seven thousand degrees and diplomas were granted, ranging from short-term technical diplomas to associate’s degrees in applied science. In 2011, 370,000 students were served in the technical college system.

Wisconsin was the first state to establish a system of state support for vocational, technical, and adult education. Now the WTCS is the coordinating agency for the state’s sixteen technical colleges. WTCS’s board establishes statewide policies and standards for the educational programs and services provided by the state’s sixteen technical college districts. The district boards, in turn, are responsible for the direct operation of their respective schools and programs. They are empowered to levy property taxes, provide for facilities and equipment, employ staff, and contract for services. The districts set academic and grading standards, appoint the district directors, hire instructional and other staff, and manage the district budget.

The WTCS has a long history of competency-based education matched to industry requirements. To foster this alignment, Wisconsin State Statute 38.14 addresses the role of advisory committees in shaping the content of occupational programs in the following clause:

(5) ADVISORY COMMITTEES. The district board may establish advisory committees representing every occupation in the district. Each advisory committee shall consist of equal numbers of employers and employees selected by the district board from recommendations submitted by representative organizations and associations of each occupation. The district board and the district director may request the advice and assistance of these advisory committees in selecting, purchasing and installing equipment, in preparing course materials, in developing instructional methods and vocational guidance programs and for such other purposes as the district board desires.

In addition, WTCS created a clear policy (Administrative Bulletin 09-04) requiring each degree program to have an advisory committee, which comprises employers and former students or graduates of the program. The advisory committee advises on program curriculum to ensure that graduating students
have the skills they need for their intended occupation. College staff members design occupational program curriculum around program outcomes or statements, validated by advisory committees, which identify what students can verifiably demonstrate upon successful completion of the program. The system has been assessing student performance based on the program outcomes for a hundred years, and it further developed outcome-based learning and assessment with the evolution of a WTCS model for designing and assessing learning (Bullock et al. 2008). The WTCS leadership commitment to effectiveness and accountability in education continues through the Technical Skills Attainment (TSA) implementation approach, in which program faculty members align program learning and assessment activities with program outcomes.

The 2006 Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act called for a new level of accountability in the assessment of TSA with the addition of a core postsecondary indicator. In 2007, the Department of Education identified three categories of assessments as gold, silver, and bronze standards. These categories indicated measures of skill attainment as a third-party assessment for the gold standard, followed by internal assessment for silver, and course completion for bronze. However, Wisconsin argued to the Department of Education that pushing programs to a gold standard would be costly for students and taxpayers and in many programs would require additional work when a logical third party does not exist. This paved the way to build on the existing framework of competency-based education to quantify technical skill attained for the purpose of Perkins reporting and other college and system accountability systems.

The WTCS data system collects data elements from each of the sixteen colleges. Data metrics required for most accountability reports come from this data system, including those for Carl Perkins funding requirements, such as graduation rates, course completion rates, and nontraditional student participation and completion. In 2008, in response to the Carl Perkins Technical and Career Education Act of 2006, WTCS’s plan included a strategy to “Identify, validate, and measure technical skill attainment for postsecondary career and technical education programs” (Wisconsin Technical College System 2008). The response was to develop a framework to gather data and report on metrics identified by Perkins legislation to include the ratio of the number of students who passed the program technical skill attainment to those who took the technical skill attainment. WTCS uses the data elements for Perkins and as well as for continuous improvement systems.

The Technical Skill Attainment Framework

TSA is a tool used to document learning of specific knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSA), and competencies, which allows the WTCS and districts to gather, share, and learn from those programs achieving desired outcomes. The WTCS data system allows districts to report metrics on student success tied to shared performance criteria, which WTCS staff aggregate and analyze at a statewide level. Expert faculty identifies performance criteria and verifies it with industry partners and advisory committees.

The WTCS TSA initiative was in response to changes in the Carl Perkins legislation, which required additional program accountability measures to include technical skill attainment metrics for all programs. In 2009, WTCS began working with select programs to identify common program outcomes across the same or similar programs at multiple colleges and subsequent assessment strategies. With the TSA framework, WTCS designed a process to formally document the outcomes and develop
metrics for reporting accountability (Wisconsin Technical College System 2008). Using this process, colleges with the same or similar programs meet to determine common program outcomes. Colleges with unique programs in the state identify program outcomes individually. If a valid reliable option for a third party exists, the program faculty groups explore third-party options. Initially, ideas on how programs should select appropriate assessments centered on selecting third-party assessments. Many third-party assessments offer a great independent review of student skills that are industry-aligned; however, a majority of occupational programs do not have such assessments. In addition, program faculty members consider the cost and value to the student when selecting a third-party assessment. It is Wisconsin’s experience that data is often difficult to obtain from third-party vendors on a student level, which is required for Perkins reporting.

If no third party exists, program faculty members identify common rubrics with pass and fail criteria. Program faculty members integrate these rubrics into the curriculum and assessment approach at each college. Colleges are responsible for collecting data on TSA assessment, along with other data elements reported by the colleges, and reporting the data to the WTCS data system. WTCS then aggregates the data on a state level for purposes of Perkins accountability. WTCS reports the collected data to the Department of Education in the Consolidated Annual Report (CARS) with specific accountability metrics. More important, colleges use the data locally in continuous program quality improvement. Data assures both students and employers that students acquire the skills in their occupational program that employers need. The TSA process formalizes student assessment, provides comparable data metrics, and engages colleges in meaningful conversations about program outcomes and assessment in shared occupational programs. Colleges are required to report their technical skill attainment metrics to WTCS, which some programs started in 2011–2012.

Wisconsin’s approach on TSA is different from that of other states that are searching solely for third-party assessments. One example is Missouri, which is using an industry-recognized third party along with newly developed third-party assessments (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 2012). Wisconsin views this approach as missing an opportunity to engage in development of shared program outcomes and performance criteria in non-industry credentialed programs. For example, A.S.K. Business Institute offers exams to assess business and marketing concepts, which bypasses the role of local industry partners (A.S.K. 2013). Florida uses a formula that identifies students having earned at least 75 percent of required program credit hours with a GPA of 2.5 or higher, or students pass a valid and reliable evaluation instrument applicable to their program area (Florida Department of Education 2011).

Value to Students, Employers and Colleges

Although the Perkins Act requires designing a process to collect student technical skill assessment, leadership at WTCS has determined that the technical skill attainment process has value in other key ways:

1. Faculty members inform students up front about the program outcomes and expected competencies upon completion.
2. Colleges, through their faculty and advisory committees identify competencies and performance measures to assess students and use assessment data for program evaluation.
3. College outcome-based approaches assure employers that the students hired from programs have the skills required for specific occupations.

First, the TSA provides students with clear expectations of program outcomes and performance criteria because program faculty members review the TSA plan with each student. Students engage in an occupation-specific learning process, including learning activities, that align the high-level program outcomes with specific and measurable performance criteria. As students progress through the program, faculty members provide student feedback on these performance measures throughout the program. Depending on the program assessment plan, students may be assessed in their courses and/or complete a capstone portfolio, take a third-party exam that aligns industry competencies with program outcomes, or complete pieces of the TSA at specific program milestones. Students understand why the content they are learning is important and how faculty members assess students. This process allows students to manage their learning outcomes and focus on the relevant competencies they need for their occupational role. Programs that have implemented a TSA process are still gathering completion data on their initial cohort of students. There is still a need for further research into how the engagement of students in the TSA process affects their successfully passing the TSA.

Second, the TSA process is valuable to colleges; it engages faculty members and advisory boards in discussion about relevant program outcomes and curriculum design and generates data to use for program evaluation and improvement. Colleges have historically used advisory committees for continuous improvement and feedback on program curriculum to ensure that students learn the skills required for the jobs they want after they graduate, not obsolete or antiquated skill sets. With the TSA process, the formalized documentation of aligning the curriculum and program outcomes with assessments provides program evaluation information to the college; faculty members can easily identify content areas that are missing, need reinforcing, or are no longer relevant. In addition, the TSA process provides a way in which colleges can measure skill attainment for students who job out without completing or graduating.

Third, local industry’s involvement in the TSA process ensures that colleges deliver programs to address specific skills gaps and requirements and that students in their districts gain the necessary skills to fill those jobs. Industry provides critical feedback to college staff on relevant program outcomes. This involvement has been seamless because local industry partners, as members of the district’s program advisory board members, are already convening and providing input to the curriculum and program outcomes and competencies in the occupational programs.

Discussion and Conclusions

The TSA process is not without imperfections. The TSA is largely unfunded, and often the third-party assessments are cost-prohibitive to the students and to the college. Third-party data are often difficult to access without navigating a difficult Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) landscape. In addition, Perkins requires colleges to report the assessment within six months of graduation. This is difficult for many of the industry-recognized certifications that also require work experience. Funding to cover costs to gather and facilitate faculty members to define common core program outcomes and develop rubrics has decreased significantly in recent years. Many programs at multiple colleges
have completed this step; however, there are programs that have yet to complete this process. Notably, without formal facilitation, many unique programs in the state are struggling to complete this step.

Examples of third-party assessment are the automotive technology and technician programs. The TSA selected the National Automotive Technician Education Foundation (NATEF) end-of-program assessments. Students take these assessments in eight of the areas defined by NATEF that also are the same areas as the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) industry credentials. This series of exams serves multiple purposes. First, students are not only better prepared to take the ASE credential exams, but they get information on their performance in the eight areas. Second, the process assures employers that students have gained knowledge in the industry areas. Third, the college and instructors receive data on the quality of educational programming that they are providing students and opportunities to continuously improve the automotive education experience.

For the internal or WTCS assessments, data collection at the colleges is often a challenge. Colleges within the system do not necessarily use the same enterprise software, so it is difficult for the staff at WTCS to provide guidance on local data collection. The accounting program at Milwaukee Area Technical College is an example of an internal assessment in which the TSA assessment plan is designed to test and measure technical competencies in each appropriate course throughout the program curriculum. Faculty members determine the most logical sequence for assessing students at strategic intervals in the curriculum and forward this to their associate deans, who in turn enter the data into the student information data system. Other programs have selected an end-of-program assessment approach that incorporates a capstone course using a summative assessment of learning outcomes. Challenges exist for collecting and storing data for students who move from program to program and those who leave and re-enter. This is particularly true in situations in which faculty design the assessment in multiple steps or milestones across the program.

Additional challenges include using the data for process improvements. WTCS has a quality improvement system that utilizes metrics and is moving toward including the TSA metrics in this system. WTCS’s data system allows it to aggregate the data statewide. Several programs, such as the automotive programs, have been using this data metric for continuous improvement for years—and without Perkins legislation. The numbers aggregated by the WTCS are a measure of TSA completion under Carl Perkins requirements and a means to gauge student and program success. Continued use of the TSA process and evaluation findings by the WTCS and local districts will lead to sharing best practices across colleges and making state-level policy or program decisions.

REFERENCES


Sandra Schmit and Moira Lafayette are Education Directors at Wisconsin Technical College System in Madison.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days

Christina L. Frazier and David Starrett

According to the protocol for peer reviewers reviewing credit hours under the Higher Learning Commission’s new policies, the federal definition of a credit hour is

an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally-established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than: (1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward the award of credit hours. 34CFR 600.2 (11/1/2010). (Higher Learning Commission 2013)

Compliance with the federal regulations has been included in comprehensive evaluations for candidacy, biennial visits, evaluations for initial or continued accreditation, and AQIP Quality Checkup Visits occurring on or after January 1, 2012. For face-to-face classes, this definition can easily be met by counting “seat time.” However, at Southeast Missouri State University, 12 percent of student credit hours are delivered in online courses. In addition, due in part to recent university-wide course-redesign activities, a number of sections are offered in a blended or hybrid format. Therefore, the university needed to develop procedures to establish equivalency. Course-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) provide an excellent tool to document student learning and achievement. Comparisons can be made between the levels of student learning in different course formats and thus be used to establish credit-hour equivalency between online and face-to-face sections of the same course. In addition SLOs could be used to enhance reporting of student learning to regional and disciplinary accrediting bodies and as an aid in the validation of the course redesign project. SLOs also provide a powerful tool for individual faculty members to determine if students are learning key concepts in their courses, provide impetus for pedagogical and content changes, and afford a way to measure whether these changes increased student performance. In the development and assessment of the course-specific SLOs, cooperation between faculty members teaching different sections of the same course can facilitate consistency among sections of that course.

Planning for this project began in late fall 2011 with the appointment of a Quick Quip committee (Quick Quip committees are established to address a specific task) of faculty members, administrators, and students to oversee the process. At the beginning of the 2012 spring semester, the initial steps to introduce the project to the entire campus community were taken at an all-campus meeting. Project completion was planned for spring 2013 to coincide with a scheduled AQIP Quality Checkup Visit. However, in late spring 2012 the university was informed that its Quality Checkup Visit had been rescheduled for the beginning of September 2012. The problems created by the shortened
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days

time frame were exacerbated by the fact that most faculty members are not on campus during the summer. Under normal circumstances, developing SLOs can be a long and detailed process riddled with roadblocks. When the time available to develop and implement SLOs is limited, however, the process must be modified so that it is short but no less thorough. Anticipating and diffusing potential problems were thus an important part of developing effective SLOs in an abbreviated time frame. The project was divided into three distinct phases. The target of the first phase was to develop three course-level student learning outcomes for all courses scheduled to be taught in fall 2012, have them approved by the end of the spring 2012 semester, and have them incorporated into course syllabi by the beginning of the fall 2012 semester. Next, during the fall 2012, we concentrated on establishing course-level methods for measuring and reporting student achievement of these individual outcomes and developing university processes for gathering the data. SLOs were measured and reported for all courses taught in the fall 2012 semester. Student performance on course-level SLOs will be measured for all courses taught in the spring 2013 term, and course-level SLOs are being developed for all remaining courses. During fall 2012, we began to tackle the sensitive issue of who would have access to the raw data and how the data can and cannot be used. These discussions will continue in the spring 2013 semester.

The development of course-level SLOs occurred in a campus environment where other changes were also happening, most notably the adoption of a new learning-management system, revision of the course-syllabus template, and a university-wide course redesign project. At Southeast Missouri State, the existing syllabus-approval process was long and involved. It was necessary to temporarily adopt an abbreviated process to reach the goal of incorporating three SLOs into each syllabus by the beginning of the fall 2012 semester. Faculty members and administrators worked cooperatively and rapidly to develop a process for expedited approval of syllabi revised to contain the SLOs. Because procedures to integrate reporting on SLOs into the new learning-management system are still being developed, in fall 2012 we implemented an ad hoc process using department-level spreadsheets (these will most likely be used for spring 2013 as well). It would have been easy to say that we would not do anything until its perfect, but the willingness to employ temporary processes when circumstances prohibited the development and use of the “final polish” process was key to meeting the compressed timelines.

Southeast Missouri State is, of course, not the first institution to develop course-level SLOs, and one of the initial decisions was to take advantage of publicly available resources from institutions that had already developed course-level SLOs. A Web page was developed to share this information with faculty members. Hints on getting started ranged from a list of key characteristics of good SLOs, action verbs used in writing SLOs, and examples of good and poor SLOs, to full, step-by-step directions from two institutions. Lists of discipline-specific SLOs from multiple institutions were also made available.

A key component to helping faculty members construct their course-level SLOs were workshops on writing and measuring SLOs. The workshops on writing SLOs were offered at multiple times during the short time between the announcement of the rescheduling of our AQIP Quality Checkup Visit and the end of the semester. Because we knew that faculty members had limited free time at this point in the semester, we offered a workshop at least every day, at varying times. If the course was taught by multiple instructors, they were encouraged to find a time when all or almost all could attend together. Because the outcomes were at the course level rather than instructor level, all sections of the course used the same SLO. Thus it was necessary to have as many of the instructors as possible involved for courses with sections taught by more than one individual or team-taught courses. Individuals from
the Center for Scholarship in Teaching and Learning and the SLO Quick Quip committee facilitated the workshops, and the presence of multiple facilitators allowed individual faculty members to get attention and assistance as they developed their SLOs. The workshops also focused on encouraging faculty buy-in and defusing faculty anxiety. Although all workshops contained the basic elements of background information and time to work on individual SLOs, the balance between the two varied greatly between workshops depending on the individual presenters and, more importantly, the direction dictated by the participants. One quarter of all faculty members attended a workshop on writing SLOs. Attendance was much lower at the workshops presented in the fall, which were designed to help individuals measure student achievement of the outcomes. This was not unexpected, as we emphasized using embedded assessment when the SLOs were being developed. Many faculty members knew how they were going to assess the SLOs as they wrote them. In all, we produced 1,450 SLOs in ninety days.

The compressed time frame for preparing, in time for the AQIP Quality Checkup Visit, student learning outcomes for all the courses to be taught in fall put significant pressure on the Quick Quip committee. However, our experiences with the project since the AQIP Quality Checkup Visit have indicated that there might have been an unexpected benefit of working in the shortened time frame: administrators and faculty members focused on getting the job done and did not get diverted into complex, theoretical questions or micro-examination of the process. This was assumed to be an indication of faculty buy-in.

During the fall 2012 semester, the SLO Quick Quip committee was transformed into an AQIP Action Project. As the sensitive task of developing processes to collect, manage, and use the data was initiated, it became obvious that we had confused some faculty members’ acceptance and willingness to meet accreditation deadlines with their buy-in. A number of faculty members adamantly expressed concerns over how the data would be used (or perhaps misused). Thus we developed a process to establish protocols for access to the data, as well as data collection, management, and use. Currently, a policy drafted by the SLO Action Project committee is being reviewed by the Faculty Senate, with additional input being sought from a number of groups, including the Council of Deans, the Administrative Council, the student government, and the executive staff.

Developing and approving 1,450 SLOs in ninety days required cooperation from the entire university community. Now the major task before the SLO Action Project committee is maintaining the momentum in the absence of an AQIP Quality Checkup Visit deadline.

REFERENCE


Christina L. Frazier is Professor of Biology, Associate to the Provost, and Director of Assessment, and David Starrett is Dean of Academic Information Services and Director, Center for Scholarship in Teaching, at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau.
This paper details the chronology of a ten-point, integrated process involved in developing and implementing a university-wide assessment system. Process development, initial results, and continued refinements to the system are discussed. The paper also outlines challenges that include departmental buy-in and validity and reliability issues, along with examples of how the system was implemented.

Implementing an Integrated University Outcomes Assessment Process

**Step One: Convene a committee of the willing.**

The assessment process at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) began during the 1990s and was driven by the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) accreditation reporting requirements, the state of New Mexico’s reporting requirements for general education core, and reporting requirements of specialty accreditation entities, such as the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Coordinators in various departments have always been charged with tracking and submitting assessment data, and they managed the reporting to various accreditors without institutional support. Eventually the need for a full-blown office of outcomes assessment became evident. Involvement in HLC’s Academy for Assessment of Student Learning finally led NMHU to institutionalize the outcomes assessment process on both the academic and the administrative sides of the university and to obtain institutional funding for it. Interested faculty coordinators joined the standing Faculty Senate committee for outcomes assessment.

**Step Two: Obtain university administrative support for the process of university-wide outcomes assessment, build awareness of the importance of this process, and develop a set of expectations surrounding the process.**

We addressed the challenge of raising faculty awareness of the need for continual assessment in several ways: (1) Along with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER), Academy team members presented on our Academy project each year during faculty development week; (2) during the year, we partnered with the OIER to present workshops to core curriculum faculty members on the Banner-based core curriculum outcomes assessment system and provided faculty members with step-by-step instructions for using the system; and (3) through this process we raised the expectation among faculty members that participating in annual outcomes assessment is required as part of their regular faculty duties.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System

Step Three: At the university level, identify desired goals that set parameters for matching departmental processes to university-wide learning outcomes objectives.

We identified four common traits that NMHU graduates should possess: mastery of content knowledge and skills, effective communication skills, critical and reflective thinking skills, and effective use of technology. Since fall 2009, we have required that the four traits be included in course syllabi.

Step Four: Identify or develop assessments that show the degree of attainment of outcomes, both departmentally and university-wide.

Examples from the School of Business (see Figure 1) demonstrate how university-wide traits were incorporated into existing departmental outcomes assessment processes. University-wide attainment is reported in Step Seven.

Management 489, Strategic Management: Results indicate the mean score on the SWOT analysis and the final exam met the criterion for all years 2007 through 2010. This course is a group case analysis and SWOT presentation.

**MGMT 489 Course Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SWOT Mean</th>
<th>SWOT SD</th>
<th>Final Mean</th>
<th>Final SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>89.81%</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>90.03%</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>86.34%</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>88.44%</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>87.83%</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>86.32%</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>89.25%</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>88.66%</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Departmental Outcomes—Trait: Team Work and Presentations in Capstone Class

Step Five: Develop matrices linking assessment objectives at the course level, the program level, and the university level and to external accreditation, as appropriate. Reflect the objectives in course syllabi.

The School of Business, Media and Technology (SBMT) tracks the traits through the business core curriculum and evaluates where the traits are introduced (I), applied (A), and reinforced (R). All traits are measured initially in the business core, where they are first introduced, then measured as they are applied, and then reinforced as these traits flow through the curriculum. Figure 2 is an example of the matrix approach from the SBMT.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System

Figure 2. Matrix Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
<th>BUS 110</th>
<th>BUS 210</th>
<th>ECON 216</th>
<th>ECON 217</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery of Content Knowledge &amp; Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Application of Traits</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Assessments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Student participation [10% of course grade]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) In-class exercises [10% of the course grade]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Quizzes [15% of course grade]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Midterm Exam [20% of course grade]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Final Exam [30% of the course grade]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step Six: Develop a framework for inputting assessment data into a university-wide database.

The outcomes assessment database has two parts: (1) data entry and storage in the Banner system, and (2) data analysis and report generation through Microsoft Access. Each academic program has an Excel sheet customized for that program. Data for each assessment measure are entered into a separate sheet by the individual responsible for collecting that data. For example, if one assessment measure is the scores on a specific assignment in a lab section of a science course, the faculty member responsible for that course enters the data on the Excel sheet. If the assessment measure is the scores graduates received on a licensing exam, then the department member who receives those scores from the licensing body would enter the scores on the appropriate Excel sheet. All students are given either a 0 or a 1, indicating whether or not they met the program’s definition of success on that measure.

This system has several benefits: (1) It allows for outcomes assessment data to be entered in real time, at the time it is collected; (2) it allows for shared responsibility for entering assessment data; (3) assessment measurements associated with a specific course can be analyzed based on specific course characteristics (e.g., traditional vs. online courses, or main campus vs. distance students); (4) comparisons can also be made based on student characteristics (e.g., achievement by lower division students vs. upper division students); and (5) we can look at subsets of students, such as students who entered the university requiring developmental coursework, and investigate their student learning over time.

We created a table in Microsoft Access, including all aspects of every academic program’s outcomes assessment plan. We developed a numbering system to link each individual assessment measure between this table and the tables in Banner that are populated with the data uploaded by the academic programs. A series of queries allows us to print a report for each academic program, based on their own plan, giving summary data on each measure. The report provides the number of students who were assessed on each measure and the number who met the criteria for success on that measure. The reports are sent to the academic programs in Word format, allowing the programs to add...
information regarding their interpretation and use of the data. Reports are then sent to the OIER, which then posts them on the university Web site.

Using Microsoft Access for the data analysis and report generation gives us the flexibility to make modifications to the assessment plans whenever necessary without changing anything in Banner. It also allows us to map the data to other types of assessment needs, such as assessing the four university-wide traits or providing data to academic programs for specific accreditation purposes.

Step Seven: Develop an outcomes assessment handbook.
An outcomes assessment handbook has been developed and is currently under review by the newly reconstituted Outcomes Assessment Committee of the Faculty Senate.

Step Eight: Collect outcomes assessment data annually on student performance.
Based on recommendations by our HLC Academy mentor, we reduced our data collection to fall semesters only. Outcomes assessment reports are due each October for the previous year. This provides a cycle of data collection in fall, data analysis and report generation in spring, and report submission each fall.

Step Nine: Use the data formatively for program improvement.
We are still learning everything this system can provide, but we have already discovered several issues that we had not considered previously. For example, about a third of the undergraduate students whose academic performance was included in one or more assessment measures were lower-division, and half were upper-division. This is a useful distribution if an academic program is using the data to assess how their students progress in their attainment of learning objectives over time, but at this time none of the programs are actually using the data this way. Instead, the data are being used by the programs to identify opportunities for improvement in their curriculum, such as courses or assignments that are particularly difficult for students or that do not seem to be adequately preparing students for subsequent coursework. This is an extremely valid and important use for outcomes assessment data. However, it probably does not match the perception of most people who read our outcomes assessment reports on the university Web site. These individuals most likely view those documents as an indication of the preparation of graduates from the program. This finding has resulted in our reconsidering the format of our reports. With our new system, it would be simple to separate data related to graduates of the program from students who are just entering the program. Data on graduates could then be presented separately from data on lower-division students.

Of the sophomore students included in assessment measures, 31 percent did not meet the program’s definition of success. This was also true of 25 percent of juniors and 7.7 percent of seniors, supporting the idea that data on program graduates should be viewed separately from data on other students.

Step Ten: Implement a continuous improvement cycle to refine and improve the process.
Implementing an integrated assessment process resulted in the following institutional improvements:

1. Institutional culture related to learning assessment has improved, because now assessment is expected and faculty members are actively engaged in the process.
2. Improvements to assessment processes have included the addition of an office that manages assessment. Also, now the process occurs in a set cycle of data collection (fall), data analysis (spring), and data reporting (fall), which provides time for departments to analyze and digest information in a meaningful way.

3. Learning outcomes have improved because we are now able to analyze data at various levels of specificity—at the program level, at the school or departmental level, and at the university level.

Conclusion

This is a work in progress, and many issues remain. For example, can we really say that measuring effective communication in a business course and measuring the same trait in an education or geology course are equivalent? We have yet to tackle the larger issues of bringing colleagues together to discuss the specific competencies embedded within specific traits, although we know conceptually what we want to measure (e.g., Effective Communication). Each program continues to have its own internal measurements for these traits, which have not been evaluated by the assessment team. Thus, validity and reliability issues remain an important aspect of our process improvement that we have yet to undertake. However, all in all, our integrated process of outcomes assessment has been quite successful, and, for the most part, the university has buy-in from its assessment stakeholders.

Margaret A. Young is Dean of the School of Business, Media and Technology, Jean L. Hill is Director of the Office of Institutional Research, Margot S. Geagon is Assistant Professor of Finance and Quantitative Management, Christopher Nelson is Professor of Special Education, and Stephen Weatherburn is Instructor of English at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico.
In his 2006 book, *Our Underachieving Colleges*, Derek Bok indicates that there is nearly unanimous agreement among faculty members that critical thinking is the most important outcome of a college education. However, both Bok and more recent authors (e.g., Arum and Roksa 2011; Keeling and Hersh 2012) suggest that students, on average, may not be developing these necessary skills adequately during their college years. This leaves faculty members and staff members around the country searching for ways to more effectively promote the development of critical thinking skills in their students.

There are at least two reasons why colleges and universities are not more effective at developing students’ critical thinking skills. The first is that faculty members are not always very intentional about developing those skills. Students are not likely to develop critical thinking skills spontaneously, and merely sitting in one of the large lecture classes common to many campuses is not likely to be particularly helpful, either (Bok 2006). What is needed is a more purposeful approach, one in which courses are designed to give students multiple opportunities to practice their skills and to receive feedback about the quality of their work (Bain 2004; Bensley 2010; Svinicki 2004). Second, faculty from across campus who do take on the challenge of promoting students’ critical thinking skills may not always do so in an integrated way. That is, they may engage in their work completely independent of the other good work that may be happening across their campus. The result is that students never really have a unified (or unifying) experience when it comes to development of their critical thinking skills. What is needed is for multiple courses—perhaps bridging academic disciplines—to work together in order to promote the skills required for effective critical thinking (Maki 2010).

This paper introduces the intentional and integrated efforts that have begun to emerge on our campus to promote critical thinking among our students. The focus of the paper is particularly on a grassroots effort that has taken place among faculty members teaching general education courses to our first-year students. We begin by describing what these faculty members have done to enhance our students’ critical thinking and to assess the extent of their growth. We conclude by discussing what we see as the way ahead on our campus.

**Developing Critical Thinking**

One of the distinctive characteristics of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) is that we have a large core (i.e., general education) curriculum, which comprises 101 of the 146 credit hours required to graduate. In fact, the academic schedules of our first-year students consists entirely of core courses, representing a wide range of academic disciplines, including behavioral science, chemistry, English, engineering, history, computer science, and physics. Over the past several years, course directors from several of these first-year core courses have attempted to integrate their efforts to
develop their students’ critical thinking skills. This started with informal conversations about common challenges they were facing in their classrooms, and then became a longitudinal Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project that involved an increasing number of these core courses. Thus, over time, those efforts have become much more systematic, and they have led to at least three notable accomplishments.

The first major accomplishment was that these faculty members were able to come to agreement on a common definition of “critical thinking” as it applies to their set of first-year courses. Critical thinking is one of those terms that everyone deems to be important, but a precise definition has not emerged from the literature. Based on an examination of the literature (e.g., Barbour and Streb 2010; Halpern 1996; Paul and Elder 2006) and deep discussion about their own disciplines, the group developed the following definition: “Critical thinking is the process of questioning and analyzing assertions, in order to make an informed judgment or propose solutions. Three essential components of this process are the evaluation of relevant evidence, identification of biases and assumptions, and consideration of multiple perspectives.” Importantly, this definition specifically targeted a small number of foundational critical thinking skills that aligned well with existing objectives within the first-year courses. By agreeing on (and subsequently disseminating) this definition, both the faculty members teaching first-year courses and the students taking them can share a unified perspective on the kinds of skills that we intend to develop in first-year courses.

A second significant accomplishment was the publication of a “critical thinking guide” that has been explicitly provided to both faculty members and students in the first-year courses and made openly available to the entire campus community. This twenty-seven-page primer begins with the common definition provided above, as well as a broad introduction to each of the fundamental skills encompassed within that definition: evaluating evidence, identifying biases and assumptions, and considering multiple perspectives. In addition, faculty members from the participating first-year courses have contributed specific examples that students are likely to encounter when they are taking those courses. For instance, faculty members from the Department of History have included an example from the first-year military history course that challenges students to consider myriad reasons (including social, geographical, economic, and technological) why one nation’s military may be superior to that of another nation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this integrated effort has led to regular meetings between faculty members from across a variety of academic departments, all focused on the common goal of fostering critical thinking skills in our students. All too often, we have found that faculty members on our campus engage in very good work without necessarily knowing what their colleagues in other departments are doing. By meeting periodically as a multidisciplinary group, faculty members have a chance to compare notes, learn from one another, and build on what each other is doing. Just as important, these meetings improve the chances of our students experiencing a “united front,” when it comes to the skills involved in critical thinking and why those skills are so vitally important.

Assessment

In addition to discussing ways to better develop students’ critical thinking skills, the efforts of the cross-disciplinary team have led to wonderful conversations about the most effective ways to assess students’ critical thinking skills. Within each of the relevant first-year courses, instructors are using
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills

graded assignments focused on students’ critical thinking, and they are able to share what they learn from those assignments with the other members of the faculty team. In addition, for each of the last two years, we have been administering the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT) on our campus, and the team has been actively involved in administering, scoring, and evaluating our students’ performance on this test.

Developed over the last ten years with funding from the National Science Foundation, the CAT is a fifteen-item written test that has been shown to be both a valid and reliable measure of critical thinking (Tennessee Technological University 2010). We have chosen to adopt this test for several reasons, among them that we have found that the short-answer or essay format does a good job of revealing the strengths and weaknesses of our students’ thinking. In addition, the test is designed to be administered in one hour, meaning that we are able to embed the test into one of our existing first-year courses, with students taking the test during a regular class period. This administration procedure helps a great deal with student motivation, a factor that has been shown to significantly affect student performance on tests of these sorts (Liu, Bridgeman, and Adler 2012).

Another distinctive feature of the CAT is that it is scored “in house” by our own faculty members (Stein and Haynes 2011). The creators of the CAT hold periodic “train the trainer” workshops where participants learn how use a detailed scoring guide to grade each of the fifteen questions on the test, as well as how to lead scoring sessions back on their home campus. To this point, we have sent seven different faculty members to one of these workshops, and their experience has been very important in getting other faculty members involved. Last spring, we were thrilled to have more than twenty faculty members—many of whom had just finished teaching a course to our first-year students—volunteer to score our students’ tests in a two-day scoring session.

While the time and training cost associated with having our own faculty members engaged in the grading of the CAT may initially seem onerous, we have found that it is an outstanding faculty development opportunity for those who have been involved. For two full days, the faculty volunteers at our scoring session were fully engaged with the CAT, and they developed a new perspective on what their students were (and were not) able to do. Just as important, they also were able to see the types of questions asked on the CAT, and—at the urging of the CAT administrators—we spent considerable time as a group discussing the creation of analogs to each of the CAT questions within each of the first-year courses. For instance, one of the skills assessed in the CAT has to do with recognizing the limitations of correlational data. Faculty members in our Behavioral Sciences department found that it was relatively easy to create discipline-specific questions in a course that were focused on that same skill, and those questions have now become the basis of assignments and test questions in the first-year behavioral science course. As more opportunities to practice those kinds of fundamental skills are embedded in our first-year academic courses, we expect that students’ performance on the CAT will improve.

The Way Ahead

Our integrated attempts to develop and assess students’ critical thinking skills will always be a work in progress. Nonetheless, we are pleased with the progress we have made thus far. One of the notable characteristics of the work being done on our campus is that it emerged from the ground up, completely separate from the more formal administrative structures that have been working on
our institutional outcomes (among them critical thinking) for the last half dozen years. This has been an organic effort, driven by questions that the faculty members in relevant first-year courses find most interesting. By encouraging this group of faculty members to develop their own research and assessment questions, it is perhaps not surprising that we have enjoyed such a high level of interest and participation in the process (Ryan and Deci 2000). Looking ahead, our task is to support these kinds of grassroots efforts, not only with regard to critical thinking, but also related to our other institutional outcomes. Doing so will help faculty members improve their courses, work together toward common institutional goals, and provide a more intentional and integrated means of developing and assessing the student learning outcomes that are so important for our graduates to have.

Notes
The opinions in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Air Force.

1. Surveys of the U.S. Air Force Academy’s graduates further support the importance of critical thinking skills. In fact, more than 82 percent of our recent graduates say that critical thinking is “very important” to their jobs as officers in the United States Air Force (O’Donnell 2012).

REFERENCES


Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills


Steven K. Jones is Director of Academic Assessment, Kathleen Harrington is Permanent Professor and Head, Department of English and Fine Arts, and Lauren Scharff is Director for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
In the spirit of cross-institutional cooperation and as the result of Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) peer review process that provides reviewers with the opportunity to view the processes of other institutions and interact with their personnel, three colleges in three states came together around a common theme—the use of Common Learning Outcomes within their institutions.

Three institutions—Arapahoe Community College (Colorado), Blackhawk Technical College (Wisconsin), and Highland Community College (Kansas)—have adopted learning outcomes that are expectations for both students and employees and/or aligned with processes for which employees are responsible. Outcomes were identified and are being woven into institutional processes. Assessment of these learning outcomes/core abilities for both students and employees is being conducted directly in some cases and, in others, through the evaluation of processes.

Each college is looking at ways to instill in its students the essential skills and abilities they need to achieve their goals once they leave the institution. All three colleges count on their processes to reflect competence and personal/professional responsibility and appreciate the importance of their faculty members, staff members, and administrators acting as role models for the students in these areas. Each institution is developing and implementing measures to determine the achievement of the outcomes by individual students and employees and, in the case of Arapahoe, as they are manifested through improved processes within work units. These learning and performance aspirations are a critical part of realizing improvements in student learning and in institutional climate and effectiveness.

Arapahoe, Blackhawk, and Highland have adopted learning outcomes that are common to students and employees and expected to be considered in the implementation of institutional processes. Arapahoe Community College has implemented Learning Outcomes for Student Enrichment and Process Improvement. At Blackhawk Technical College, these outcomes are called Core Abilities, while Common Learning Outcomes define expectations at Highland Community College. Each institution arrived at its outcomes; strategies were used to make these outcomes part of the institutional culture; and measures were designed to assess the achievement by students and employees or the extent to which institutional processes align with the basic tenets of institutional outcomes. Consideration of emerging data has begun as it represents direct and indirect impact on institutional effectiveness and student success, and specific applications are being made for the improvement of institutional processes.

Effective Communication—that essential skill for individual and group function—is included in the outcomes/abilities for all three institutions. Beyond communication, other similarities include respect, teamwork, diversity/cultural awareness, responsibility, quantitative reasoning, problem solving, critical thinking, professional behavior, and personal development.
Chapter 3: Assessment of Student Learning

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications

The Learning Outcomes for Student Enrichment and Process Improvement at Arapahoe Community College

**Communication:** Construct, deliver, and engage in effective, knowledgeable communication for a variety of audiences and purposes.

**Information Management:** Identify, retrieve, and synthesize information in order to think critically, reason creatively, and make informed judgments.

**Personal Development:** Identify and continually develop one’s aptitudes and abilities in pursuit of goals.

**Responsibility and Accountability:** Employ personal and social accountability, recognize ethical issues, practice ethical behavior, and balance personal freedom with the interest of the community.

**Quantitative Reasoning:** Retrieve, interpret, and evaluate information and numerical concepts to determine trends, make predictions, and develop informed opinions.

**Cultural Awareness:** Identify, distinguish, or express a diversity of aesthetic, cultural, and historical perspectives.

The Core Abilities at Blackhawk Technical College

**Communicate Professionally:** Indicators of success include being able to demonstrate communication standards specific to occupational area, write professionally, speak professionally, interpret professional documents, and demonstrate critical listening skills.

**Use Appropriate Technology:** Indicators of success include being able to select equipment, tools, and resources to produce desired results; demonstrate proper and safe usage of equipment; demonstrate occupational-specific computer skills; and adapt to new technology.

**Work Effectively in Teams:** Indicators of success include being able to participate in identifying team goals, work with others, respect the contributions and perspectives of all members, complete assigned tasks, motivate team members, and resolve conflicts.

**Demonstrate Professional Work Behavior:** Indicators of success include being able to follow policies and procedures, meet attendance expectations, manage time effectively, dress appropriately, accept constructive feedback, work productively, demonstrate organization/prioritization skills, be accountable, demonstrate effective customer service skills, take initiative, and transfer learning from one context to another.

**Show Respect for Diversity:** Indicators of success include being able to interact with diverse groups respectfully, treat everyone without bias, seek information when necessary to interact effectively with others, and adapt to diverse situations.

**Solve Problems Efficiently:** Indicators of success include being able to identify a problem to be solved, recognize when the process is complete, select an appropriate problem-solving methodology, recognize and gather relevant information, apply mathematical reasoning, and utilize appropriate resources.
Lead by Example: Indicators of success include being able to recognize leadership qualities in others; demonstrate legal and ethical standards of practice; create and share a vision; develop and implement a plan to accomplish a goal; manage conflict, pressure, and change with constructive strategies; be a colleague/peer on whom others can depend; acquire the knowledge needed for success; and bring passion and energy to your work/project.

The Common Learning Outcomes at Highland Community College

Be Competent at Your Work: Know your area of work or study and consistently perform to expectations and use constructive feedback to improve.

Communicate Effectively: Create a message—in written, oral, or visual form—that is clearly understood by the intended audience.

Respect Others: Show respect for other people and be open to perspectives different than your own, and treat people with empathy and kindness.

Think Critically: Apply critical thinking methods to relevant issues and problems—examine assumptions, gather relevant and reliable data and information, and make conclusions based on evidence.

Act Responsibly: Your role at Highland Community College, meet your commitments; be accountable for your own professional behavior and performance.

Work Effectively on Teams: Contribute productively—as a leader or a member—as part of a team that may have members who are different than you in some significant way.

These core abilities constitute the heart of the authors’ presentation at the 2013 Annual Conference of the HLC. In addition, attendees of the presentation will learn how outcomes were identified, how outcomes are being woven into institutional processes, processes used to measure achievement of outcomes, and lessons learned.

Craig Mosher is Executive Assistant to the President/Executive Director of the HCC Foundation at Highland Community College in Highland, Kansas; Donna Chrislip is Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Arapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colorado; Gary Schenk is Action Project Coordinator at Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville, Wisconsin; and Cia Vershelden is Executive Director of Institutional Assessment at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond.
Fostering a learning culture at any college or university in North America requires both focused attention and resource allocation, and the Higher Learning Commission’s Open Pathway certainly points institutions in the right direction to achieve this goal. Specifically related to this work on the campus of the University of Arkansas–Fort Smith (UAFS), the Open Pathway Quality Initiative (QI Project) has reinvigorated those on the campus who have long worked in assessment and given faculty members and staff members who are new to the conversation a more manageable focus.

Since the mid-1990s, both the UAFS Office of Assessment and Accountability and the faculty Committee for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes (CALO) have served as resources for those who are involved in ongoing program assessment. The CALO comprises faculty representatives from each college, who serve as liaisons between the committee and faculty members at large, as well as a faculty co-chair and a staff co-chair. All deans and department chairs are also encouraged to attend the meetings. In fall 2012, UAFS was selected to be a Pioneer Cohort Two institution in the Open Pathway. As part of this agreement, the university has become an active participant in the Academy for Assessment of Student Learning (Academy) for the Open Pathway Quality Initiative. The accreditation visit to UAFS is scheduled during the 2014–2015 academic year.

Becoming part of the Academy has allowed UAFS to be even more effective in focusing faculty members and staff members on a shared agenda of assessing the learning environment with University Learning Outcomes. These six University Learning Outcomes, or general education competencies, established and approved by faculty and administration in the early 2000s, include analytical skills, communication skills, ethical decision making, global and cultural perspectives, technological skills, and quantitative reasoning skills (see http://uafs.edu/ulo/university-learning-outcomes-goals). Each program of study was asked to select two University Learning Outcomes to assess during a five-year cycle. Through the process, it became apparent that two of the six outcomes had been underrepresented in program reporting: Ethical Decision Making (“Students will model ethical decision making processes”) and Global and Cultural Perspectives (“Students will reflect upon cultural differences and their implications for interacting with people from cultures other than their own”). As a result, these two University Learning Outcomes became the starting point for the UAFS QI Project: “University of Arkansas-Fort Smith will undertake a multi-year process to create systemic, comprehensive assessment and improvement of student learning in two University Learning Outcomes (ULO): Ethical Decision Making (2011–2013) and Global and Cultural Perspectives (2012–2014).”

**Activities**

Involvement of both faculty members and staff members in the QI Project has been essential to its success. Communication and continued discussions in meetings of the CALO have informed committee
members and administrative staff about where UAFS is in the QI Project process and what committee members’ individual responsibilities are to their colleagues who are gathering and reporting the assessment information. The importance of the members of the CALO to this project cannot be overstated: they maintain and cultivate further faculty involvement in the conversation regarding past, present, and future assessment activities, a discussion that is crucial in establishing a baseline for the project and a continuum that supports connections among all the players to sustain this project over time. One-on-one conversations between these liaisons and the co-chairs of the CALO have been helpful in establishing the committee as the assessment experts on the campus.

During faculty and staff in-service events, presentations and discussions about QI Project activities continue to communicate the purposes of the project: (1) to strengthen systemically an emphasis on teaching students ethical decision making skills and to increase students’ global perspectives from general education to program specific courses, (2) to capture the reflective pedagogical process necessary to provide a favorable environment for students to practice them, and (3) to communicate to all constituencies the outcomes for these efforts. Because the involvement of faculty members in the QI Project is crucial to its success, multiple presentations by the co-chairs of the CALO committee to the faculty at large, frequent discussions among smaller groups of faculty members at college and department meetings, and one-on-one conversations to clarify faculty expectations to the QI Project have been ongoing since fall 2011. These activities have helped faculty members become better at understanding and practicing assessment, reflecting on what assessment results mean and how they can inform development and revision of program outcomes, and viewing assessment documents as tools useful in improving student learning.

UAFS faculty members and administration have long valued the importance of teaching. Therefore, a discussion of creating an assessment culture on the campus focuses on finding tangible ways to demonstrate what UAFS already values and practices in its student and academic programs, which leads to the question of where assessment data are found. Understanding how to use student work for assessment purposes is a key piece of this conversation. While faculty members have traditionally used student work as a means to measure what students have and have not learned, it contains a wealth of information that points to changes that can be made in the classroom and at the program level to best teach course material, which is where assessment efforts can make the most difference. Faculty members may collect assessment data through a variety of methods and artifacts already in use in the classroom, including traditional lectures; researched papers; pre- and posttests; group projects and presentations; case studies; written and oral exams; guest speakers and presentations followed by discussion and question-and-answer sessions; clinical evaluations; poster presentations; hands-on learning assignments; and portfolio submissions. Embracing the difference between grading student work and using these materials to determine program strengths and weaknesses is the most difficult piece of the assessment process. However, making this shift in thinking is central to establishing an effective learning culture that addresses what faculty can do to improve student learning overall.

In 2011–2012 the QI Project aligned expectations across disciplines for how faculty members should teach ethical decision making in discrete courses and how that focus is interpreted using respective program learning outcomes. During, 2012–2013, the portion of the QI Project assessing global and cultural perspectives will provide a baseline for measuring how students process perspectives other than their own. In addition, the QI Project—and all that it encompasses—has given the CALO a fresh, directed purpose for assessing University Learning Outcomes across campus by using a common
rubric, a standard survey, and instructions for evaluating skills across programs. The results provide a snapshot for determining if these values are indeed central to the UAFS university mission, how and where they are being taught, and if they are important enough to continue as published University Learning Outcomes for the institution.

**Quality Initiative First-Year Results: Ethical Decision Making**

During the 2011–2012 academic year, all thirty-five UAFS programs participated in the QI Project focusing on the University Learning Outcome ethical decision making, which had two objectives (called “Statement One” and “Statement Two”). In the fall 2011 semester, twenty-two classes assessed ethical decision making. In the spring 2012 semester, seventy-eight classes assessed the ethical-decision-making learning outcome. Faculty members entered the ethical decision making rubric data for the programs using LiveText. The ethical decision making data were also presented, discussed, and subsequently assessed at the following two extracurricular activities: the student government retreat in January and the student worker training in February.

There were 2,255 assessments administered during the academic year. These results were shared with faculty and administration during the fall 2012 semester. For Ethical Decision Making Objective Statement One, “Students will identify ethical dilemmas and affected parties,” 1,053 students were assessed: 52 were below expectations; 257 were developing; 548 were proficient; and 646 were exemplary.

For Ethical Decision Making Objective Statement Two, “Students will apply ethical frameworks to resolve a variety of ethical dilemmas,” 752 students were assessed: 51 were below expectations; 145 were developing; 315 were proficient; and 241 were exemplary.

During the 2012–2013 academic year, UAFS is continuing to assess the ethical decision making outcome. In September 2012, an e-mail was sent to the deans and department chairs, asking each to identify where the ethical decision making content was taught in the curriculum and, if different from the last academic year, to please note and give justification for the change. The program faculty members will again present the material, conduct assessments, collect and evaluate data, and assess the University Learning Outcome during the 2012–2013 academic year, uploading this content into LiveText by June 1, 2013. At the end of this second year, faculty members will review the data to determine if curriculum revisions should be made to improve student learning in ethical decision making, as well as determine if the ethical decision making rubric still represents what UAFS values as a campus.

**Quality Initiative Second-Year Results: Global and Cultural Perspectives**

From fall 2012 through spring 2014, faculty members will assess the second quality initiative, the Global and Cultural Perspectives University Learning Outcome. In anticipation of starting this initiative, a seminar was offered during the summer for faculty members and students, “Conversations on Culture: Integrating an International Perspective into Our Classes.” International faculty discussed cultural differences among the students. The goal of the seminar was to broaden faculty members’ and students’ understanding of different cultural backgrounds and to use this knowledge to improve instruction of all students.

In September 2012, an e-mail was sent to deans and department chairs asking them to identify where the University Learning Outcome for global and cultural perspectives will be taught in the curriculum
during that year. The program faculty members will present the material, conduct assessments, collect and evaluate data, and assess this learning outcome during the 2012–2013 academic year. These data will be uploaded into LiveText by June 1, 2013. This process will continue until each of the six University Learning Outcomes has been included in this quality initiative.

**Positive Outcomes from this Project**

The QI Project has made a difference in the UAFS learning culture in the following ways:

1. In the spring semesters of 2011 and 2012, first-year and senior students were surveyed using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The following figure demonstrates that real connections are being made between classroom learning and student personal development:

   ![UAFS NSSE Report](image)

   - Percent of students responding *Very Much* or *Quite a Bit* that their college experience contributed to their knowledge, skills and personal development in developing a personal code of values and ethics.

2. For the first time, faculty members have been involved more fully in the assessment process, not only from a classroom perspective, but also from a university perspective. As part of this involvement, in the past two years UAFS has funded travel for faculty members, deans, department chairs, Faculty Senate representatives, and the like (approximately twenty participants) to different Higher Learning Commission–sponsored events.

3. While UAFS has always had an outstanding program of assessment, being chosen to participate in the Open Pathway Pioneer Cohort 2 and the Academy as the QI Project has created an atmosphere of communication that was not present before the college began this journey. While faculty members have not yet been surveyed regarding their experiences with the QI Project, faculty members have engaged in the assessment process to a much greater degree. Just one example is a recent conversation with the Faculty Senate chair and the associate provost, when, during an event unrelated to assessment, the conversation turned to assessment. Again, this project has increased focus on assessment, and faculty members and students are more engaged than they were before the project was initiated.
Conclusion

The QI Project has already and continues to focus UAFS in undertaking a multiyear process to create systemic, comprehensive assessment and improvement of student learning, as well as raising awareness across campus of the university’s learning outcomes. Faculty members, who have long been involved in this conversation, especially regarding program-level and university-wide learning outcomes, have been reenergized by the QI Project. Administrators and staff members are taking an active role in the University Learning Outcomes. The focus on the Higher Learning Commission QI Project itself has brought together faculty members and administrators to decide where and how to focus resources and energy to improve student learning. As a result of this effort, UAFS is creating a learning culture.

Ray Wallace is Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, Brenda Mitchell is Associate Provost, Kimberly Downing Robinson is Assistant Professor of English, and Rebecca Timmons is Director of Assessment and Accountability at the University of Arkansas–Fort Smith.
Introduction

This paper shares a case study of a successful strategy to coordinate accreditation self-study and strategic planning processes to engage the college community in discussion leading to consensus on organizational culture change. The case involves the experience of Peru State College, a public open-enrollment institution in southeast Nebraska. The college offers a mix of online and traditional undergraduate programs and online graduate programs in education and organizational management. Nebraska’s first college, Peru State was established in 1867 and currently serves around 2,400 students.

In fall 2009, new executive leadership, along with faculty members and staff members, were considering defining the strategic direction for the college. The current strategic plan horizon extended only to 2008. These groups were also considering the best process to support reaffirmation of accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and prepare for the related site visit in fall 2011. The college was dealing with many challenges, including organizational fatigue from a decade of rapid growth and programmatic innovation, a history of complicated relations with the institution’s constituencies, and rapid changes in the competitive environment. All of these conditions were more acute given the institution’s small size and unusually limited resources. As initial discussions were held on campus to define the state of affairs, it became evident that the primary factors constraining the organization were an unclear vision for the future and inchoate values. These were thought to be addressed through an intentional organizational intervention based on proven organizational development concepts, models, and practices.

Planning for Change

As deliberations progressed, change facilitators developed strategies in several key areas essential to the overall change effort (developed based on Cummings and Worley 2008, 164–184):

- Motivating change, including creating readiness, and overcoming resistance
- Creating a vision for the change initiative and desired outcomes
- Developing political support, including identifying and involving key stakeholders
- Managing the transition through organizational structures and project plans
- Sustaining momentum, through continued support for the process and desired new behaviors

Before undertaking an intentional organizational development process, facilitators considered the change management literature and the organization’s readiness for change. Most helpful was developing an understanding of resistance to, readiness for, and alternative models to foster change.
Organizations have their own ingrained and distinct cultural attributes, not all of which are consciously processed by stakeholders. They often suffer from insight, action, and psychological inertia that collectively serve as barriers to change (Godkin and Allcorn 2008). To manage through organizational inertia and deal with resistance to change, a formal development model was adopted.

Although there are many conceptualizations of change processes, in this case the Positive Model or philosophy (described in detail in Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn 2003) was adopted by facilitators. This approach usually involves, as one might guess from the title, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as opposed to the deficit identification and solution generation approach inherent in the classic Action Research Model. AI focuses on more comprehensive stakeholder involvement, valuing positive elements of organizational culture and creating a positive orientation to change to enhance the organization’s potential (Cooperrider and Whitney 2000; Watkins and Mohr 2001).

**Process Characteristics and Results**

The process started with several assumptions, one of which was the notion that the quickest way to doom a change initiative is to label it as such. It becomes less organic and more artificial, which immediately sparks a reaction from the practically oriented, who wonder how such a significant endeavor can be undertaken and sustained. Coordinated self-study and strategic planning processes provided a mechanism for fundamental issues to be discussed from the strategic point of view and provided a greater sense of urgency as the hard deadline of the self-study report’s submission loomed. Use of the phrase “practically oriented” to describe stakeholders illustrates another critical assumption consistent with the AI approach, which was that stakeholders were not “entrenched” but instead fundamentally interested in change. Still, change should be clearly mission-related and supported with evident commitment from leadership. A third assumption was that stakeholders had to be reminded of the benefits of change efforts. The process coordinators created a “Strategic College Enhancement Model” to characterize the practical and interrelated benefits of organizational change. Although this model was not distributed formally, it was used in speeches and planning sessions to organize leaders’ comments. This provided a sense of greater purpose and context for the change effort.

Key elements of the coordinated self-study and strategic planning processes included:

- Direct leadership commitment and involvement in that the president chaired and facilitated the strategic planning process and the vice president for Academic Affairs coordinated the self-study process. The self-study steering committee was chaired by a faculty member.
- A detailed project plan and timeline of two years’ duration was created and shared. These documents and a draft self-study report were reviewed by the college’s HLC liaison, who also made a campus visit to help introduce the process and answer questions. This was an essential step toward making effort allocation decisions, particularly in determining the level of evidence needed to support various conclusions.
- Steering and subcommittees were established for both processes with much consideration for representation from various stakeholder groups. Overlapping membership facilitated communication. Existing shared governance bodies were represented on committees and were kept informed and involved throughout the process.
Committee participants were invited to experience professional development activities associated with the process. For example, the college invested in sending a large team of faculty and staff members to HLC workshops and the vice president for Academic Affairs participated in a Harvard University leadership development experience focused on organizational change.

Input was gathered through town hall, senate, school, and department meetings, where anyone could make a strategic proposal, as well as through a series of stakeholder surveys developed by the committees. Proposals were shared and refined in an iterative process with stakeholders and information gathered on perceived viability and political support.

All activities of the college were clustered into a number of broad programs, each of which was reviewed by stakeholders and reports shared with the relevant committees or governance bodies.

Meetings often featured dissemination of “best practice” literature and the institution’s own assessment data to focus discussions.

Results of these efforts included a new, well-defined vision statement and a recommitment, now organizationally, to the original process theme of “essential engagement,” as well as the development of organizational values symbolized by the terms engage, inquire, discover, and innovate.

The most valuable investment the college made during the process was professional development for participants. Not only was practical knowledge gained and shared from these experiences and organizational commitment reaffirmed, but esprit de corps developed quickly for participants who previously had not had much opportunity to work together. The highest risk taken in the process was to have senior leadership so directly involved as facilitators. While this showed the commitment of senior leadership necessary for organizational change, it also had the risk of appearing too “top-down” in approach. To address this risk, several committees were used and were chaired by faculty members and other professional staff. The process was conducted with complete transparency with evolving ideas and tentative conclusions being shared with stakeholders as quickly as was practical. All feedback was presented to steering committees and governance bodies. Stakeholders with known opposing views were intentionally selected for leadership roles and invited to present their perspectives.

Sustaining Momentum

Institutionalization of change occurs when organizational citizens are effectively socialized about the change process and related activities; participant commitments are secured at key points in the process and by appropriate members of various levels of the organization; desired behaviors are rewarded or conditions are created for intrinsic rewards to be experienced; there are mechanisms to foster diffusion of understanding and practicing desired behaviors; and a means of sensing and calibrating deviations from the desired behaviors exists (Cummings and Worley 2008, 205–206). In addition to the classic strategy of sharing the strategic plan with all stakeholders, various organizational systems that could have an impact on behavior were reconsidered and modified with stakeholder support to foster the new cultural orientation toward engagement.

In the realm of the symbolic, campus e-mail signature blocks were changed to include the values tag line, an engagement logo was created (affectionately known as the “Gearhead Guy”) and used in communication materials and on banners around campus, and mouse pads reading “Caution! Engagement Zone” were provided to interested employees and placed in public computer labs. Then
the college began to take a life-cycle approach to organizational citizenship, from employee attraction through promotion. Employment announcements, interviews, orientations, campus communications, position descriptions, individual performance-reporting and evaluation forms, rank promotion, tenure processes, and the like were all reconsidered and modified, when possible, to add a focus on engagement. The college identified new peer groups for performance benchmarking, including aspirational peers, and engagement assessment data were emphasized in faculty, staff, and executive meetings. Organizational leaders were coached to ask in what way proposals were supportive of the strategic plan and new values. Presidential addresses included updates on strategic plan progress—progress in terms of key performance indicators and anecdotes regarding engagement success. An annual progress report on the strategic planning was prepared and shared publicly on the president’s Web page, along with the original plan document and self-study reports.

At the strategic level, two significant organizational decisions were made to indicate commitment to the engagement initiative and directly foster progress toward an engagement-oriented culture. The first was the creation of an Institute for Community Engagement (ICE), the mission of which is to provide engagement-related programming for students in the form of new courses and experiences, as well as to model effective student engagement practices and support them with practical advice, resources, and administrative time and energy. Although resources are quite limited, the creation of the ICE was prioritized and launched early in the plan execution period. The second significant strategy to promote engagement as an organizational value was to create Student Engagement Enhancement funding for an internal grant program. Approximately one-third of the faculty received some form of funding and the diversity of new project ideas was impressive. The funding commitment for these two initiatives, while not large compared to initiatives at other institutions, was significant in the context of the college’s size, reinforcing the commitment to the new values.

Initial Benefits

The college received a strong reaffirmation of accreditation with no follow-up reporting required. The team noted the “animating vision” and “overwhelming support” of the new strategic direction. This was a significantly better outcome than that of the prior evaluation when, due to a lack of organizational attention to several key areas, a focused visit and further follow-up reporting was necessary. Compared to past experiences, the process was more efficient in terms of time and resources, it provided more focus, and seems to have (Hawthorne Effect possibility acknowledged) generated results. The process was efficient in that all information gathering served two purposes: guiding the strategic plan and providing evidence for reaffirmation of accreditation. The strategic planning and self-study processes were mutually reinforcing. In the past, for this institution and likely others, the goal of reaffirmation of accreditation became an end in itself. Institutions can focus on that goal alone and thus the whole experience runs the risk of becoming a compliance exercise with little sustained impact. Integrating self-study and strategic planning processes can increase attention paid to both, make outcomes more relevant to more individuals, and sustain impact for a longer period of time. In this case, the college appears to have adopted the values comprehensively, and conversations supporting decisions now frequently feature the key organizational values generated by the combined processes. The experience and resulting values clarification directly drove subsidiary planning processes in athletics, enrollment management and marketing, facilities, and student life. Alumni and donor relations were also enhanced in the sense that they provided new opportunities
for contacts and conversation. Many curricular changes were made to academic programs to develop and support the capacity for greater engagement in and outside the classroom. The most significant changes were made in the college’s general studies program, which was completely reconceptualized to add, among other things, a capstone-like requirement. Several new courses were created, including a new community development course focused on community engagement activities. Perhaps most notable as a qualitative result was the unanimous vote of the Student Senate to create a new fee for scholarships to support international engagement experiences.

There is preliminary quantitative evidence of a positive impact on students:

- Full-time freshmen retention for those entering in 2011 increased nearly six percentage points from the five-year average of the years prior to the process.
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Supportive Campus Environment scores for first-year students improved, with scores for 2012 significantly above the Plains Public peer group and statistically equivalent to the NSSE top 10 percent.
- NSSE measured perceptions of overall quality improved for first-year students in 2012, with scores significantly higher than Plains Public and Small Public peer groups and statistically equivalent to the Small Private aspirational group.
- A significant decline in NSSE Enriching Educational Experiences scores for seniors was halted and stabilized for the last two years.

Conclusion

The process described here is not perfect and remains a work in progress. Additional evidence of success will be provided if, over time, NSSE perception scores for seniors improve in a manner and pattern similar to those for first-year students. The college continues to struggle with maintaining a commitment to the values that emerged, especially in the face of new budget challenges. However, it appears clear in this instance that the value of accreditation self-study can be intentionally evolved from an elaborate documentation exercise culminating in a report as an outcome, to an integrated part of strategic planning and ultimately to a springboard for organizational development. Although the techniques applied in this case were in a small-college setting, they are likely to be scalable for organizational size, transferable across organizational types (e.g., for public and private organizations), and useful regardless of strategic question (i.e., not just for refining values, but to consider strategic questions like adoption of new technology or instructional approaches such as blended coursework or e-texts). The HLC’s new Open Pathway approach directly supports the integration of self-study and strategic planning processes as well as the concept of using reaffirmation of accreditation as a catalyst for organizational development. This case describes an example of how this might work and the associated initial results.

REFERENCES


*Todd Drew* is Vice President for Academic Affairs and *Dan Hanson* is President at Peru State College in Nebraska.
Introduction

Currently in academia, universities are called on to validate cost and worth associated with educating today’s student; cost and worth translate into accountability and assessment resulting in evaluation. No longer limited to the K–12 school setting, standards-based assessment continues to gain momentum as associated with student learning and results in changes affecting curriculum, assessment, evaluation, and teaching. For institutions of higher education, agencies such as the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools assume the responsibility of reviewing university self-study reports based on specific criteria to determine if standards of quality merit accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation (Higher Learning Commission 2012).

Identifying, demonstrating, collecting, and highlighting evidence to meet standard evaluation requirements create opportunities for administration, faculty, staff, and students to incorporate various educational tools to appropriately authenticate effectiveness and efficiency. With regard to improving teaching and learning, curricular mapping is one of the simplest and most effective tools (Hayes-Jacobs 2004). In higher education assessment efforts, adapting curricular mapping models yields more analytical, more fully synthesized, and more constructive reporting efforts. The university benefits result in opportunities for educational refinement, advancement, and innovation.

To assist in the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) accreditation process, this paper focuses on how to utilize adaptive curricular mapping models as a method for triangulating evidence. The presenters utilize the HLC Criteria in a crosswalk, and also demonstrate how the crosswalk can be applied to other national accrediting agencies as part of the adaptive model. Explanations and examples of constructing such a tool are highlighted to include codes, categories, and or themes.

What Is Curriculum Mapping?

Originating in the mid- to late 1970s and early 1980s, the concept of curricular mapping (Hausman 1974) is currently more commonly associated with and employed in K–12 school districts as a method of collecting data to determine what is actually being taught (Hayes-Jacobs 1997). A pioneer in the field, Fenwick English (1980), defined curriculum mapping as a description of the content taught and the amount of time spent teaching it. In planning, teachers focus on the “what” (content or curricular topics) and the “when” (time) in the instructional procedure. Based on the school calendar, teachers
traditionally create a year’s overview or curriculum map; this is broken into months (semesters) and/or grading periods to further map out what is to be taught and how it is to be taught (content, skills, and assessment of learning in the classroom [Moore 2012]). According to school district guidelines, teachers work together in what is termed either horizontal or vertical planning (Hayes-Jacobs 1997). Horizontal planning consists of examining the curriculum, instruction, and assessment within one grade or multiple sections; teachers plan and work collaboratively to examine what is taught across the courses and how to address gaps or explain assessments associated with how they teach. Comparatively, vertical planning or grade-to-grade allows teachers of all grades to identify areas for integrating and reinforcing learning (Hayes-Jacobs 2004). In either approach, the heart of the matter is to refine the educational process while the focus remains on student learning. Hayes-Jacobs (2004) cites other targeted areas where curricular mapping is used: district transformation, alternative education, principal's administrative role, information systems, benchmarks and assessment, data collection, and professional development.

Higher Education Adaptive Model

For higher education, adapting and incorporating this model to meet institutional needs finds root in the medical field. While medical schools (Harden 1986; Harden 2001) were among the first to integrate this concept, teacher education (Uchiyama and Radin 2009) and engineering (Chen, Liu, Hsiu-Ping, and Horn-Jiunn 2010), realizing the potential value of curricular mapping among faculty members, incorporated the approach, as did others in the development of particular curricular areas and fields. Continued adaptation finds the curricular model incorporated with the intent of gaining similar benefit as found in the K–12 setting. Emerging benefits include the improvement in communication (Koppang 2004) and the identification of gaps and redundancies (Willett 2008). In addition, collaboration and collegiality with respect of professional knowledge and expertise emerge as key benefits for faculty (Uchiyama & Radin, 2009), as well as transparency and intentionality (Cuevas, Matveev, and Miller 2010).

How does this apply to the HLC and accreditation? There are several benefits to using curricular mapping in the HLC self-study process. Harden (2001) noted that curricular mapping not only helps faculty and students, but also facilitates discussion and reflection regarding curriculum and resource allocation. Through varying curricular models, mapping is easily adapted to benefit the correlation of assessment data to particular criteria. This effort elevates the linear view across the Criteria and the model. And this adaptation and crosswalk is applicable to other national accreditation organizations (e.g., Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB], National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology [ABET], American Association of Colleges of Nursing [CCNE], and Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP]).

Implementation

According to Hayes-Jacobs (2004), the keys for curriculum mapping is organization, planning, research, and preparation . . . all before even beginning the process. At the University of North Dakota, in preparing for the HLC self-study process, consideration for the process and how best to address all Core Components and subcomponents led to much discussion and reflection. Orienting faculty members to the Criteria was primary. During the data collection process, concern arose for understanding how the standard components could be seen throughout the final document. An examination of a Criterion’s components through the creation of a crosswalk (see below) revealed the weaving of the main ideas
throughout the standards and created the opportunity to triangulate data points (evidence) to be found within the final drafting. In the initial construction, laying out the Criterion was important so all components (major and minor) could be viewed as “moving parts” and not rigid in construct. Each component was then examined within the holistic framework to identify connectivity throughout the standards. This crosswalk was then identified as part of the mapping to allow for the elimination of gaps or breaks in evidence gathering and, more importantly, the final writing of the self-study report. The puzzle pieces were fitted together to create a strong document that fully addressed all of the Criteria. Following the release of the final version of standards, another effort was made to ensure that all components were addressed as well as documents secured. Criterion groups were provided an opportunity to complete the Criterion Map (CM). The CM included Core Components and subcomponents of each Criterion and particular elements that addressed what the university considered relevant to the assessment effort.

Crosswalk of Earlier HLC Criteria

| I. Mission | 1.A. The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations. |
| I. Mission | 1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and adopted by the governing board. 5A3 |
| I. Mission | 2. The institution’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion S.C.1.) |
| I. Mission | 1.B. The mission is articulated publicly. 2B, 3A2, 3B2 |
| I. Mission | 1. The institution clearly defines its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities. |
| I. Mission | 2. The document or documents identify the nature and scope of the higher education programs and services the institution provides and whom these activities serve. |
| I. Mission | 3. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of U.S. society. 3B4 |

| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2.A. The institution establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and processes for its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions. 5B2 |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, costs to students, faculty and staff, control, and accreditation relationships. 3A2, 3B2 |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity. 5B1, 5B2 |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 1. The governing board’s deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution. 5B3 |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution’s internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations. |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution. |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters. |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2.D. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. |
| II. Ethical and Responsible Conduct | 2.E. The institution ensures that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly. 3B Core |
Creating a Curricular Map

With consideration for the Criteria and all components, creating a curricular map (CM) is determined by the chosen topics or elements, all correlating to an institution’s assessment and or evaluation needs. In seeking evidence to meet the prescribed standards, some items to look at are source, method of acquisition, and a progress indicator measuring effort. As suggested in the literature, these elements are predetermined by institutional need as defined by the focus. Particular processes involving the CM can be completed earlier or later in the evidence-collecting phase, depending on institutional needs. This assists the process in various ways: Criterion chairs can identify areas where data are thin; it creates collegial team-building opportunities; it streamlines technological assistance; and it assists with the organizing of drafting, reading, and/or reviewing the writing. Concluding data collection, incorporating the CM and two-page summaries from each Criterion group provides whole-picture insight with regard to the product of writing.

Following is an example of the CM created to elicit institutional information relative to the Core Component and subcomponents of Criterion IA. Remember that in curricular mapping, the creation of the instrument drives the process and data collection. It should be (and is) specific to the needs of the work and should result in the authentic examination of the database in conjunction with the assessment information. In review of the institutional charge for this project and the carefully defined needs of the assessment self-study report, incorporating the different mapping tools assisted in determining the location of evidence, and, therefore, the triangulation of data.

Curricular Map of Present Criteria: Example of Criterion IA and Subcomponents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>1A. The institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.</th>
<th>1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.</th>
<th>2. The institution’s academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.</th>
<th>3. The institution’s planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion S.C.1.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Source: Where</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Source: How</td>
<td>E-mail, Internet, phone, research, interview, personal contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Evidence:</td>
<td>Policy, Minutes, Reports, Law, U-Statement, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation: Measure:</td>
<td>Meets, Does Not Meet, or Progressing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both the CM and the earlier crosswalk are flexible and easily adapted according to institutional preferences. Software is also available to assist in the merging and management of data. Additional software associated with qualitative research can also be used to assist in determining codes, categories, and/or patterns found within the evidence.

Conclusions and Suggestions

While administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students may participate in this process only once, those charged with overall responsibility for accreditation, either programmatic or institutional, may want to consider incorporating curricular mapping because it provides a strong background and documentation for future efforts. This process makes it easier to outline and adjust, especially with computer assistance; the trail required provides assessment verification of the process. As greater accountability increases in higher education, incorporating curricular maps into the assessment process may result in administrators more closely examining findings that could be deemed as institutional capital. In addition, with current and changing technologies, this tool can be advantageous as new software allows for greater manipulation of charts, graphs, and other media.

While this adapted curricular model is not the end-all-and-be-all, it certainly offers another tool in eliciting evidence in the assessment process. Critically evaluating how to adjust and modify the tool will serve the assessment purpose in this and other projects and make the utility clearer. Relative to research, it is suggested that more time be invested in the examination of other assessment-focused mapping tools.

REFERENCES


Harden, R. 1986. Ten questions to ask when planning a course or curriculum, ASME Medical Education Booklet No 20, Medical Education, 20:356–365.


*Donna K. Pearson* is Associate Professor, *Joan I. Hawthorne* is Assessment and Regional Accreditation Director, and *Patrick O’Neill* is Professor at University of North Dakota in Grand Forks.
The University of Missouri–St. Louis was founded in 1963 as a member of a four-campus system to bring a public research university to the state’s largest city and provide greater accessibility to higher education, especially to place-bound students. To this day, University of Missouri–St. Louis is generally considered a commuter institution and has a high percentage of transfer students, but in addition, 23 percent of the 12,000 degree-seeking students are master’s and doctoral students.

Since its beginning, the campus’s research mission has received the most attention, often at the expense of students. As a result, according to the Academic Analytics Web site, the campus consistently ranks high in studies of scholarly productivity, particularly among universities with few (e.g., ≤15) doctoral programs. Innovative teaching and assessment of student learning were not consistently valued when planning for the reaffirmation of accreditation began. In addition, the campus’s highly decentralized organization posed a serious challenge for changing that culture.

Historically, the institution acted opportunistically in order to grow (Touhill 1985). Leaders purchased real estate when available and invested in programs and opportunities as presented, not necessarily systematically. Despite limited planning and assessment, many programs thrived and even gained national prominence.

Faced with increasing pressure for accountability, in 1987 the University of Missouri System required the campus to undergo five-year program reviews. This requirement later expanded to include administrative units and the faculty senate as well as the original focus on academic programs. In 2003, a new chancellor instituted action planning. These two changes initiated a new focus on institutional improvement that served as the foundation for the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) reaffirmation of accreditation visit in 2008.

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation Challenges**

Four challenges dominated our reaffirmation of accreditation plans. First, recognizing that the reaffirmation of accreditation process can be insular and boring, we determined that writing the self-study report would no longer be a one-person administrative task. Instead, subcommittees would analyze each criterion and decide how campus data could inform a response.

Second, the reaffirmation of accreditation process had to avoid being “as dry as dirt.” Undeniably unconventional additions to the process included an accreditation homecoming float, a humorous Microsoft PowerPoint explanation of reaffirmation of accreditation, and breakfasts for union-eligible staff. In addition to being entertaining, these activities assured everyone’s awareness of the reaffirmation of accreditation process and his or her role in it.
Third, the self-study could not be a compilation of lists or a collection of notable programs or outstanding individuals. By characterizing and communicating our strengths as an institution, we used qualitative research methods so that input to the self-study would be evaluated on the basis of its value proposition.

Fourth, after learning a great deal from peers and HLC staff at workshops and annual meetings and in private consultations, we were determined to take advantage of the reaffirmation of accreditation process to promote the nascent interest in a culture of institutional improvement. Instead of producing a one-time review, reaccreditation could promote continuous improvement.

**Diagnosis: Fitness Training Program**

Focused reaffirmation of accreditation preparation began three years before the site visit. More than six months were dedicated to planning a comprehensive, inclusive process that would reach across academic, student affairs, and administrative units to generate energy and drive the process to a successful outcome. Success was defined as a positive review with no additional follow-up reports.

To achieve our goals, the accreditation chair assumed a role similar to a fitness trainer. That is, plans had to include assessment, relevant action plans, motivation, and a fitness-maintenance plan. The steering committee would need to be a leadership team that would focus on institutional strengths, communicate them to the campus, and plan ways to continue to build on those strengths. The composition of such a team required recruiting big thinkers from a wide array of disciplines who were emotionally involved in the campus and would be recognized as campus leaders.

As in any fitness planning, the reaffirmation of accreditation trainer crafted a plan that included a collaborative and transparent process, one that would follow timelines and clearly communicate and uphold expectations. Because everyone wants to be part of a successful team (Bolman and Deal 2008), the trainer’s role also required exerting leadership to motivate the campus to follow the plan.

To support the chair, the provost assigned a reaffirmation of accreditation coach who was adept at event planning, organizational behavior, and management. Her behind-the-scenes logistics ensured smooth operations, from the selection of the steering committee to writing the self-study and then organizing the site visit. She also coached individual team members and subcommittees to assure that they met stipulated outcomes and timelines, and she routinely checked in with members to reduce any confusion and maintain progress.

**Fitness Plan**

The goal of any fitness plan is long-term lifestyle change, or, in this case, institutional culture change. Reaffirmation of accreditation was conceptualized as a tool to market the university’s relevant product: student learning. As a result, the campus community participated eagerly and developed a sense of institutional pride and deeper understanding of the campus. Following are the major components of the plan.
The Team
The steering committee, comprising recruited faculty members and staff members who had demonstrated critical thinking and a commitment to the campus, needed time to develop as a team. As seems common in HLC institutions, team members were assigned to specific Commission Criteria based on their professional interests and strengths. A detail-oriented physical chemist, for example, served as the fact checker in addition to being responsible for Criterion Three. A qualitative researcher guided the team’s writing.

Trust was the first order of business in building the team. This was accomplished by developing a lock-step process on which members could rely. Trust was deepened by clarifying roles and expectations for accomplishing work on time, respecting every member’s time and talents, and providing critical feedback to work in progress. To assure that everyone met expectations, the team met monthly with lunch, a set agenda, distinct timelines, and meeting goals.

Fitness Activities
Every worthy fitness plan includes comprehensive planning that is reviewed and revised as necessary to accomplish the fitness goals. A reaffirmation of accreditation communication plan assured not only broad awareness across campus but also the community’s engagement in the process. For example, four online editions of an accreditation newsletter, *The Accreditor*, attracted readers because of humor, pictures, activities, and contests. A homecoming float, also called *The Accreditor*, appeared in two homecoming parades with steering committee members aboard chanting “ten more years.” All academic departments received HLC bookmarks listing Criteria, and many also requested door-handle signs with the Criteria. When walking across campus, team members handed out soft-drink coupons to respondents could tell them what they did for student learning. Six months before the site visit, a clock on the campus home page counted down days, hours, and seconds to the site visit. On the day of the site visit, colorful balloons replaced the clock. To celebrate after the site visit, during a regular deans’ meeting the coach presented the trainer with a trophy: a bobble-head likeness.

In addition to traditional “pull” communication styles, we used “push” tactics to drive the message deeper into the campus. The trainer and coach met with all campus units—academic and non-academic—as well as university donors to show “Accreditation for Morons,” a Monty Python–style presentation on accreditation prepared (using Microsoft PowerPoint) by the librarian on the steering committee to help deliver the serious message. Visiting with faculty members and staff members during their regular departmental meetings also provided many more opportunities for participation and richer conversations regarding student learning and also taught project leaders more about diverse perspectives on campus. Each fall during the two-year period, a breakfast for union-eligible personnel afforded a venue for the chancellor to discuss the accreditation process and staff members’ roles in student learning. As a result of the communication plan, all faculty and staff members, from custodians to vice chancellors, could articulate how they contribute to student learning.

The Fitness Prescription: The Self-Study Report
An outstanding self-study report anchors any reaffirmation of accreditation process. After writing each Criterion summary, subcommittees drafted their assigned sections based primarily on data from the five-year reviews. They usually had to seek more information and then decide which of the
voluminous data had the highest value for depicting student learning and institutional improvement. When they identified gaps in the data, we constructed surveys. For example, although most programs communicated with their alumni regarding their experiences in that specific program, there had been no recent alumni surveys of campus services overall. Finally, subcommittee members prioritized the measures of success and gave great consideration to including as many disciplines as possible as examples.

To enhance campus ownership, buy-in of the contents of the self-study report was vital. As prescribed in the communication plan, a SharePoint site was designed to store documents and offer access to campus stakeholders to multiple drafts and primary sources. For feedback, a campus-wide wiki was introduced, along with specific discussion boards, one for each Criterion. The most common complaint was that specific material was omitted because the self-study could not include everything.

A strong self-study also requires input from experts with specialized knowledge and skills. We wanted the self-study to tell the campus story of the previous ten years succinctly, so a campus editor, two faculty members who serve as HLC reviewers, and an English professor provided feedback on the draft. After all the input, the final stages for the self-study included rewriting it in a single voice for greater readability and adding an index. The self-study was printed with pictures selected to illustrate the student-learning theme in each Criterion, and a portable document format (PDF) of the printed document was made available on the campus Web site. The librarian created electronic document storage linked from the digital self-study.

Fitness Test: Site Visit

All fitness plans must be occasionally tested for effectiveness, and our site visit served that purpose. We prepared for the visit by requesting some updating of the campus. Windows were washed, carpets replaced, technology upgraded, parking lots re-striped, and meeting rooms painted. An accurate campus map was designed and printed, and an electronic version was made available on the campus Web site.

The reviewers’ visit involved all campus constituents and many external stakeholders. The coach arranged for students to serve as drivers for reviewers, and, of course, they became information sources for the HLC team as well. The campus rallied during the site visit, reciting messages about student learning and its assessment. The reviewers were engaged and animated, and a group remarked that they encountered a love fest.

Outcomes and Maintenance Plan

As a result of the process described, the campus attained reaffirmation of accreditation for another ten years. We achieved our goal of having accreditation reaffirmed with no follow-up reports. In addition, the campus was energized, and we created an action plan based on reviewer feedback and recommendations, which four years later we have met.

Our next goal was to use the momentum created by the reaffirmation of accreditation process to maintain a focus on student learning and institutional improvement. Two years after a successful review, when starting an initiative to improve graduation rates, stakeholders noticed the similarity to the reaffirmation of accreditation process. Access to Success (A2S) uses data to drive change by crafting
campus routines that hold stakeholders accountable (Barber, Moffit, and Kihn 2011). We plan to move beyond random acts of retention to make retention intentional and everyone’s business. As a result, we plan for A2S to become our Open Pathway project for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2018.

We also beefed up the five-year review processes to focus more on student learning, mission alignment, and unit planning; institutional improvement guides the review process at all levels. The reaffirmation of accreditation SharePoint site remains in use today as a depository of five-year review and annual reports. In addition, strategic planning has become more robust and centralized, new campus-wide policies take precedence over disparate college policies, and consistent advising assures equitable treatment of students.

### Lessons Learned

Following are the lessons learned from this experience:

1. Fitness is not a short-term fix; fitness planning and action result in lifelong healthy habits.
   - a. For reaffirmation of accreditation planning, a theoretical framework can guide the process and then timelines should be reviewed frequently and always honored.
   - b. Implementing a communication plan will include all campus stakeholders.
2. Leadership is crucial. Selecting members of the steering committee with leadership abilities will facilitate meeting timelines with quality products.
3. Everyone, even negative critics, have something to add. Listening is an active skill and necessary at all times.
4. What you put in is what you get out. By building the infrastructure for continuing improvement, the reaffirmation of accreditation process becomes similar to a long-term fitness plan that delivers a high return on the investment.

### REFERENCES

Academic Analytics. [www.academicanalytics.com](http://www.academicanalytics.com).


*Judith Walker de Felix* is Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School and *Patricia Dolan* is Interim Director of Institutional Effectiveness at University of Missouri–Saint Louis.
Introduction

An effective communication plan is the key to involving the campus community and beyond in the self-study process. The plan should communicate a consistent message about the direction of the college and how the constituents, both individually and as part of the campus community, contribute to it. First, however, the institution must determine what message it is trying to communicate.

Selecting the Message

The message selected by Peru State College evolved from the president’s theme for the strategic planning process and the college’s mission statement. The president selected “Essential Engagement—Enhancing Institutional Effectiveness and Prominence” as the theme for the college’s strategic planning process (Peru State College 2011). Initially, many questioned what “essential engagement” was. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee, which included members of the steering committee, set about to define what essential engagement looked like on the Peru State campus. Next, committee members looked at the college’s mission statement and how it promoted essential engagement.

In educating the individual to the benefit of society, Peru State College cultivates the capacity and propensity for life-long learning by fostering independent inquiry and promoting the value of knowledge and discovery. Through innovative undergraduate and graduate programs, Nebraska’s first college continues its commitment to making a vital contribution to the future of the region and the state (Peru State College n.d.).

When asked, employees could not recite the mission statement from memory. If the people who were working to fulfill the mission of the college could only recall the essence of it, how could the mission statement be meaningful to the college’s students, employees, and community members? The idea was proposed to boil down the mission statement to its key words. The resulting slogan was “Engage: Inquire, Discover, Innovate.”

Kicking Off the Self-Study

The self-study process began with a Welcome Back Bash and Tailgate Party before the first home football game. Invitations were sent to alumni, friends, and supporters of Peru State College. An ad was placed in the local paper inviting people from the surrounding communities. Attendees were greeted at the college’s entrance by a large sign announcing the events, which included a live band, free food, and free carnival-style games for children and adults. Games included a cash grab booth, sumo wrestling, a Velcro wall, face painting, and human bowling. A local artist drew caricatures.
The mascot and cheerleaders handed out balloons, which were printed with the mission statement slogan, to be released at the beginning of the football game. Attendees enjoyed burgers cooked on the grill, cotton candy, snow cones, and free drinks served in specially designed cups promoting the self-study process. These cups served as free admission tickets to the football game that would follow. A halftime announcement informed the crowd about the upcoming self-study process leading to continued accreditation. The marketing of the Welcome Back Bash and Tailgate Party resulted in record attendance at the football game. In addition, it provided a great opportunity for the campus community to interact and connect with friends and family, alumni, online students, community members, board members, and political representatives. It also provided positive press for the college. In fact, the reaction was so positive that it appears that the party will now be an annual event.

**Communicating the Message**

As part of the self-study process, one of the subcommittees determined that the college was not doing an effective job of communicating its mission statement. It was decided that this could be corrected easily. Signs in metal frames were placed at the entrance to each academic building. The design and wording of the sign visually tied it to the banners on the light poles, the Welcome Back Bash and Tailgate Party sign, the college’s Web site, and the banners on all Blackboard course shells and course syllabi. In addition, all faculty and staff added “Engage: Inquire, Discover, Innovate” to their e-mail signatures.

**Building Campus Involvement**

Signs about the self-study process were posted throughout the campus and in the student center. Bulletin boards in buildings across campus encouraged students to be actively involved in activities that promoted engagement. Signs and table tents were utilized to educate students and employees about the accreditation process. In October 2010, four “U-Review” read-in sessions were set for students, faculty members, staff members, and the community to review drafts of the chapters, voice their opinions, and offer suggestions for improvement. In the following month, the steering committee hosted a student fashion show titled “How Do I Look?” Audience members were encouraged to volunteer to be a part of a focus group when voting for their favorite model. A surprising number of students volunteered to participate in the focus group discussions. They were encouraged to provide feedback about how Peru State’s “look” could be improved. In fall 2011, efforts were focused on building engagement across campus. A trivia contest encouraged students, faculty members, and staff members to learn more about the college, its alumni, its missions, and the self-study process. Questions were e-mailed on random days and at random times so that everyone would have the opportunity to participate. The first ten responses to each question were entered in a drawing for a $20 gift certificate to an area business. Every e-mail contained a link to a Web site where the answer(s) to the trivia question(s) could be found. The winner’s name and the correct answer(s) were sent in a follow-up e-mail. This provided all people with the opportunity to learn from the trivia question, even if they hadn’t participated. The greatest participation in the trivia contest followed the use of animated informational videos. For example, in one video the characters Spock and Simon Cowell were aboard the USS Enterprise discussing the upcoming visit by the accreditation team. Students and employees seemed to enjoy the format. Throughout the self-study process and preparation for the visit, every effort was made to inform and involve the campus. During the team visit, the team remarked several
times about the consistency of the remarks they heard across campus when meeting with the various groups. This was due in large part to consistent communication throughout the self-study process.

**It Takes a Campus**

Creativity will only take you so far. Many people helped make this effort a success. The events described above involved the cooperation of many different people. Peru State’s Marketing and Communications Department and its director were able to pull together rough sketches to create a consistent brand. The Campus Activities Board was an invaluable resource for strategizing on how to involve the student population. The administration and deans made it possible to implement strategies consistently across campus. The Campus Services Department made sure all events were properly set up and dining services provided the food, beverages, and decorations that made the events memorable. It takes more than one person or one committee to engage a campus community and beyond in the self-study process. It took a concerted effort by the entire Peru State campus to effectively prepare for a successful reaffirmation of accreditation visit, but the effort was worth it. The team visited the campus in November 2011. Official notification that Peru State College was awarded ten-year continuing accreditation was received from the Higher Learning Commission in June 2012.

**REFERENCES**


*Loretta Zost* is Assistant Professor of Education and *Greg Zost* is Associate Professor of Education at Peru State College in Peru, Nebraska.
In recent years, higher education institutions have experienced several changes that influence how we do business. As you start to list these changes, be sure to include the changes to the Higher Learning Commission’s Criteria for Accreditation, the limitation on the size of the self-study report, the need to provide all supporting documentation in electronic form, and the anticipated increase in accreditation-related annual reporting. All of these changes come with the demand to handle accreditation processes as efficiently as possible to minimize cost and the involvement of human resources committed to the tasks.

This paper discusses the value of creating an electronic document repository as a means of increasing efficiency and ultimately minimizing cost, time, and the involvement of human resources in accreditation and review processes. We discuss the purpose for a repository and the steps required in its development, and we provide the opportunity for the audience to review the repository created by the University of Findlay and practice storing documents.

The development of a document repository enables an institution to be more efficient by reducing several aspects in the accreditation and state reporting processes. First, as the self-study steering committee prepares to write the self-study, documents have to be gathered and stored in a manner that will enable all persons on the committee to have access to the same ones. By putting the documents in a repository, the committee has systematically gathered the information in one place and in essence has created the core of the electronic resource room. Second, by having a repository, one can eliminate more of the data, surveys, graphs, and other voluminous parts of previous self-studies; thus helping one cope with the limited length of the self-study report. Third, by collecting the documents electronically, one has addressed the guideline that all resources need to be submitted electronically.

The value of a repository is tremendously enhanced if it is an institution-wide resource. Once the repository is created it can be utilized for future reporting needs. For instance, the repository will fit well with the evidence-gathering expectations of the Higher Learning Commission’s new Pathways model for reaffirmation of accreditation. In addition, most institutions need to provide data to state review boards as well as to specialized professional accreditation organizations.

The benefits of the repository exceed the uses already mentioned. This electronic storage system provides a systematic manner of storage of information that the campus can keep up to date and retrieve whenever it is necessary without doing a major search. Furthermore, with one place to store information that is easily retrievable, those involved in self-study minimize the duplication of collection processes. For example, the University of Findlay is currently preparing for a comprehensive visit from the Higher Learning Commission, and the College of Education is preparing for a National Council for
Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) review. The repository is being used by those involved in both accreditation efforts, with no need to re-create or track down the documents.

Once the decision is made to develop a repository, the institution needs to select a database instrument. There are many different database systems available on the market, but some basic considerations need to be addressed. First, we recommend involving the institution’s information technology (IT) experts in the decision-making process. They will help set up the repository, and their advice may be to take advantage of a system that your institution already utilizes. Second, it is important to ensure that the database is user-friendly for IT and other staff, faculty, and administration members. Third, the database should be adaptable to the needs of a repository. Fourth, because the documents will need to be retrieved by internal and external constituencies, it is important that the repository can be made accessible to visiting accreditation groups while also protecting confidential information when needed. For example, we chose to use the Task Stream database because it is already in use for collecting assessment data on the University of Findlay campus, and many faculty members are already familiar with it.

Developing the repository will require the expertise of IT personnel and a strong understanding of the institution. IT’s assistance is needed to appropriately adapt the database for use as a repository and to assist in the formation of the repository categories and access issues. After IT has helped with the selection of the database and the initial set-up, it is important to determine categories for storing the documents. These categories should envision the repository’s use beyond the needs of the self-study steering committee for an upcoming accreditation or other specific review. The better the categories fit the total institution and its future reporting needs, the more valuable the repository will be for the university. An important decision is what categories are needed for the institution to have a complete repository. The categories should fit the institution; the academic and administrative structure will alter the categories. (For example, the University of Findlay restructuring in the past year.) Along with establishing categories, those involved will need to develop policies to address what will be posted and how.

Developing informative labels is an important step. A repository is like a large warehouse; it can hold many items, but if the items are not appropriately labeled and placed in the correct category or file, they might as well not be there, and searching for them will be time-consuming at best. A policy needs to be formed that requires all documents to be entered with the same labeling format that provides sufficient information for the retrieval of the document. For example, the University of Findlay has chosen to use a labeling system that starts with a general category, moves to specific information, and concludes with date information, such as “Faculty Senate Minutes 11/2012.”

In addition to creating informative labels, it is important to cross-list each document. This may seem like a waste of time, but when someone places a document in the repository without leaving a record of where it has been placed, the document may be lost. For example, if the information is posted in an obscure manner that someone thinks is very appropriate but no one else understands, the posted document is lost. Therefore, it is necessary to require each entry to the repository to be recorded in an ongoing log.

Another necessary policy is one that identifies who will have editing and entry responsibilities. Who will have the authority to enter and remove documents? Among the questions that the institution will need to address is whether all committee members or only specific members will have posting...
rights. At the University of Findlay, we limit the posting rights: only the cochairs of the Higher Learning Commission steering committee and of the subcommittees (or alternatively designated individuals) were given posting rights.

Beyond the functions of the Higher Learning Commission accreditation process, we are already experiencing the benefits of having developed a repository. As noted above, the College of Education is concurrently going through an NCATE continuing accreditation process and is utilizing the repository in preparation for its specialized accreditation review. In addition to having access to the repository, the College of Education will be able to add appropriate documents as needed.

The long-term administration of the repository will need to be addressed. At the University of Findlay, because the repository was relatively recently developed, we have not yet had to address the question of long-term administration, but we will need to do so in time. Nested in this question of perpetual care are policy issues. For instance, after the comprehensive visit is complete, we will need to set policies that define the campus-wide posting rights in a way that will ensure the quality and integrity of the database.

After the policy determining posting rights is set, a policy regarding access is needed: Who will have access to the repository? As the institution develops this policy, issues of confidentiality and transparency need to be weighed. These are sensitive documents: if everyone has access to the repository, it may limit the scope of the documents that can be collected. On the other hand, if the goal is a quality repository that truly serves the institution and its constituencies, the institution may choose to emphasize transparency and post all information. To some extent, this decision will depend on type of institution. If you are in a state verses a private institution, the emphasis will be more on the transparency and less on the confidential side of the issue.

These final steps should include training for those who will have the responsibility for posting documents as well as for those who will be accessing the information. The training should be hands-on and involve IT staff as well as the leadership responsible for creating the repository. Staff and faculty members need time to work through the application with the IT staff and others who can help answer any questions about application.

Note
In the final segment of the presentation on which this paper is based, the audience was given the opportunity to practice storing documents, working with the presenters to actually post four different documents. The audience was asked to develop appropriate labels and then determine where the document should be posted and how to log the posting.

Andrea W. Koepke is Dean, College of Health Professions, and Dale Brougher is Professor of Religion at the University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio.
Introduction

The Systems Appraisal Feedback Report gives context to an appraisal team’s understanding of an institution’s mission, strategic goals, identity, and factors associated with its quality improvement journey based on the contents of its Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) Systems Portfolio. The goal behind the report is to promote institutional review and change to organizational processes and systems. Yet, using the report to prepare for a visit can be daunting at best, especially if campuses have done little to incorporate the feedback into systematic processes. With the ever-changing climate in higher education, institutions must be strategic in documenting their changing processes and in analyzing appraisal feedback to prepare for the Quality Checkup visit.

Saint Paul College’s recent visit culminated in an excellent Quality Check-up Report, expanding on the leadership of a new president committed to quality, collaboration, and innovation. In the process, a system evolved to create a more meaningful visit. Sustainable initiatives in this model involved (1) communicating the report to the campus community, (2) using the report to update and improve the Systems Portfolio, and (3) creating a culture of evidence in support of continuous quality improvement.

Communicating the Report to the Campus Community

Every campus has its own culture and style of delivering information. In many cases, communication involves delivering the information at various points in time to different stakeholders, examining the data in different ways and providing the data in different formats so that they are most meaningful to different audiences. At Saint Paul College, data were shared initially with the Cabinet and with members of the Assessment Committee. A second communication involved working directly with faculty members on assessment initiatives involving the use of core competencies and ways to improve processes associated with student learning. A third communication involved campus broadcasts and breakout sessions during professional in-service days. SharePoint and other electronic formats were further used to gather feedback, create opportunities for collaboration, and examine ways to incorporate the feedback into new processes and procedures.

With the creation of a more intentional campus culture of transparency, communication was used to get faculty members, staff members, and students more involved in planning and data collection. One example includes the evolution of a strategic budget planning process to make budget reductions. Campus listening sessions and comments solicited through a college website provide feedback for the budget. Feedback is reviewed systematically by members of the Cabinet and then incorporated into the budget planning process. A second example involves the creation of a systematic program review and enhancement model to quantify and provide greater autonomy to program faculty members.
to review the data on program outcomes and to develop action plans to address weaknesses and inconsistencies in operations. Findings are measured and documented, processes revised, and data collected and summarized and incorporated into a color-coded dashboard system to indicate which programs meet established benchmarks and which are in need of improvement.

Using the Report to Update and Improve the Systems Portfolio

The nine categories of the Systems Appraisal can be analyzed across categories and classified by area in terms of Significant Strength (SS), Strength (S), Opportunity for Improvement (O), and Extraordinary Opportunity for Improvement (OO). A chart can then be used to identify what systems and processes have changed since the last portfolio update, what systems and processes can be modified currently, and how these changes can be incorporated into the next Systems Portfolio. At Saint Paul College, this analysis was used to communicate substantive changes to current processes, and the information was included in a new Systems Portfolio update.

An instance of improved processes includes the expansion of Key Performance Indicators into other areas of the college. Employee productivity measures were incorporated into an updated Systems Portfolio as a revised Key Performance Indicator. Productivity measures included workload and credit hours taught per FTE as well as the cost effectiveness of specific programs as compared to programs offered by comparable institutions in the state system as included in the system’s cost study. New measures of productivity include satisfaction levels with information technology (IT) response time and services, financial aid processing of applications and awards, and numbers of donations and funds raised by the Friends of Saint Paul College Foundation.

The creation of more systematic processes and feedback loops have further led to new processes for program review and redesign and to the development of a strategic planning process to create greater involvement and participation among faculty and staff members. In addition, cross-functional teams of staff and administrators meet regularly following the semester start to evaluate current processes and to make further adjustments based on feedback from students and faculty.

Preparing Evidence for the Quality Check-up Team

Enhanced documentation through data-driven decision making can be used to update the Portfolio and to show evidence of continuous quality improvement. Examples of such evidence include the creation and pilot of college-wide core competencies developed by a team of faculty members in the areas of communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, information literacy, technological literacy, teamwork, cultural diversity, and career readiness. Additional evidence includes the results from state-approved technical skill assessments in career and technical education disciplines.

Summary

The strategic use of a transparent appraisal analysis can open the door to sustainable changes. At the helm of any institution, continuous quality improvement is synonymous with greater transparency. Saint Paul College has made great strides toward making the quality process an inherent part of its institutional culture. As a result of these campus initiatives, continuous quality improvement has become embedded in what we do at the college in decision making, so that we recognize, appreciate and like who we are and what we do and have a realistic view of where we are going.
The college further attained a greater awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and can therefore capitalize on its strengths in the future. Ultimately, the AQIP Quality Checkup visit affirmed the accuracy of the online Systems Portfolio, establishing that at the college “we know who we are and where we are going; we do what we say.”

*Margie L. Tomsic* is Dean of Research, Planning and Effectiveness, and *Marilyn Krasowski* is Chief Academic Officer at Saint Paul College in Saint Paul, Minnesota.
Introduction

The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) is one pathway for achieving continued regional accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. An expectation of the AQIP pathway is that an institution is seriously pursuing ongoing quality through continuous quality improvements with annual Action Projects as well as a Systems Portfolio every four years. The feedback from AQIP reviews of the Action Projects and Systems Portfolio provides a regular pattern of actionable insights for institutions. Capitalizing on the feedback allows an institution to plan future quality improvement activities.

The Systems Portfolio Feedback Report contains rich information to guide institutions in furthering work on quality improvement. More specifically, feedback on the various sections, including the Category summaries, Category items, and Strategic Issues section, directs an institution to focus on key aspects that will provide either areas for significant improvement or noted strengths. The Category summaries provide an overview of several Category items that note Category strengths and areas for focused improvement. Category item feedback notes specific areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Finally, the Strategic Issues section provides three to five key areas that an institution should attend to with Action Projects or strategic initiatives. A Quality Check-up visit serves as a follow-up to the Strategic Issues as one component of the visit.

Once receiving the Systems Portfolio Feedback Report, institutional best practice is to widely disseminate the entire or key aspects of the report across campus to various stakeholders, including the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty members, staff members, and student groups. While posting reports on the institutional website and reporting the feedback—usually the executive summary—in administrative meetings is a common practice, there is opportunity to achieve richer institutional learning. Developing a means for widely disseminating the feedback report for rich institutional learning was the objective of the AQIP Committee at the University of Indianapolis. This paper describes that process.

Background

University of Indianapolis has been in the AQIP pathway since 2004. There is now ongoing work on the third submission of the institutional portfolio due for 2014. The university’s first portfolio demonstrated that it was in the earliest stages of developing quality systems on campus. In particular, campus-wide effective communication was lacking. The feedback report from the first Systems Portfolio pointed out the communication gap on campus.
Another issue with the creation of the first portfolio was the widespread apathy and lack of input from the key stakeholder groups on campus. The creation of the portfolio was plagued by the notion it would be add workload to faculty members and staff members and that the work should be an administrative function. The AQIP Committee members finally delegated the work of drafting the portfolio to an AQIP subcommittee composed of administrative, faculty, staff, and student representation; the plan was for various campus stakeholder groups, such as Cabinet, Deans Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and officers of the Student Government Association to provide regular input and review on the final draft of the Systems Portfolio. This further complicated communication, because buy-in from the campus stakeholder groups did not occur that would have informed the campus of the contents of the portfolio. The AQIP Committee struggled with how to present feedback from the first Systems Portfolio Feedback Report to the campus.

Following suit with other institutions, the AQIP Committee members decided that the executive summary portion of the report would be the easiest to disseminate. The full report was placed on the AQIP Portfolio Committee document site. The executive summary was presented initially to Cabinet for discussion. There were numerous concerns raised about the feedback in the report, because the executive summary provided only limited context. This necessitated a fuller explanation and justification of the executive summary conclusions, leading to the counting of the number of strengths (S), super strengths (SS), opportunities (O), and outstanding opportunities (OO) for individual items in the Categories. The focus of concern was on the cumulative count of S and O items rather than generating any meaningful analysis of the feedback. Cabinet members failed to understand the nature of the feedback and how the university could use this information in its strategic planning activities.

The entire Systems Portfolio Feedback Report was posted on the AQIP Committee documents site, and an e-mail was sent to faculty members and staff members informing them of the report location, but the feedback was not formally disseminated in a digestible way to faculty or staff groups. The report was for all intentional purposes not accessed or read. Consequently, the opportunity for campus-wide learning did not occur.

The university initiated use of an e-folio system for creation and maintenance of the portfolio. The subcommittee coordinated its second Systems Portfolio with greater input from the campus community. Cabinet members reviewed sections pertaining to their areas. Deans and directors also provided input. Cabinet members and deans and directors disseminated selected sections of the portfolio to their units with some successful involvement.

Before submitting the second Systems Portfolio, members of the AQIP subcommittee, which had evolved into a standing Portfolio Committee, made a decision that a plan would be in place for effective dissemination of the Systems Portfolio Feedback Report. The Portfolio Committee noted that, through posters, the AQIP Committee had showcased an example of what each campus unit was doing for assessment of the four campus-wide learning goals. In this successful lunchtime event, campus members shared best practices in assessment through their poster exhibits. It was determined that a similar model would be used.

**Best Practice Model of Dissemination**

A planning group composed of AQIP Committee members scheduled a date in May for a showcase of the portfolio findings. The Portfolio Committee met and reviewed each Category for strengths
and opportunities. The Theater Department created posters for each Category to list each item for prioritization by the campus community pertaining to critical and important opportunities. Significant strengths from all Categories were placed on another set of posters. Announcements were made to the campus community via e-mails, Internet postings, and announcements at Cabinet meetings and meetings of deans and directors. Lunch was planned for attendees.

The posters were set up in a large conference room and arranged by Category. Each attendee was given a set of colored dots with brief instructions to place ten of the red dots next to items that are critical to the university as opportunities and ten yellow dots next to items of important opportunities. Ten green dots were also distributed to place on the posters for indicating the university’s greatest strengths. Once the items were reviewed and the dots were placed, attendees moved to the luncheon area in the room.

The Portfolio Fair took place from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to provide flexibility for multiple schedules. Attendance exceeded all expectations, with all levels of campus stakeholders participating. Photos were taken during the event to capture the session’s activities. Attendees commented on how valuable the experience was because they could conveniently review the items and vote on priority items for the university. The lunch was also enjoyed.

At the conclusion of the Portfolio Fair, each poster was collected and the Portfolio Committee tallied the dots in a spreadsheet. Each red dot was worth three points and each yellow dot was worth one point. Green dots, worth one point, were also tallied. Results demonstrated that Category 5, Leading and Communicating, and Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness, were of the highest priority. These Categories were then analyzed for themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes for Critical Opportunities</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication across campus (from administration and across units)</td>
<td>Category 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance evaluation of administrators for effectiveness</td>
<td>Category 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A campus climate survey to gauge satisfaction of all employees</td>
<td>Category 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider involvement in strategic planning</td>
<td>Category 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A comprehensive schedule of collected campus data</td>
<td>Category 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A brief report of the key prioritized items that arose to critical or important opportunities for strategic action was published, along with a list of the ten highest-rated strengths. In addition, the two Categories were identified with the five key themes. The information on the identified strategic priorities was widely disseminated to campus groups for discussion.

**Integrating Systems Portfolio Feedback into Strategic Planning**

Cabinet determined that most of the themes identified by the campus community as critical could be folded into the three broad strategic goals in the current strategic plan. Target measures were created, with resources allotted for the new initiatives. Integration within the strategic plan was essential for ongoing attention and a feedback loop for informing the university of progress, results, and
further need for improvements. Themes pertaining to Category 5, Leading and Communicating, and Category 7, Measuring Effectiveness, were addressed by the following strategies:

- Addition of a Leadership Team monthly meeting that included Faculty Senate leaders and key staff leaders led by the president
- Delegation of the creation and implementation of a campus climate survey to the Institutional Research Office to research best practices. Although a formal evaluation by faculty and staff was not created, the survey would incorporate the key aspect of administrative leadership.
- Coordination of the next strategic plan by the next president, who was to be hired in spring 2012, offering the opportunity for widespread involvement
- Compilation by the Institutional Research Office of a list of all key campus data collected, responsible parties, and time frames

Conclusion

The model used for the second Systems Portfolio Feedback Report—disseminating the results with opportunity for active involvement of all campus members in setting priorities for new strategic initiatives—was very successful. The prioritized report was widely disseminated, with good campus buy-in for the strategic actions integrated within the current strategic plan. The model facilitated campus-wide learning about the AQIP Categories and its items and how strategic initiatives could be generated from the feedback from the Higher Learning Commission’s AQIP pathway and Systems Portfolio.

*Connie S. Wilson* is Professor of Nursing and *Mary C. Moore* is Vice President for Research, Planning, and Strategic Partnerships at University of Indianapolis in Indianapolis, Indiana.
There may be disconnects between what is submitted in a change application by institutions and how change panelists evaluate requests. For example, institutions address information in seven distinct sections. However, there are 6 essential elements that change panelists seek evidence for in the application that do not correlate with the application’s seven sections. Complicating the analysis is the lack of stated criteria that distinguish the ability of an institution to offer up to 5 percent, 20 percent, or 100 percent (the three “brackets”) of their programs online. In other words, the same evaluation is used for all three request brackets.

Often information provided in the application’s General Questions conflicts with what is provided in the topic-specific information, such as the need for approvals or the actual percentage of programs offered at a distance indicated either in the institutional context or the requested change description. Consequently, what is clearly stated in the general section becomes vague or possibly incomplete to the reviewing panelist. For example, under General Questions, the number or the percentage of programs that the institution indicates that it is currently offering or planning to add in the future does not always agree with the table of information provided in response to the operational data provided under Essential Element #1.

In general, panelists are concerned with three aspects of the change application: intent, planning, and capacity. Intent is the “why” of a school moving into distance learning programs or expanding its programs. Panelists look at the school’s history with distance learning or earlier versions of what is now called distance learning. Intent is captured in the mission of the school and the school’s focus on the needs of current students or new students (different constituents). Panelists understand that intent may be financial solvency, but this should not be the only reason. If it appears this is the only driver, then the next two components (planning and capacity) become increasingly important.

With respect to planning, change panelists are concerned with how schools have planned for distance learning. Are enrollment projections easy to understand and plausible? Does the financial planning make sense? When a third-party vendor is involved, it is important to show what impact this arrangement may have on the institution’s bottom-line income. If part-time faculty members are involved in distance learning, it is critical to show the plan for their involvement with regular faculty, as well as the faculty development plan overall. If panelists see a program that is expected to grow quickly, they look for a plan to ramp up to meet this kind of growth. Planning must answer the question, “Has the institution planned for the changes that distance learning programs would bring to the institution?”

Capacity overlaps planning, but this concept encompasses almost every aspect of the application. The institution needs to detail how student services, faculty development, and assessment have
been designed or redesigned to meet the unique needs of distance learners. If the institution notes, “Our assessment of distance learning is the same as our assessment of on-ground courses,” then the assessment of on-ground courses needs to be very carefully described. Sometimes those completing the application may come to the last few questions and dash off answers. It is best to start at the end, because some of the latter questions may be the most critical.

Generally, the first part of the application requires only minor clarification of the five items: the change request description; the actual classification of the request, stated as bracket 1, 2, or 3; the institutional context for change description; any special conditions that might apply; and the need for required approvals. Resolution is usually quickly established, either through a call to the institution or with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) liaison to the institution. For example, institutions often indicate a required approval was secured for the change requested but neglect to provide documentation as an addendum to the request application.

Essential Element 1: Commitment to, Preparation for, and Fit of the Proposed Change to the Institution

For this element, the change panelist must distill evidence from Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the change application regarding change characteristics, history, planning, and design. Part 1 provides a glimpse of the impacts of the change from tables and information provided in Questions 1 through 7, which allow insight into the operational aspects of distance delivery. Information includes anticipated increase in distance learning programs and the manner in which the institution is organized with respect to distance learning.

What Panelists Look For

- Part 2, Question 8, provides a history of distance learning at the institution.
- Part 3, Questions 11–13, provide an overview of how an institution plans for changes.
- Part 4, Question 17, allows the change panelists to glean information regarding the process the institution uses to design its distance learning programs.

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application

- Distance education is part of the strategic planning and budgeting process
- Academic governance of online is integrated into institutional governance
- History of success with distance education (for example, distance delivery through consortium agreements or integration of learning management systems into face-to-face courses)

Essential Element 2: Capacity for Implementing and Sustaining Changes

Under this element, the change panelists must distill evidence from Parts 1, 3, 5, and 6 of the change application. This essential element primarily concerns the people, structures, and resources an institution has to support the requested change.
Chapter 4: Commission Processes for Maintaining Accreditation

Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion

What Panelists Look For

- Part 1 responses provide information on the extent of staffing needed and whether external resources are to be employed beyond the current staffing of the institution. The application does not request an actual table of staffing or numbers of instructors involved with the distance learning programs, but this would be a great place to summarize such information.

- Part 3, Question 14, should indicate how the institution’s finances have been organized to account for the anticipated increase in distance learning programs; Question 15 should indicate what additional resources will be used to market and support the new distance programs.

- Part 5, Question 22, should indicate the staffing formula the institution is using to support its distance learning programs. Question 26 should indicate what other student support services are being offered to distance learning programs, which presumably should include all service available to traditional programs such as tutoring and counseling.

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application

- A clear outline of operational and academic governance structure
- Training and development for faculty designing and/or teaching courses
- Necessary services to support distance education students (academic advising, library, financial aid, etc., are readily available to students at the hours they are needed)

Essential Element 3: Strategies for Systematically Monitoring and Evaluating the Effects, Performance, and/or Quality of the Change(s)

For this element, the change panelists must distill evidence from Parts 1 and 7.

What Panelists Look For

- Part 1, Question 3, should indicate who is involved in overseeing the distance learning programs at the institution.

- Part 7, Questions 29–32, should detail the actual strategies, the “how” questions, being used to systematically monitor and evaluate the effects, performance, and quality of changes requested in the level of distance learning.

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application

- How faculty members teaching online are evaluated and how the evaluations are similar to evaluation of faculty members who teach in traditional classrooms
- How students in online courses are evaluated and how this is related to on-ground evaluations
- Regular review of surveys from faculty and students regarding online delivery performance and satisfaction
Essential Element 4: Strategies for Addressing Strengths, Challenges, or Strategic Issues (Especially Those Previously Identified by the Commission) Related to the Changes

The change panelists must distill evidence from Parts 3 and 7 for this element.

What Panelists Look For

- Part 3, Questions 11–16, should provide information about whether an institution has considered the future ramifications of its planned expansion by indicating its strengths with respect to program offerings, challenges that might exist, and the strategic issues addressed in planning efforts. There isn’t a specific set of questions in Part 3 that can be easily mapped to this specific element.
- Part 7, Questions 29–32, describe the processes used to ensure the quality of the institution’s distance learning efforts. As a consequence, panelists usually have some difficulty identifying specific evidence that the institution has considered its strengths, challenges, and strategic issues and documented those in the request application. In another context, this would be covered in a brief analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the changes under consideration.

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application

- Resolution of any issues related to distance delivery that were previously identified
- Honest identification of those areas related to distance delivery that are strengths and, where there are challenges, how the institution will deal with them.

Essential Element 5: Potential Positive or Negative Effects of the Changes on Other Institutional Operations

Change panelists seek evidence across all parts of the application for information related to this element.

What Panelists Look For

Responses to this element are presumably largely derived from the experiences that change panelists have had in relation to similar substantive change in higher education. Issues considered include dealing with expanded problems in controlling copyright infringement, FERPA, accessibility of disabled students, verification of participant identification, proctored examination, increased need for information technology, and grade inflation, among other issues. Panelists look closely at the following responses:

- Question 27 should specifically address how students are authenticated in the online environment.
- Question 28 should directly address concerns of student identification and FERPA.
- Question 24 should satisfy the heightened copyright concerns of distance education delivery.
- Questions 18, 19, and 25 should address how the institution maintains the operational integrity used for distance learning and how students obtain help before and when problems occur.
Questions 20 and 21 should indicate both the good and concerning aspects of any outside partnerships.
Questions 9 and 10 should address specifics related to considerations of managing growth.

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application
- Growth has been realistically budgeted and projected, and the application provides overall evidence that the expected growth can be supported.
- Student and faculty support systems are budgeted appropriately.

Essential Element 6: Quality Standards Incorporated That Would Make Successful Implementation Likely
Responses to this element send the change panelists back to Parts 1 and 7 of the application; however, the emphasis here is on the specific quality standards the institution has documented with respect to offering programs at a distance. Change panelists tend to focus very closely on assessment and continuous improvement.

What Panelists Look For
- Rubrics such as Quality Matters, which are considered best practices
- Implementation of quality initiatives as part of the AQIP process
- The requirement that all instructors who will be teaching online must complete specific training before teaching online or be subject to selection by a review board, usually described in part in response to Question 23

Evidence That Would Bring Clarity to the Application
- Rubrics have been developed and used to assess student learning and performance.
- Student support and faculty metrics are collected and regularly reviewed within academic governance. Assessment of online learning happens and is consistent with assessment for on-ground learning.
- Instructional design team ensures classroom quality.

The panel presentation is meant to be a discussion of how to improve the change panel process. Other change panelists may have other thoughts and input regarding how to bring greater clarity to this process. Following is a proposed mapping between application sections and essential elements.
REFERENCES


Daniel Wright is Dean of Online Development at Pima County Community College District in Tucson, Arizona; Gary J. Burkholder is Director of Graduate Research Curriculum Standards and Assessment at Walden University in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Beth Pellicciotti is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Purdue University–Calumet in Hammond, Indiana.
The institutional research and accreditation functions of an academic institution work together for the benefit of the institution and ultimately for the benefit of the institution’s students. However, this collective effort is often hindered by a lack of collaboration and communication between these two distinct, yet related, functional areas.

Collaboration between functional areas of an organization can be easier said than done. Garman, Leach, and Spector (2006) report that role conflict and goal conflict in health care systems can prevent collaboration between various health care professions. In spite of this potential for conflict, collaboration across various functional areas is recognized in the health care literature as yielding benefits both to organizations and to patients.

Gorski, Schaffner, and Tieman (2012, 53) cite the work of Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001), who proposed that “synergy is the distinguishing feature of collaboration, providing the key mechanism through which partnerships gain an advantage over single agents in addressing health and health system issues.” Lata, Mainhardt, and Johnson (2004, 486) reported that collaboration between nurse case managers and a clinical pharmacist at a hospital in the rural Midwest “substantially increased the reporting rates of serious” adverse drug events.

Bird et al. (2012) reported both the benefits and challenges of collaboration between a public university college of pharmacy and an academic medical center managed by a for-profit corporation. Benefits of collaboration include the integration of the college of pharmacy into the organizational structure of the medical center, expansion of residency programs through the financial and in-kind support of the medical center, and clinical placements for pharmacy students at the medical center. Challenges identified in this partnership include communication issues and developing reimbursement systems for services provided to one of the two entities by the other.

McClung, Grossoehme, and Jacobson (2006, 148) state that “differences between the roles and functions of the two disciplines in spiritual care are not clear” is one barrier to collaboration between nurses and chaplains in a hospital setting. These authors “offer guidelines for nurses to collaborate with chaplains to provide spiritual care to patients and families.” Nelson et al. (2008, 21) report that there are “five requirements for effective collaboration between patient safety and ethics programs,” which focus on clarifying roles, identifying common issues, and implementing a process to deal with these common issues.

Less well understood is the impact of collaboration across different functional areas within the same academic institution. Chamberlain College of Nursing—a single-purpose institution in the private education sector—has undergone rapid growth over the past six years, growing from a single location to thirteen campuses in nine states and online programs offering baccalaureate and master’s-level
nursing programs for students across the United States. As a result of this rapid growth, Chamberlain has identified the need for greater collaboration between the areas of Accreditation and Institutional Research to support ongoing education evaluation and programmatic accreditation efforts.

Increased collaboration between Accreditation and Institutional Research at Chamberlain has yielded benefits in the form of improved assessment and greater levels of cross-functional efficiency. Improved assessment is evidenced by conversion of paper assessment instruments to electronic format, consolidation of surveys targeting the same audiences, and improved item quality on assessment instruments. Greater levels of cross-functional efficiency have been shown in the form of shared communications and requests for information that come to one operational area but not the other and by assurance that Institutional Research is involved earlier in discussions concerning evaluative data required by programmatic accreditation agencies, such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and the Higher Learning Commission. Chamberlain expects to obtain further benefits as we continue to refine interdepartmental collaboration between Institutional Research and Accreditation.

REFERENCES


*Stephanie M. Dykes* is Director of Research and Quality Assessment and *Linda Prozialeck* is Director of Accreditation at Chamberlain College of Nursing in Lombard, Illinois.
Indexes

Title / Author / Institution
Author / Institution / Title
Institution / Title / Author
Keyword / Title / Institution
### Title Index

[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

### A

**The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability**
- Sprowl, Donald R.
  - Indiana Wesleyan University ................................................................. 136
- Wright, David
  - Indiana Wesleyan University ................................................................. 136

**Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness**
- Dolan, Patricia
  - University of Missouri–Saint Louis ......................................................... 290
- Walker de Felix, Judith
  - University of Missouri–Saint Louis ......................................................... 290

- Hawthorne, Joan I.
  - University of North Dakota ..................................................................... 284
- O’Neill, Patrick
  - University of North Dakota ..................................................................... 284
- Pearson, Donna K.
  - University of North Dakota ..................................................................... 284

**Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges**
- Lafayette, Moira
  - Wisconsin Technical College System ....................................................... 250
- Schmit, Sandra
  - Wisconsin Technical College System ....................................................... 250

**Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project**
- Hart, Claudia
  - Northern Michigan University ................................................................. 106
- Plemmons, Anthony
  - Northern Michigan University ................................................................. 106

**Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success**
- Dickson, Donna
  - Oakton Community College ..................................................................... 207
- Van Wolvelear, Leslie
  - Oakton Community College ..................................................................... 207
Title Index
[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

Williams, Ruth
Oakton Community College ...................................................... 207

An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation
Valensky, Sandy
Baker College ........................................................................ 31

Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees
Gress, Michael E.
Vincennes University ................................................................. 202

Lock, Cory
St. Edward's University ............................................................ 202

Peterson, Larry R.
North Dakota State University .................................................... 202

C

College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals
Appatova, Victoria
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ............................... 12

Koeritz, Linsey
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ............................... 12

Riley, Susan
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ............................... 12

Wallace, Barbara
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ............................... 12

Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance
Klein-Collins, Becky
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning ................................. 118

Wertheim, Judith
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning ................................. 118

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
Bushway, Deborah
Capella University .................................................................... 243

Feliu, Genevieve
Capella University .................................................................... 243

Grann, Jeff
Capella University .................................................................... 243
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance</td>
<td>Gorski, Kathleen</td>
<td>National Louis University</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keiser, Jonathan</td>
<td>Columbia College Chicago</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watson, Marsha</td>
<td>National Louis University</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education</td>
<td>Lengacher, Linda S.</td>
<td>Stark State College</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wiles, Kathleen R.</td>
<td>Stark State College</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives</td>
<td>Downing Robinson, Kimberly</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mitchell, Brenda</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timmons, Rebecca</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wallace, Ray</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Organizational Innovation</td>
<td>Newman, Scott</td>
<td>Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment</td>
<td>Bartelmay, Ryan</td>
<td>Kendall College</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buscen, Paul</td>
<td>Kendall College</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tinnish, Susan</td>
<td>Kendall College</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zonka, Renee</td>
<td>Kendall College</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College</td>
<td>Cicchelli, Cynthia L.</td>
<td>Schoolcraft College</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title Index

[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

Hawkins, Cheryl  
Schoolcraft College ................................................................. 52

D

**Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data**
Brougher, Dale  
University of Findlay ................................................................. 298
Koepke, Andrea W.  
University of Findlay ................................................................. 298

**Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion**
Burkholder, Gary J.  
Walden University ................................................................. 308
Pellicciotti, Beth  
Purdue University–Calumet ................................................................. 308
Wright, Daniel  
Pima County Community College ................................................................. 308

E

**Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond**
Zost, Greg  
Peru State College ................................................................. 295
Zost, Loretta  
Peru State College ................................................................. 295

**Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs: A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models**
Schuver, Mark T.  
Purdue University ................................................................. 83
Springer, Mitchell L.  
Purdue University ................................................................. 83

**Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons**
Dechert, Renee  
Northwest College ................................................................. 78
Giraud, Gerald  
Northwest College ................................................................. 78
Title Index
[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

Richards, Susan
Northwest College ......................................................... 78

Zawacki, Carol
Northwest College ......................................................... 78

F

Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
Grant, Cynthia
Concordia University Chicago ........................................ 73
Safer, L. Arthur
Concordia University Chicago ........................................ 73
Schuth, Scott
Concordia University Chicago ........................................ 73

Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Perry, Janet C.
Oklahoma City Community College ................................. 159

Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
Dykes, Stephanie M.
Chamberlain College of Nursing ..................................... 314
Prozialeck, Linda
Chamberlain College of Nursing ..................................... 314

From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment
Butler, Marilynn N.
Ursuline College ............................................................. 212

G

Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures
Forgets, Adrienne M.
Northwestern College ..................................................... 122
Sklak, Tim
Northwestern College ..................................................... 122
Title Index

[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

Il-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning
Dagan, Kelly A.
Illinois College ................................................................. 88
Dean, Karen E.
Illinois College ................................................................. 88

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
Abramson, Charles
Oklahoma State University .................................................. 58
Barthell, John
University of Central Oklahoma ........................................... 58
Hranitz, John
Bloomsburg University ....................................................... 58
Radke, William
University of Central Oklahoma ........................................... 58
Redd, JeAnna
University of Central Oklahoma ........................................... 58
Wells, Harrington
University of Tulsa ............................................................ 58

Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program
Kirst, Pamela
Zane State College ............................................................. 187
Kline, Elizabeth
Zane State College ............................................................. 187

Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College
Graessle, Charles A.
Olivet College ................................................................. 95
Logan, Linda
Olivet College ................................................................. 95

Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
Fleming, Raymond
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .................................... 23
Jirovec, Danielle L.
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .................................... 23
Pedrick, Laura E.  
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .......................................................... 23

Pfeiffer, Heidi M.  
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .......................................................... 23

Reddy, Diane M.  
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .......................................................... 23

Stoiber, Leah C.  
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee .......................................................... 23

**Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning**

Harvey, Kim  
Jefferson College .......................................................... 183

Selsor, Mindy  
Jefferson College .......................................................... 183

**Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications**

Chrislip, Donna  
Arapahoe Community College .......................................................... 269

Mosher, Craig  
Highland Community College .......................................................... 269

Schenck, Gary  
Blackhawk Technical College .......................................................... 269

Vershelden, Cia  
University of Central Oklahoma .......................................................... 269

**An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills**

Harrington, Kathleen  
United States Air Force Academy .......................................................... 264

Jones, Steven K.  
United States Air Force Academy .......................................................... 264

Scharff, Lauren  
United States Air Force Academy .......................................................... 264

**Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities**

Arthur, Virginia  
Metropolitan State University .......................................................... 126

Hensrud, Faith  
University of Wisconsin–Superior .......................................................... 126
Kopper, Beverly
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater .......................................................... 126

**M**

*Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work: Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality*

Nolan, Ernest I.
Madonna University ................................................................. 18

O’Neill, James
Madonna University ................................................................. 18

*Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission*

Hathcoat, John
Oklahoma State University ......................................................... 193

Penn, Jeremy D.
Oklahoma State University ......................................................... 193

**O**

*Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation*

Knight, William E.
Ball State University ............................................................... 131

*Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact*

Baker-Sperry, Lori M.
Western Illinois University ......................................................... 233

Parsons, Nancy P.
Western Illinois University ......................................................... 233

**P**

*Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence*

Summers, Angela
Tulsa Community College ........................................................... 229

Urie, Jeanne
Tulsa Community College .......................................................... 229

Wilson, Steven Harmon
Tulsa Community College .......................................................... 229
**Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities**
Loberg, Kristi K.
Concordia College ................................................................. 141

Wohlfeil, Michael
Concordia College ................................................................. 141

**Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process-Lessons Learned**
Cheek, William
Missouri State University .......................................................... 178

Einhellig, Frank
Missouri State University .......................................................... 178

Jahnke, Tamera
Missouri State University .......................................................... 178

**Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change**
David, Kevin
Tulsa Community College ......................................................... 164

Stecher, Sarah
Tulsa Community College ......................................................... 164

Wood, Donna
Tulsa Community College ......................................................... 164

**Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience**
Strohl, Katie
Crowder College ........................................................................ 101

Wilson, Sherry
Crowder College ........................................................................ 101

**Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges**
Brorson, Bruce
University of Minnesota, Crookston .......................................... 67

Brorson, Susan
University of Minnesota, Crookston .......................................... 67

Maier, Denis
University of Minnesota, Crookston .......................................... 67
Title Index
[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

R

Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning
Booth, Stephane E.
Kent State University ................................................................. 151
Davis, Laura L.
Kent State University ................................................................. 151

S

The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes
Drew, Todd
Peru State College ................................................................. 278
Hanson, Dan
Peru State College ................................................................. 278

Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach
Krueger, Mablene
Robert Morris University ......................................................... 111
Nieman, Larry
Robert Morris University ......................................................... 111
Ramos, Maria
Junior Achievement Chicago .................................................... 111

Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones
Hawthorne, Joan
University of North Dakota ...................................................... 198
Peterson, Larry R.
North Dakota State University .................................................. 198
Smith, Matt J.
University of Saint Francis ....................................................... 198

Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Abbott, Judy
Culver-Stockton College .......................................................... 64
Deege, Susan
Culver-Stockton College .......................................................... 64
Hammonds, Lloyd
Coconino County Community College ....................................... 64
## Title Index

[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

**Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix**
- Hellerud, Nancy
  - Webster University .......................................................... 237
- Watts, John
  - Webster University .......................................................... 237
- Weissman, Julie
  - Webster University .......................................................... 237

**Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days**
- Frazier, Christina L.
  - Southeast Missouri State University .................................. 256
- Starrett, David
  - Southeast Missouri State University ................................. 256

**Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives**
- Moore, Mary C.
  - University of Indianapolis ............................................... 304
- Wilson, Connie S.
  - University of Indianapolis ............................................... 304

**Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning**
- Fitch, Peggy
  - Central College ............................................................... 246
- Steinke, Pamela
  - University of St. Francis ................................................ 246

**Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System**
- Geagon, Margot S.
  - New Mexico Highlands University ..................................... 259
- Hill, Jean L.
  - New Mexico Highlands University ..................................... 259
- Nelson, Christopher
  - New Mexico Highlands University ..................................... 259
- Weatherburn, Stephen
  - New Mexico Highlands University ..................................... 259
Title Index
[Index by Title / Author / Institution]

Young, Margaret A.
New Mexico Highlands University ......................................................... 259

Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit
Krasowski, Marilyn
Saint Paul College ................................................................. 301
Tomsic, Margie L.
Saint Paul College ................................................................. 301

Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
Crawford, C. B.
Fort Hays State University ......................................................... 146
Rackaway, Chapman
Fort Hays State University ......................................................... 146

Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
Ayers, Cathy F.
Lewis University ................................................................. 175
Yen, Jion Liou
Lewis University ................................................................. 175

W

We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development
Castor, Theresa
University of Wisconsin–Parkside .................................................. 219
Kelley, Kimberly
University of Wisconsin–Parkside .................................................. 219
Robinson, James
University of Wisconsin–Parkside .................................................. 219

We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)
Bamford, Cheyne
Arapahoe Community College ....................................................... 224
Chrislip, Donna
Arapahoe Community College ....................................................... 224
Hegeman, Diane
Arapahoe Community College ....................................................... 224
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective</td>
<td>Adams, Gerald E.</td>
<td>Columbia College Chicago</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cherif, Abour H.</td>
<td>DeVry University</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dunning, Jeremy</td>
<td>Indiana University Bloomington</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Movahedzadeh, Farahnaz</td>
<td>City Colleges of Chicago–Harold Washington College</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Author Index

[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

## A

### Abbott, Judy
Culver-Stockton College

*Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model*  
64

### Abramson, Charles
Oklahoma State University

*Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School*  
58

### Adams, Gerald E.
Columbia College Chicago

*Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective*  
35

### Appatova, Victoria
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College

*College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals*  
12

### Arthur, Virginia
Metropolitan State University

*Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities*  
126

### Ayers, Cathy F.
Lewis University

*Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes*  
175

## B

### Baker-Sperry, Lori M.
Western Illinois University

*Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact*  
233

### Bamford, Cheyne
Arapahoe Community College

*We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)*  
224

### Bartelmay, Ryan
Kendall College

*Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment*  
114

### Barthell, John
University of Central Oklahoma

*Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School*  
58
Booth, Stephane E.
Kent State University
*Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning* ............................................. 151

Broorson, Bruce
University of Minnesota, Crookston
*Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges* ..... 67

Broorson, Susan
University of Minnesota, Crookston
*Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges* ..... 67

Brougher, Dale
University of Findlay
*Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data* ............................................. 298

Burkholder, Gary J.
Walden University
*Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion* .......... 308

Busceni, Paul
Kendall College
*Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment* .......................... 114

Bushway, Deborah
Capella University
*Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths* ................ 243

Butler, Marilynn N.
Ursuline College
*From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment* ............... 212

C

Castor, Theresa
University of Wisconsin–Parkside
*We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development* .......... 219

Cheek, William
Missouri State University
*Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process-Lessons Learned* .... 178
### Author Index

[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherif, Abour H.</td>
<td>DeVry University</td>
<td>Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrislip, Donna</td>
<td>Arapahoe Community College</td>
<td>Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cicchelli, Cynthia L.</td>
<td>Schoolcraft College</td>
<td>Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford, C. B.</td>
<td>Fort Hays State University</td>
<td>Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagan, Kelly A.</td>
<td>Illinois College</td>
<td>II-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David, Kevin</td>
<td>Tulsa Community College</td>
<td>Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Laura L.</td>
<td>Kent State University</td>
<td>Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, Karen E.</td>
<td>Illinois College</td>
<td>II-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dechert, Renee</td>
<td>Northwest College</td>
<td>Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deege, Susan</td>
<td>Culver-Stockton College</td>
<td>Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickson, Donna</td>
<td>Oakton Community College</td>
<td>Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolan, Patricia</td>
<td>University of Missouri–Saint Louis</td>
<td>Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downing Robinson, Kimberly</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew, Todd</td>
<td>Peru State College</td>
<td>The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunning, Jeremy</td>
<td>Indiana University Bloomington</td>
<td>Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dykes, Stephanie M.</td>
<td>Chamberlain College of Nursing</td>
<td>Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ein hellig, Frank</td>
<td>Missouri State University</td>
<td>Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process-Lessons Learned</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feliu, Genevieve</td>
<td>Capella University</td>
<td>Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitch, Peggy</td>
<td>Central College</td>
<td>Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fleming, Raymond
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction .......................... 23

Forgette, Adrienne M.
Northwestern College
Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures .................................................. 122

Frazier, Christina L.
Southeast Missouri State University
Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days ................................................. 256

Geagon, Margot S.
New Mexico Highlands University
Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System .............. 259

Giraud, Gerald
Northwest College
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an
Information Commons to a Learning Commons ................................................................. 78

Gorski, Kathleen
National Louis University
Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance ...................... 169

Graessle, Charles A.
Olivet College
Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College ...... 95

Grann, Jeff
Capella University
Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths ................................ 243

Grant, Cynthia
Concordia University Chicago
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects .......... 73

Gress, Michael E.
Vincennes University
Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees ........... 202
H

Hammonds, Lloyd
Coconino County Community College
Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model ............ 64

Hanson, Dan
Peru State College
The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes ......................................................... 278

Harrington, Kathleen
United States Air Force Academy
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills ......................... 264

Hart, Claudia
Northern Michigan University
Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project ............. 106

Harvey, Kim
Jefferson College
Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning ................................................................. 183

Hathcoat, John
Oklahoma State University
Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission ............. 193

Hawkins, Cheryl
Schoolcraft College
Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College ................................................................. 52

Hawthorne, Joan I.
University of North Dakota
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones .... 198

Hegeman, Diane
Arapahoe Community College
We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie) .................... 224
Author Index

[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

Hellerud, Nancy
Webster University
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix ......................... 237

Hensrud, Faith
University of Wisconsin-Superior
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities ........... 126

Hill, Jean L.
New Mexico Highlands University
Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System .......... 259

Hranitz, John
Bloomsburg University
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School .... 58

J

Jahnke, Tamera
Missouri State University
Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process-Lessons Learned ...... 178

Jirovec, Danielle L.
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction .................. 23

Jones, Steven K.
United States Air Force Academy
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills .............................. 264

K

Keiser, Jonathan
Columbia College, Chicago
Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance ............... 169

Kelley, Kimberly
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development ................ 219

Kirst, Pamela
Zane State College
Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program .......................... 187
Author Index
[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

Klein-Collins, Becky
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance ........................................ 118

Kline, Elizabeth
Zane State College
Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program ........................................................ 187

Knight, William E.
Ball State University
Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation ........................................ 131

Koepke, Andrea W.
University of Findlay
Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data .................................................. 298

Koeritz, Linsey
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College
College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals .......................................................... 12

Kopper, Beverly
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities .............. 126

Krasowski, Marilyn
Saint Paul College
Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit ...................................... 301

Krueger, Mablene
Robert Morris University
Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach ........................................ 111

L

Lafayette, Moira
Wisconsin Technical College System
Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges .................................................. 250
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lengacher, Linda S.</td>
<td>Stark State College</td>
<td>Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loberg, Kristi K.</td>
<td>Concordia College</td>
<td>Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock, Cory</td>
<td>St. Edward’s University</td>
<td>Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan, Linda</td>
<td>Olivet College</td>
<td>Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maier, Denis</td>
<td>University of Minnesota, Crookston</td>
<td>Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Brenda</td>
<td>University of Arkansas–Fort Smith</td>
<td>Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore, Mary C.</td>
<td>University of Indianapolis</td>
<td>Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosher, Craig</td>
<td>Highland Community College</td>
<td>Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movahedzadeh, Farahnaz</td>
<td>City Colleges of Chicago–Harold Washington College</td>
<td>Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Christopher</td>
<td>New Mexico Highlands University</td>
<td>Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Newman, Scott
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology
*Cultivating Organizational Innovation* ................................................................. 156

Nieman, Larry
Robert Morris University
*Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach* .................. 111

Nolan, Ernest I.
Madonna University
*Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work: Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality* .......................................................... 18

O’Neill, James
Madonna University
*Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work: Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality* .......................................................... 18

O’Neill, Patrick
University of North Dakota

Parsons, Nancy P.
Western Illinois University
*Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact* .................. 233

Pearson, Donna K.
University of North Dakota

Pedrick, Laura E.
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
*Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction* ........ 23
Pellicciotti, Beth
Purdue University–Calumet
Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion .......... 308

Penn, Jeremy D.
Oklahoma State University
Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission .......... 193

Perry, Janet C.
Oklahoma City Community College
Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements .......... 159

Peterson, Larry R.
North Dakota State University
Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees .......... 202
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones .......... 198

Pfeiffer, Heidi M.
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction .......... 23

Plemmons, Anthony
Northern Michigan University
Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project .......... 106

Prozialeck, Linda
Chamberlain College of Nursing
Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation ................................................................. 314

R

Rackaway, Chapman
Fort Hays State University
Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement ...... 146

Radke, William
University of Central Oklahoma
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School ..... 58
Author Index
[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

Ramos, Maria
Junior Achievement Chicago
Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach .......................... 111

Redd, JeAnna
University of Central Oklahoma
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School 58

Reddy, Diane M.
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction ...................... 23

Richards, Susan
Northwest College
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons ................................................................. 78

Riley, Susan
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College
College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals ................................................................. 12

Robinson, James
University of Wisconsin–Parkside
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development .................... 219

Safer, L. Arthur
Concordia University Chicago
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects .... 73

Scharff, Lauren
United States Air Force Academy
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills ........................................ 264

Schenck, Gary
Blackhawk Technical College
Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications ......................................................... 269

Schlak, Tim
Northwestern College
Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures ..................................................... 122
Schmit, Sandra
Wisconsin Technical College System
Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges ................................................................. 250

Schuth, Scott
Concordia University Chicago
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects .... 73

Schuver, Mark T.
Purdue University
Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs: A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models .............................. 83

Selsor, Mindy
Jefferson College
Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning ............................................................. 183

Smith, Matt J.
University of Saint Francis
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones .... 198

Springer, Mitchell L.
Purdue University
Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs: A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models .............................. 83

Sprowl, Donald R.
Indiana Wesleyan University
The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability ....................... 136

Starrett, David
Southeast Missouri State University
Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days ........................................ 256

Stecher, Sarah
Tulsa Community College
Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change ........... 164

Steinke, Pamela
University of St. Francis
Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning ................................ 246
Stoiber, Leah C.
   University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
   *Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction* .................. 23

Strohl, Katie
   Crowder College
   *Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience* ............ 101

Summers, Angela
   Tulsa Community College
   *Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence* ............................. 229

Timmons, Rebecca
   University of Arkansas–Fort Smith
   *Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives* .............................................. 273

Tinnish, Susan
   Kendall College
   *Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment* .............................. 114

Tomsic, Margie L.
   Saint Paul College
   *Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit* ............................... 301

Urie, Jeanne
   Tulsa Community College
   *Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence* ............................. 229

Valensky, Sandy
   Baker College
   *An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation* ....................... 31

Van Wolvelear, Leslie
   Oakton Community College
   *Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success* ........................................... 207
### Author Index

[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

**Vershelden, Cia**  
University of Central Oklahoma  
*Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications*  
269

**Walker de Felix, Judith**  
University of Missouri–Saint Louis  
*Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness*  
290

**Wallace, Barbara**  
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College  
*College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals*  
12

**Wallace, Ray**  
University of Arkansas–Fort Smith  
*Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives*  
273

**Watson, Marsha**  
National Louis University  
*Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance*  
169

**Watts, John**  
Webster University  
*Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix*  
237

**Weatherburn, Stephen**  
New Mexico Highlands University  
*Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System*  
259

**Weissman, Julie**  
Webster University  
*Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix*  
237

**Wells, Harrington**  
University of Tulsa  
*Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School*  
58

**Wertheim, Judith**  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning  
*Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance*  
118
**Author Index**  
[Index by Author / Institution / Title]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wiles, Kathleen R.</td>
<td>Stark State College</td>
<td><em>Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education</em></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Ruth</td>
<td>Oakton Community College</td>
<td><em>Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success</em></td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Connie S.</td>
<td>University of Indianapolis</td>
<td><em>Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives</em></td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Sherry</td>
<td>Crowder College</td>
<td><em>Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience</em></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Steven Harmon</td>
<td>Tulsa Community College</td>
<td><em>Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence</em></td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wohlfeil, Michael</td>
<td>Concordia College</td>
<td><em>Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities</em></td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Donna</td>
<td>Tulsa Community College</td>
<td><em>Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change</em></td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, Daniel</td>
<td>Pima County Community College</td>
<td><em>Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion</em></td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, David</td>
<td>Indiana Wesleyan University</td>
<td><em>The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability</em></td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yen, Jion Liou</td>
<td>Lewis University</td>
<td><em>Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes</em></td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young, Margaret A.</td>
<td>New Mexico Highlands University</td>
<td><em>Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System</em></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Z

Zawacki, Carol
Northwest College
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons ........................................................................................................ 78

Zonka, Renee
Kendall College
Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment ........................................114

Zost, Greg
Peru State College
Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond ....295

Zost, Loretta
Peru State College
Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond ....295
Institution Index

[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

A

Arapahoe Community College

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
- Chrislip, Donna ................................................................. 269
- We’re Movin’ on Up! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)
  - Bamford, Cheyne ............................................................. 224
  - Chrislip, Donna .............................................................. 224
  - Hegeman, Diane ............................................................ 224

B

Baker College

An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation
- Valensky, Sandy .............................................................. 31

Ball State University

Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation
- Knight, William E. ............................................................ 131

Blackhawk Technical College

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
- Schenck, Gary ............................................................... 269

Bloomsburg University

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
- Hranitz, John ................................................................. 58

C

Capella University

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
- Bushway, Deborah ........................................................... 243
- Feliu, Genevieve ............................................................... 243
- Grann, Jeff ................................................................. 243

Central College

Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning
- Fitch, Peggy ................................................................. 246
Institution Index
[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

Chamberlain College of Nursing
  Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
  Dykes, Stephanie M. ................................................................. 314
  Prozialeck, Linda ................................................................. 314

City Colleges of Chicago–Harold Washington College
  Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
  Movahedzadeh, Farahnaz ...................................................... 35

Coconino County Community College
  Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
  Hammonds, Lloyd ............................................................... 64

Columbia College Chicago
  Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
  Keiser, Jonathan ................................................................. 169
  Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
  Adams, Gerald E. ................................................................. 35

Concordia College
  Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities
  Loberg, Kristi K. ................................................................. 141
  Wohlfeil, Michael ............................................................... 141

Concordia University Chicago
  Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
  Grant, Cynthia ................................................................. 73
  Safer, L. Arthur ................................................................. 73
  Schuth, Scott ................................................................. 73

Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
  Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance
  Klein-Collins, Becky ....................................................... 118
  Wertheim, Judith ............................................................ 118

Crowder College
  Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience
  Strohl, Katie ................................................................. 101
  Wilson, Sherry ............................................................... 101
Institution Index
[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

Culver-Stockton College
Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Abbott, Judy ................................................................. 64
Deege, Susan ............................................................... 64

DeVry University
Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
Cherif, Abour H. ........................................................... 35

Fort Hays State University
Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
Crawford, C. B. ............................................................... 146
Rackaway, Chapman .................................................... 146

Highland Community College
Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
Mosher, Craig ............................................................... 269

Illinois College
Ill-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning
Dagan, Kelly A. .............................................................. 88
Dean, Karen E. ............................................................. 88

Indiana University Bloomington
Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
Dunning, Jeremy ............................................................ 35

Indiana Wesleyan University
The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability
Sprowl, Donald R. ........................................................... 136
Wright, David ............................................................... 136
Institution Index
[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

J
Jefferson College
Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning
Harvey, Kim .......................................................................................... 183
Selsor, Mindy .......................................................................................... 183

Junior Achievement Chicago
Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach
Ramos, Maria ......................................................................................... 111

K
Kendall College
Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment
Bartelmay, Ryan ...................................................................................... 114
Busceni, Paul .......................................................................................... 114
Tinnish, Susan ......................................................................................... 114
Zonka, Renee ......................................................................................... 114

Kent State University
Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning
Booth, Stephane E. .................................................................................. 151
Davis, Laura L. ......................................................................................... 151

L
Lewis University
Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
Ayers, Cathy F. ......................................................................................... 175
Yen, Jion Liou ......................................................................................... 175

M
Madonna University
Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work:
Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality
Nolan, Ernest I. ....................................................................................... 18
O’Neill, James ......................................................................................... 18
Institution Index
[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

Metropolitan State University
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Arthur, Virginia ................................................................. 126

Missouri State University
Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process-Lessons Learned
Cheek, William ................................................................. 178
Einhellig, Frank ................................................................. 178
Jahnke, Tamera ................................................................. 178

National Louis University
Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
Gorski, Kathleen ............................................................... 169
Watson, Marsha ............................................................... 169

New Mexico Highlands University
Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System
Geagon, Margot S. ............................................................ 259
Hill, Jean L. .................................................................. 259
Nelson, Christopher ......................................................... 259
Weatherburn, Stephen ..................................................... 259
Young, Margaret A. .......................................................... 259

North Dakota State University
Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees
Peterson, Larry R. ............................................................. 202

Northern Michigan University
Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project
Hart, Claudia ................................................................. 106
Plemmons, Anthony ........................................................ 106

Northwest College
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons
Dechert, Renee .............................................................. 78
Giraud, Gerald ................................................................. 78
Richards, Susan .......................................................... 78
Zawacki, Carol .......................................................... 78

Northwestern College

Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures
Forgette, Adrienne M.................................................. 122
Schlak, Tim ............................................................ 122

Oakton Community College

Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success
Dickson, Donna .......................................................... 207
Van Wolvelear, Leslie ................................................... 207
Williams, Ruth .......................................................... 207

Oklahoma City Community College

Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria,
Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Perry, Janet C........................................................... 159

Oklahoma State University

Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
Abramson, Charles ...................................................... 58

Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission
Hathcoat, John............................................................ 193
Penn, Jeremy D. .......................................................... 193

Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology

Cultivating Organizational Innovation
Newman, Scott .......................................................... 156

Olivet College

Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College
Graessle, Charles A..................................................... 95
Logan, Linda ............................................................. 95

Peru State College

Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond
Zost, Greg .............................................................. 295
Zost, Loretta ............................................................. 295
## Institution Index

[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pima County Community College</strong></td>
<td>Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion</td>
<td>Wright, Daniel</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purdue University</strong></td>
<td>Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs: A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models</td>
<td>Schuver, Mark T., Springer, Mitchell L.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purdue University–Calumet</strong></td>
<td>Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion</td>
<td>Pellicciotti, Beth</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robert Morris University</strong></td>
<td>Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach</td>
<td>Krueger, Mablene, Nieman, Larry</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Edward’s University</strong></td>
<td>Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees</td>
<td>Lock, Cory</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saint Paul College</strong></td>
<td>Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit</td>
<td>Krasowski, Marilyn, Tomsic, Margie L.</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schoolcraft College</strong></td>
<td>Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College</td>
<td>Cicchelli, Cynthia L., Hawkins, Cheryl</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Southeast Missouri State University

*Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days*
- Frazier, Christina L. .......................................................... 256
- Starrett, David .................................................................... 256

Stark State College

*Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education*
- Lengacher, Linda S. ............................................................. 27
- Wiles, Kathleen R. .............................................................. 27

Tulsa Community College

*Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence*
- Summers, Angela .............................................................. 229
- Urie, Jeanne ...................................................................... 229
- Wilson, Steven Harmon ...................................................... 229

*Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change*
- David, Kevin .................................................................. 164
- Stecher, Sarah .................................................................. 164
- Wood, Donna ................................................................... 164

United States Air Force Academy

*An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills*
- Harrington, Kathleen .......................................................... 264
- Jones, Steven K. ................................................................. 264
- Scharff, Lauren ................................................................ 264

University of Arkansas–Fort Smith

*Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives*
- Downing Robinson, Kimberly ........................................... 273
- Mitchell, Brenda .............................................................. 273
- Timmons, Rebecca ............................................................ 273
- Wallace, Ray .................................................................. 273
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Central Oklahoma</td>
<td>Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School</td>
<td>Barthell, John</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radke, William</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Redd, JeAnna</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications</td>
<td>Vershelden, Cia</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati–Clermont College</td>
<td>College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals</td>
<td>Appatova, Victoria</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Koeritz, Linsey</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Riley, Susan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wallace, Barbara</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Findlay</td>
<td>Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data</td>
<td>Brougher, Dale</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Koepke, Andrea W.</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Indianapolis</td>
<td>Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives</td>
<td>Moore, Mary C.</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wilson, Connie S.</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota, Crookston</td>
<td>Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges</td>
<td>Brorson, Bruce</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brorson, Susan</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maier, Denis</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri–Saint Louis</td>
<td>Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness</td>
<td>Dolan, Patricia</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walker de Felix, Judith</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institution Index
[Index by Institution / Title / Author]

O'Neill, Patrick ................................................................. 284
Pearson, Donna K. ............................................................. 284
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones
Hawthorne, Joan .............................................................. 198

University of Saint Francis (IN)
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones
Smith, Matt J. ................................................................. 198

University of St. Francis (IL)
Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning
Steinke, Pamela ................................................................. 246

University of Tulsa
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
Wells, Harrington ............................................................... 58

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
Fleming, Raymond ............................................................. 23
Jirovec, Danielle L. .............................................................. 23
Pedrick, Laura E. ............................................................... 23
Pfeiffer, Heidi M. ............................................................... 23
Reddy, Diane M. ............................................................... 23
Stoiber, Leah C. ................................................................. 23

University of Wisconsin–Parkside
We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development
Castor, Theresa ................................................................. 219
Kelley, Kimberly ............................................................... 219
Robinson, James .............................................................. 219

University of Wisconsin-Superior
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Hensrud, Faith ................................................................. 126

University of Wisconsin–Whitewater
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Kopper, Beverly ............................................................... 126
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ursuline College</td>
<td><em>From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment</em></td>
<td>Butler, Marilynn N.</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincennes University</td>
<td><em>Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees</em></td>
<td>Gress, Michael E.</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walden University</td>
<td><em>Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion</em></td>
<td>Burkholder, Gary J.</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster University</td>
<td><em>Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix</em></td>
<td>Hellerud, Nancy</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watts, John</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weissman, Julie</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Illinois University</td>
<td><em>Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact</em></td>
<td>Baker-Sperry, Lori M.</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parsons, Nancy P.</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Schmit, Sandra</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zane State College</td>
<td><em>Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program</em></td>
<td>Kirst, Pamela</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kline, Elizabeth</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keyword Index
[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

Accountability
The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability
Indiana Wesleyan University ................................................................. 136
Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials
for Measurable Student Learning and Performance
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning .......................................... 118
Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
Columbia College Chicago ................................................................. 169
National Louis University .................................................................... 169
Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education
Stark State College ............................................................................. 27
Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission
Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Oklahoma City Community College ...................................................... 159
Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days
Southeast Missouri State University ...................................................... 256

Adjunct Faculty
Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned
from the Pilot Program
Zane State College ............................................................................. 187

Adult Learners
Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs:
A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models
Purdue University ................................................................................. 83

Assessment of Co-Curricular Offerings
From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment
Ursuline College .................................................................................. 212
Il-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning
Illinois College .................................................................................... 88
Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College
Olivet College ..................................................................................... 95

Assessment of Student Learning
Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on
the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the
Wisconsin Technical Colleges
Wisconsin Technical College System .................................................... 250
Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success
Oakton Community College ................................................................. 207
An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation
Baker College ................................................................. 31

Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees
North Dakota State University ........................................... 202
St. Edward’s University ...................................................... 202
Vincennes University .......................................................... 202

Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning ......................... 118

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
Capella University .............................................................. 243

Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
Columbia College Chicago .................................................. 169
National Louis University ................................................... 169

Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education
Stark State College ............................................................ 27

Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives
University of Arkansas–Fort Smith ....................................... 273

Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment
Kendall College ................................................................. 114

From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment
Ursuline College ............................................................... 212

IL-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning
Illinois College ................................................................. 88

Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee ..................................... 23

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
Arapahoe Community College .............................................. 269
Blackhawk Technical College .............................................. 269
Highland Community College ............................................. 269
University of Central Oklahoma .......................................... 269

An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills
United States Air Force Academy ........................................ 264

Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission
Oklahoma State University .................................................. 193

Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact
Western Illinois University ................................................... 233

Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence
Tulsa Community College .................................................... 229
### Keyword Index

[Index by **Keyword** / **Title** / **Institution**]

**Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process—Lessons Learned**
- Missouri State University ................................................................. 178

**Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones**
- North Dakota State University ......................................................... 198
- University of North Dakota ............................................................. 198
- University of Saint Francis .............................................................. 198

**Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix**
- Webster University ............................................................................ 237

**Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days**
- Southeast Missouri State University .................................................... 256

**Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning**
- Central College ................................................................................ 246
- University of St. Francis .................................................................... 246

**Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System**
- New Mexico Highlands University ....................................................... 259

**We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development**
- University of Wisconsin–Parkside .................................................... 219

**We’re Movin’ on Up!! (We All Have a Piece of the “Student Learning” Pie)**
- Arapahoe Community College ......................................................... 224

**Collaborations/Partnerships**

**Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs:**
- A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models
- Purdue University ............................................................................. 83

**Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons**
- Northwest College ........................................................................... 78

**Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning**
- Kent State University ......................................................................... 151

**Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model**
- Coconino County Community College .............................................. 64
- Culver-Stockton College ................................................................... 64

**We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development**
- University of Wisconsin–Parkside .................................................... 219

**Communication**

**Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project**
- Northern Michigan University ......................................................... 106

**Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond**
- Peru State College ........................................................................... 295
Keyword Index

[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning
Jefferson College ................................................................. 183

Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Metropolitan State University .................................................. 126
University of Wisconsin–Superior ......................................... 126
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater .................................... 126

Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives
University of Indianapolis ....................................................... 304

Curriculum
Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees
North Dakota State University ............................................... 202
St. Edward’s University ......................................................... 202
Vincennes University ............................................................. 202

Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
Capella University ................................................................ 243

Continuous Academic Improvement Through Assignment of Credit Compliance
Columbia College Chicago ...................................................... 169
National Louis University ....................................................... 169

Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College
Schoolcraft College ................................................................. 52

Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience
Crowder College .................................................................. 101

Data Collection/Data Management
University of North Dakota .................................................... 284

Count What Counts: Assessing Program Effect in Developmental Education
Stark State College ................................................................. 27

Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data
University of Findlay ............................................................... 298

Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College
Olivet College .................................................................. 95

Student Learning Outcomes: From 0 to 1,450 in Ninety Days
Southeast Missouri State University ..................................... 256
## Keyword Index

[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

### Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System
- New Mexico Highlands University .......................................................... 259

### Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
- Lewis University ............................................................................... 175

### Diversity

**Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School**
- Bloomsburg University ....................................................................... 58
- Oklahoma State University ................................................................. 58
- University of Central Oklahoma ......................................................... 58
- University of Tulsa ........................................................................... 58

### Faculty Development and Evaluation

**Implementing an Adjunct Performance-Based Advancement Model: Lessons Learned from the Pilot Program**
- Zane State College ........................................................................... 187

**Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence**
- Tulsa Community College .................................................................. 229

**We’re in This Together: Shared Learning Goals Through Faculty Development**
- University of Wisconsin–Parkside ...................................................... 219

### First Year Programs

**An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation**
- Baker College .................................................................................. 31

**College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals**
- University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ...................................... 12

**Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience**
- Crowder College .............................................................................. 101

**Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach**
- Junior Achievement Chicago ............................................................... 111
- Robert Morris University ................................................................. 111

### General Education

**Authentically Assessing Liberal Education Outcomes in Two- and Four-Year Degrees**
- North Dakota State University ......................................................... 202
- St. Edward’s University ..................................................................... 202
- Vincennes University ........................................................................ 202

**Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives**
- University of Arkansas–Fort Smith .................................................. 273

**An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills**
- United States Air Force Academy ..................................................... 264
Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes Within Disciplinary Capstones
North Dakota State University ............................................................... 198
University of North Dakota ................................................................. 198
University of Saint Francis ................................................................. 198

Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning
Central College .................................................................................. 246
University of St. Francis .................................................................... 246

HLC Criteria and Processes
University of North Dakota ................................................................. 284

Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data
University of Findlay .......................................................................... 298

Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion
Pima County Community College District ............................................. 308
Purdue University–Calumet ................................................................. 308
Walden University ............................................................................. 308

Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond
Peru State College ............................................................................. 295

Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Oklahoma City Community College ..................................................... 159

Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
Chamberlain College of Nursing ........................................................... 314

Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities
Concordia College ............................................................................. 141

Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change
Tulsa Community College .................................................................. 164

The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes
Peru State College ............................................................................. 278

Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit
Saint Paul College ............................................................................. 301

Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
Fort Hays State University ................................................................. 146
Keyword Index

Institutional Effectiveness

The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability
Indiana Wesleyan University .................................................. 136

Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness
University of Missouri–Saint Louis .......................................... 290

Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success
Oakton Community College ................................................. 207

Cultivating Organizational Innovation
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology .................. 156

Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
Chamberlain College of Nursing ........................................... 314

Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures
Northwestern College .......................................................... 122

Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared Governance and Planning
Jefferson College ............................................................... 183

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
Arapahoe Community College ............................................. 269
Blackhawk Technical College ............................................... 269
Highland Community College .............................................. 269
University of Central Oklahoma .......................................... 269

Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Metropolitan State University ............................................... 126
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater ...................................... 126
University of Wisconsin–Superior .......................................... 126

Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation
Ball State University ............................................................. 131

Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact
Western Illinois University .................................................... 233

Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities
Concordia College .............................................................. 141

Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning
Kent State University ........................................................... 151

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Problem and the Fix
Webster University ............................................................ 237

Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
City Colleges of Chicago–Harold Washington College, .................. 35
Columbia College Chicago ................................................... 35
DeVry University ............................................................... 35
Indiana University Bloomington ......................................... 35
Keyword Index

[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

Learning Environment

Creating a Learning Culture Using Quality Initiatives
University of Arkansas–Fort Smith ................................................................. 273

Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons
Northwest College ......................................................................................... 78

From Compliance to Intention: Creating a Holistic Culture of Assessment
Ursuline College ............................................................................................... 212

Institution-wide Learning Outcomes: Three Applications
Arapahoe Community College ................................................................. 269
Blackhawk Technical College ................................................................. 269
Highland Community College ................................................................. 269
University of Central Oklahoma ............................................................. 269

Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Coconino County Community College ......................................................... 64
Culver-Stockton College ............................................................................ 64

Mission

Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging the Campus Community and Beyond
Peru State College ......................................................................................... 295

Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission
Oklahoma State University ........................................................................... 193

Professional Programs in Liberal Arts Colleges: Problems and Possibilities
Concordia College ......................................................................................... 141

Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process—Lessons Learned
Missouri State University ............................................................................. 178

Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
Fort Hays State University ........................................................................... 146

Online Learning/Distance Learning

Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion
Pima County Community College District .................................................. 308
Purdue University–Calumet ........................................................................ 308
Walden University ......................................................................................... 308

Enhancing Motivation to Participate in Professional Fee-Based Programs:
A Longitudinal Study of Multiple Faculty Compensation Models
Purdue University .......................................................................................... 83

Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
Concordia University Chicago ...................................................................... 73
Keyword Index
[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee .................................................. 23
Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges
University of Minnesota, Crookston .................................................... 67

Organizational Change
Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness
University of Missouri–Saint Louis ..................................................... 290
Competency Map: Building a Visual Display of Curricular Learning Paths
Capella University ............................................................................. 243
Cultivating Organizational Innovation
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology ............................. 156
Fostering Interdepartmental Collaboration Between Institutional Research and Accreditation
Chamberlain College of Nursing ....................................................... 314
Governance That Works: Inclusive and Flexible Structures
Northwestern College ......................................................................... 122
Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation
Ball State University ........................................................................... 131
Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change
Tulsa Community College .................................................................. 164
Remembering: Institutional Memory and Learning
Kent State University .......................................................................... 151
The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning Processes
Peru State College ............................................................................. 278
Utilization of an Open Feedback Process Model to Develop a University Mission Statement
Fort Hays State University ................................................................. 146

Organizational Leadership
Leadership in Turbulent Times: Turning Crises and Challenges into Opportunities
Metropolitan State University .............................................................. 126
University of Wisconsin–Superior ....................................................... 126
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater ............................................... 126

Persistence
Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College
Schoolcraft College ........................................................................... 52
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
Bloomsburg University ....................................................................... 58
Oklahoma State University–Stillwater .............................................. 58
University of Central Oklahoma ................................................................. 58
University of Tulsa ................................................................. 58

Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work:
Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality
Madonna University ................................................................. 18

Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
City Colleges of Chicago—Harold Washington College ................................. 35
Columbia College Chicago ................................................................. 35
DeVry University ................................................................. 35
Indiana University Bloomington ................................................................. 35

Planning/Strategic Planning

Fine-Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate Higher Learning Commission
Criteria, Achieving the Dream Goals, and Complete College America Requirements
Oklahoma City Community College ................................................................. 159

Institutional Committee Restructuring: A Foundation for Effective Shared
Governance and Planning
Jefferson College ........................................................................... 183

Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work:
Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality
Madonna University ................................................................. 18

Promoting Completion: Sustainable Knowledge in a System Designed to Change
Tulsa Community College ................................................................. 164

Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges
University of Minnesota, Crookston ................................................................. 67

The Self-Study as a “Strategic Event”: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study
and Strategic Planning Processes
Peru State College ................................................................. 278

Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives
University of Indianapolis ................................................................. 304

Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
Lewis University ................................................................. 175

Program Evaluation

Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on
the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the
Wisconsin Technical Colleges
Wisconsin Technical College System ................................................................. 250

Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment
Kendall College ................................................................. 114
# Keyword Index

[Index by **Keyword** / **Title** / **Institution**]

## Program Review

**College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals**  
University of Cincinnati–Clermont College ................................................................. 12

**Distance Learning Change Requests: Panel Reviewers’ Perspectives and Discussion**  
Pima County Community College District ........................................................................ 308  
Purdue University–Calumet ............................................................................................. 308  
Walden University .......................................................................................................... 308

**Program Review: Policy, Review Cycle and Assessment of the Process—Lessons Learned**  
Missouri State University ................................................................................................. 178

## Quality Improvement

**The Academic Quality Index: A Tool for Management and Accountability**  
Indiana Wesleyan University ........................................................................................... 136

**Accreditation Aerobics for Institutional Fitness**  
University of Missouri–Saint Louis .................................................................................. 290

University of North Dakota ............................................................................................ 284

**Aligning Student Outcomes and Assessments to Meet Industry Need: A 360° View on the Value of the Technical Skills Attainment Process to Students, Employers, and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges**  
Wisconsin Technical College System ............................................................................... 250

**Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project**  
Northern Michigan University ....................................................................................... 106

**Assessments That Worked: From Skepticism to Success**  
Oakton Community College ............................................................................................. 207

**An At-risk Student Immersion Project: College and Career Preparation**  
Baker College .................................................................................................................... 31

**Competency-Based Degree Programs in the United States: Postsecondary Credentials for Measurable Student Learning and Performance**  
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning .................................................................. 118

**Cultivating Organizational Innovation**  
Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology ......................................................... 156

**Curricular Agility: Re-inventing Curriculum Through Assessment**  
Kendall College ................................................................................................................ 114

**Curriculum Mapping at Schoolcraft College**  
Schoolcraft College ......................................................................................................... 52

**Implementing Causal Interpretations in Community Life Assessment at a Small College**  
Olivet College ................................................................................................................... 95
## Keyword Index

### Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with Your Institution’s Mission
Oklahoma State University ................................................................. 193

### Optimizing Institutional Effectiveness Functions to Improve Accreditation
Ball State University ................................................................. 131

### Our Four-Step Cycle of Assessment of Student Learning: Shifting the Focus to Impact
Western Illinois University ................................................................. 233

### Planting Seeds of Assessment, Nurturing a Culture of Evidence
Tulsa Community College ................................................................. 229

### Quality Management for Online Education: Best Practices and Implementation Challenges
University of Minnesota, Crookston ................................................................. 67

### Systems Portfolio Feedback Dissemination and Strategic Initiatives
University of Indianapolis ................................................................. 304

### Ultimate Outcomes: Implementing a University-wide Integrated Assessment System
New Mexico Highlands University ................................................................. 259

### Using a Systems Appraisal to Guide the Quality Checkup Visit
Saint Paul College ................................................................. 301

### Utilizing a Matrix Approach for Managing Assessment Data and Processes
Lewis University ................................................................. 175

### Why Do Students Fail? Students’ Perspective
City Colleges of Chicago—Harold Washington College ................................................................. 35
Columbia College Chicago ................................................................. 35
DeVry University ................................................................. 35
Indiana University Bloomington ................................................................. 35

### Recruitment/Retention

**Making Retention the Linchpin Around Which the University Organizes Its Work:**
**Bringing Tinto’s Vision to Reality**
Madonna University ................................................................. 18

### Service Learning

**Assessing the Communication Health of a University: A Service Learning Project**
Northern Michigan University ................................................................. 106

**II-LUMINA-ting the Curriculum: Turning the Spotlight on Civic Learning**
Illinois College ................................................................. 88

**Promoting Service Learning Through a Freshman-Level “Service Seed” Experience**
Crowder College ................................................................. 101

**Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach**
Junior Achievement Chicago ................................................................. 111
Robert Morris University ................................................................. 111
Keyword Index
[Index by Keyword / Title / Institution]

Tools for Assessing Cognitive Outcomes of Experiential Learning
Central College ................................................................. 246
University of St. Francis .................................................. 246

Teaching/Pedagogy
Exploring the Learning Commons: Tutoring Moves In! Transitioning from an Information Commons to a Learning Commons
Northwest College ........................................................... 78
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
Concordia University Chicago ........................................ 73
Increasing Student Success in Higher Education Through U-Pace Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee ................................ 23
An Integrated Effort to Develop and Assess Critical Thinking Skills
United States Air Force Academy ..................................... 264
Student Learning in a Multidisciplinary Context: An Experiential Simulation Model
Culver-Stockton College .................................................. 64
Coconino County Community College .............................. 64

Technology/Technology Tools
Developing a Structure to Organize Collected Data
University of Findlay ....................................................... 298
Faculty and Student Use of Private Cloud Computing with Academic Research Projects
Concordia University Chicago ........................................ 73

Underserved Populations
College Success Program: Helping Marginally Prepared Students Achieve Their Education Goals
University of Cincinnati-Clermont College ...................... 12
Impacts of Globalization and Undergraduate Research on Persistence to Graduate School
Bloomsburg University .................................................... 58
Oklahoma State University–Stillwater ............................... 58
University of Central Oklahoma ...................................... 58
University of Tulsa .......................................................... 58
Service Learning for Freshmen Students: An Experiential Approach
Junior Achievement Chicago .......................................... 111
Robert Morris University ................................................ 111
The Commission selected groups of three or four higher education professionals to review papers submitted to the 2013 *Collection of Papers* and to identify the best paper in each of four themes.

The 2013 Best Paper Award Winners are:

**Theme 1: Programs and Structures that Support Student Success**


**Theme 2: Organizational Leadership, Organizational Change, Institutional Effectiveness**

“Fine Tuning Your Strategic Planning Process to Integrate HLC Criteria, AtD Goals, and Complete College America Requirements,” by Janet C. Perry, Director of Institutional Effectiveness at Oklahoma City Community College in Oklahoma City.

**Theme 3: Assessing and Improving Student Learning (two awards)**

“Mission Possible: Aligning Assessment’s Purpose with your Institution’s Mission,” by Jeremy D. Penn, Director of University Assessment and Testing, and John Hathcoat, Data Analyst, at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

“Strategies for Assessing General Education Outcomes within Disciplinary Capstones,” by Joan Hawthorne, Director of Assessment and Regional Accreditation at University of North Dakota in Grand Forks; Larry R. Peterson, Director of Accreditation, Assessment, and Academic Advising at North Dakota State University in Fargo; and Matt J. Smith, Dean of School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Theme 4: Evaluation Processes**

“The Self-Study as a ‘Strategic Event’: Cultural Change Through Coordinated Self-Study and Strategic Planning,” by Todd Drew, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dan Hanson, President, at Peru State College in Peru, Nebraska.

A special thanks to the reviewers: Sandy Bowles, University of Charleston; Kathleen Clauson-Bash, Graceland University; Sue Darby, National American University; Sue Day-Perroots, West Virginia University; Marie Giacomelli, Robert Morris University-Illinois; Jennifer Gruening, Bradley University; Paul C. Koch, St. Ambrose University; Douglas N. McMillian, Southeastern Oklahoma State University; Diane Nyhammer, Rock Valley College; Susan Rydell, Metropolitan State University; William Tammone, Illinois Central College; Roberta Teahen, Ferris State University; and Benjamin Franklin Young, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana.

The 2013 *Collection of Papers* is available on a flash drive and is provided to every conference registrant.
Disclaimer

The papers included in this collection offer the viewpoints of their authors. The Commission highly recommends them for study and for the advice they contain, but none represent official Commission directions, rules, or policies.