Good Practices in Student Learning and Assessment Report
Academy for Assessment of Student Learning Roundtable
June 18-20, 2008

Initiatives that Engaged a Campus in Student Learning and Assessment

We feel that one of the most effective strategies we have pursued is having leadership stay "on message" regarding the importance of student learning data for internal decision-making. Five years ago, we hired our first institutional researcher, and now have three researchers and a newly hired Dean of Research and Evaluation. Data on student learning is now referenced for decision-making in purchasing, the college strategic plan, academic program review, and our student affairs workplan. At annual faculty development meetings, assessment of student learning is consistently on the agenda.

-Anoka Ramsey Community College

The great diversity of teaching and learning methods at a liberal arts college has led us away from the "one size fits all" approach which we previously implemented, namely of requiring all departments to provide mission statements, goals, objectives, assessment instruments, and measures. After all, if Franklin College is to be a coherent place, the mission statements of its parts had better be a reflection of the mission statement of the institution. Accordingly, our current approach is more straightforward: all departments are asked to answer a few basic questions: What do you want your students to know?

> Are they learning?
> How do you know?
> What steps should follow from your data-gathering?

In addition to the First Year Learning Project previously mentioned, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee will help academic departments to conduct their program reviews, second round, over the next four year cycle.

-Franklin College

A "good thing" we have done to get stakeholders thinking and talking about student learning and assessment was our initial attempt (2000 through 2003) at the institutional portfolio approach. During those years, we had an Outcomes Assessment Coordinator who met with program chairs, coordinators, and deans to help them develop and implement outcomes assessment plans. This was a university-wide effort and it definitely raised the awareness of faculty regarding outcomes assessment. Although this effort was abandoned by the then-university administration, many of the faculty who were involved in that effort are still at NMHU and collectively possess a latent knowledge of the need for and possible utility of outcomes assessment.

-New Mexico Highlands University

Institutional Thinking about Assessment: The More Concrete the Better. Throughout the last academic year, two of our three faculty divisions (Bible and Leadership) talked together about how we help students learn to teach the Bible in their ministry contexts. In four 90-minute meetings, we talked about (a) what constitutes competency in the skill of teaching the Bible to lay people, and (b) how we work with students on this skill at various points in the curriculum. Some faculty shared some of their assignments in this area. We identified Bible courses, Education courses, and

Preaching courses as those places in the curriculum most directly related to developing the skill of teaching the Bible.

The conversation was lively. We were energized to hear what our colleagues were doing across divisions and courses. In addition to what we learned about how we are teaching people to teach the Bible, we learned that we have a lot more energy around "assessment" when we are discussing a well-defined, concrete subject or practice. The questions, "How are we doing?" or "How are our students doing?" are most fruitfully discussed when we have a concrete task to focus our discussion.
-Luther Seminary

In 2004, the College sponsored a "Focus on Learning Academy" which involved a series of presenters on the topic of assessment – Mark Milliron, Barbara Walvood, and Thomas Angelo. As an outgrowth of the Learning Academy, the Assessment Committee has coordinated an annual Assessment Forum & Showcase. The forum consists of a keynote-type address, followed by presentations by various faculty showcasing assessment activities and how assessment data has been used in their discipline.
-St. Clair County Community College

Monthly "Brown Bag Lunch" conversations about outcomes assessment and the use of outside consultants to help academic departments develop and maintain assessment plans.
-University of Iowa

Structures & Models for Communications, Committees, and Assessment Resources
We have a printed assessment handbook which is given to new faculty at orientation, and web-based resources with the same information. We count a success each time a faculty member unconnected with any current or historical assessment effort at our college initiates a contact with our faculty assessment work group for assistance with a new project.
-Anoka Ramsey Community College

The formation of the University Assessment Committee (UAC). The UAC is responsible for compiling data on assessment practices that are used throughout the university (both in academic and non-academic departments). This process gets the departments involved and holds them accountable for incorporating assessment into their policies and procedures.
-Capital University

We have also revamped our Academic Assessment Committee. We have changed the name of this group to Student Learning Committee to foster a more positive attitude to assessment. We have changed our committee structure, omitting a traditional "chair" position that was given a stipend for acting as chair, and adding a "coordinator" position which is still filled by faculty, but given release time and a stipend for this work. We have expanded the time taken with assessment, and we've also worked toward more meaningful assessment. This has meant some growing pains, but we're excited about the direction we're heading.
-Joliet Junior College

We have instituted some advertising type activities to get people talking about assessment, including the creation of a bi-annual newsletter with articles on assessment going on around campus. This newsletter is sent to all faculty, staff and administrators as well as board members. We

profile assessment activities going on in departments, advertise upcoming conferences faculty and administrators may attend, and give some basic information about assessment.
-Joliet Junior College

An ongoing internal publication, *In the Abstract*, gets our institution thinking and talking about student learning and assessment. The Office of Research, Curriculum and Planning puts out a monthly publication that features, in one page of clear, accessible language, a piece of research that that office has conducted. Some of these pieces are directly related to learning outcomes assessment.
-Oakton Community College

There are two key committees involved with assessment – Assessment and Academic Review. The Assessment Committee is comprised of a faculty representative from each department and coordinates the overall assessment activities of the College. The Academic Review Committee also has representation from each of the departments and is involved in the oversight of general education competencies and assessment. The dedication of two independent committees (and typically with different departmental representatives) complements the effort to campus involvement in assessment.
-St. Clair County Community College

Student Success Team (of faculty, staff, and students) and the University Assessment Council
-University of Iowa

This year we created a new template for departments to use in developing their individual assessment plans and reports. It contains explicit, directive questions that department chairs have found very helpful as they designed and implemented their annual assessment activities. Because the new template was introduced late in the fall semester, several departments have indicated that they were able to use it only partially this year, but they are enthusiastic about implementing it next year. As part of the new structure and function of the Assessment Committee, in 2007-2008 the committee reviewed and commented on the assessment plans from all College departments, and the Assessment Coordinator and one or two committee members met with a number of department chairs to help them develop more meaningful plans. This was received very positively, and we have been invited to attend several department and division meetings in Fall 2008 to help faculty with their discipline-related assessment.
-Scottsdale Community College

a) A College-wide Assessment Team with representation from all divisions and equal distribution of faculty and management. The team will work together on Action Projects designed to advance assessments efforts at WITC and lead to continuous improvement of student learning.
b) A quarterly AQIP Newsletter distributed to all WITC staff with assessment updates included.
c) Assessment website available to staff and faculty. The site includes current assessment team members/contacts, WITC's assessment plan, assessment resources for use by faculty, meeting minutes, etc.
-Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

Assessment Instruments, Practices, and Measures

Our English and Physical Therapy Assistant faculty groups both have active assessment efforts, using instruments embedded into existing courses to yield formative and summative information for students, faculty and program reporting. (Data from these embedded efforts and others is entered directly by faculty (or assistants) into our "Elumen" database for aggregation at the student goal level.) These are both examples of how our consultative work in the past few years built successfully on pre-existing knowledge base and interests.

A) In the case of the PTA program, though there is no mandatory exam for practitioners in our state, there is a voluntary one, and associated standards. Thus, there is clear motivation for PTA students to have performance standards, and to be aware of their progress on these clear standards. With assistance from a faculty peer (released for assessment coordinator work), PTA faculty established student learning goals which satisfy and incorporate those standards. Several assessments were developed to ascertain student progress toward these goals. For didactic coursework (such as human anatomy and physiology), objective tests yield results for students regarding satisfactory progress. For clinical skills, a third party rating instrument was located which is consistent with the desired professional practice standards and goals. This instrument is used to record student self-assessment at midterm and final in the clinical experience course, and to record instructor ratings on the same items. Again, students are informed of their progress at several points and given opportunities to improve. These assessments are considered useful for the program and once established, have been continued and used with relatively little outside attention.

B) Our English division, in contrast, has varying standards to consider, both for the descriptors of student work and the methods of assessment. Our college meets a statewide General Education "transfer competency in communication" through a combination of courses taught by Speech faculty and English faculty. A specific English freshman level course has been designated by our faculty for completion of a portion of this competency. In addition, English faculty have been active in following disciplinary debates on best practice for assessment and guidance of learners. Prior to our current institution-wide assessment effort, they had in place a holistic appraisal system of student portfolios for that same freshman level writing course. When faced with the challenge of demonstrating how student work from that course met the transfer competencies, they had a strong knowledge base about a)the work of their own students and b)holistic assessment with interrater reliability. Leadership was provided by their Dean, who also was leading the institutional assessment effort. Accepting the challenge to translate between the statewide competency descriptors and the English faculty knowledge base about assessment priorities, an analytic rubric developed and piloted in 2003 which is used to assess a culminating research paper.

This original analytic rubric has been revised 4 times in the past 5 years, and student learning data has been collected each semester from multiple instructors on a voluntary basis. As participation rates have risen, for the past two springs (2007 and 2008) the English division has devoted a data review time to discuss their results and possible implications for instruction. Currently, they are working to establish a performance standard for the number of students achieving proficiency, and also a small work group of English faculty have an initiative to collect college wide data on student writing proficiency in the upcoming academic year. Being an actively assessing group, with passionate commitment to best practices, they continue to wrestle with the meaning of their assessment program and ways to refine it. They are highly autonomous in the way they prefer to use consultative support.
-Anoka Ramsey Community College

Chemistry has used Workshop Chemistry to improve retention and student learning.
-Capital University

Development and use of a writing assessment rubric and the development of a Best Practices rubric and process used by the Distance Learning Advisory Team, which has greatly assisted in the improvement of instruction and learning in that online environment.
-Glen Oaks Community College

Our Child Development program has had success using portfolios to assess their students' learning. As a form of authentic assessment, students completing the Associate Degree in Child Development must present an Assessment Portfolio. Although the Assessment Portfolio is a type of summative evaluation the process of collecting required information supports formative evaluation. Currently portfolios are organized in binders. The process for portfolio development is as follows:

I. Collection Stage – students are first introduced to the concept of professional portfolio when they enroll in CDEV 205: Introduction to Early Childhood Education. The emphasis is on collecting and organizing materials that are relevant to becoming an early childhood professional. The primary goal is to get students in the habit of keeping track of their early childhood assignments, handouts, projects, related community service and professional development activities. Students are encouraged to collect materials from all CDEV classes.

II. Developing Stage – with each subsequent CDEV class students are encouraged to continue collecting evidence that demonstrates their developing competencies. During this stage students begin reflective writing as the precursor to the later requirement of having a reflective narrative for each artifact in their Assessment Portfolio. When students enroll for CDEV 220: Curriculum and Instructional Methods, they are introduced the concept of the Assessment Portfolio. Students are required to review materials collected and complete the Categorizing Artifact Chart.

III. Completion of Assessment Portfolio – the last class students take is CDEV 255: Internship and Seminar where they engage in a student teaching experience under the supervision of a Cooperating Teacher. It is during this final class that students must now focus on selecting from a vast amount of material those artifacts that demonstrate their competency in core knowledge, skills, abilities/dispositions, achievements, and training needed for an early childhood professional. For each selected artifact the student must include a reflective narrative that explains why the artifact was selected and how it connects to the Standards or Core Professional Knowledge. The framework for the portfolio is based on NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Program Standards, Illinois Early Care and Education Core Professional Knowledge, and the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. Portfolios are evaluated using a Portfolio Assessment Rubric.
-Joliet Junior College

An accomplishment in assessing student learning is our development of an on-line reporting form for outcomes assessment of the courses that make up our core curriculum. Instructors of approximately 40 core courses in five areas identified by the state of New Mexico (Humanities & Fine Arts, Lab Sciences, Mathematics, Communications, and Social & Behavioral Sciences) rate level of attainment of state competencies and NMHU core curriculum outcomes using a four-point rubric. Instructors enter the ratings on-line through the Banner system much like they enter mid-term and final grades through Banner.
-New Mexico Highlands University

Curriculum mapping

-Lewis University

Student Learning Tool: The CIQ From Stephen Brookfield, Discussion as a Form of Teaching, some of our faculty have borrowed and adapted the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ). This is a survey of four questions given to students at the end of each week in an online class or at the end of a class period on campus. The survey is anonymous and the teacher reports survey results back to the class at its next meeting.
1. At what moment in the class today did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class today did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class today did you find most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class today did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about class today surprised you the most?

While it may seem at first that this is a simple class evaluation, its impact on student learning comes as students reflect on what worked and what did not for them in any given class. How are they learning? What activities are most/least helpful? Teachers get valuable information on student engagement. Students practice thinking of themselves as learners and as participants in the shape of a class over the course of a semester.
-Luther Seminary

The Writing Skills Assessment Test (WSAT) as exit test. This holistically scored writing sample assesses student learning outcomes in developmental and some ESL writing courses and is used to place students in writing for the following term. It's considered a "best practice" and has been duplicated at other schools.

The Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) test, which assesses students' knowledge about a variety of information literacy skills, which relates to one of our gen ed objectives.
-Oakton Community College

One thing that may be of interest to others is Scottsdale Community College's use of faculty evaluation as a vehicle for assessment of student learning. In the Maricopa Community College District, evaluation of appointive faculty ("tenured") is a self-directed process in which the faculty member identifies an area for improvement (either in content or in methodology), engages a team of two or three peers, and develops a method of improving in that area. The team members help with the design and evaluation of the project. In the past several years, approximately 65% of faculty evaluation projects have been directly related to the assessment of student learning.
-Scottsdale Community College

Professional Development & Special Assessment Initiatives for Faculty
Daley College realizes that it must establish good assessment practices. Thus, we have engaged our stakeholders in other capacities that will lead to the development of assessment tools and a plan for the college. While our college has not implemented the use of a college-wide assessment plan, the college has embraced student learning outcomes as an integral part of teaching and learning.

With the institution's leadership having set forth new academic initiatives with a particular interest in student learning outcomes more support was rendered to this new direction. The college has embraced student learning outcomes as an essential part of teaching and learning. Thus, the

college administration has provided financial resources for all new faculty to attend professional development workshops on student learning outcomes assessment.

As a result of this support over 90% of tenure track faculty have attended either HLC or City College of Chicago (CCC) assessment workshops this past year.
-Richard J. Daley College

A recent faculty in-service in which we did small group work on a holistic grading of writing
-Glen Oaks Community College

We plan on having more activities on campus to educate faculty and administrators about assessment. During our Professional Development week, instead of having a traditional meeting, we've started offering roundtables where faculty can discuss problems or barriers to student learning and share ideas to improve our teaching. We are also creating a fun video to show to all faculty, staff and administrators during our all-campus meeting to get people talking about assessment. By having a positive attitude about assessment and getting people involved who are excited, we're hoping to spread discussions about student learning.
-Joliet Junior College