



**Assessment Program
Plan at
Missouri Southern
State University
2007**

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MSSU Mission Statement

Missouri Southern State University is a state-supported, comprehensive university offering programs leading to the bachelor's degree and to selective master's degrees in collaboration with other universities. The University has a statewide mission in international education granted to MSSU by special legislation.

The University's primary goal is to offer a baccalaureate program that fosters the total education of each student. Central to that mission is the strong commitment to international education, to the liberal arts, to professional and pre-professional programs, and to the complementary relationship that must exist between liberal and professional education in order to prepare individuals for success in careers and lifelong learning.

Inherent in its international approach to undergraduate education is the University's desire to prepare its students to understand world affairs, international issues and other cultures as seen through their history, geography, language, literature, philosophy, economics and politics. Knowledge and understanding of other cultures of the world also promote better understanding of our own valuable cultural diversity.

Missouri Southern State University's commitment to the liberal arts is reflected in a comprehensive program of general education requirements for all students to ensure that they have a breadth of educational experiences which will enable them to develop communication and critical thinking skills and to acquire and apply aesthetic, contemporary, civic, international, historical, mathematical, scientific and value-oriented perspectives.

The faculty and staff of Missouri Southern State University emphasize **quality teaching** and learning as the most important attributes of the institution, complemented by scholarly and creative expression and dedicated community service. Community service involves responsiveness to the Southwest Missouri region as well as serving as the intellectual, creative and cultural center of the area.

In order to remain loyal to the trust given to the University by the people of the State of Missouri, Missouri Southern State University will:

- fulfill its mission and objectives in an honorable and ethical manner;
- periodically review its mission in light of contemporary changes in society and in the needs of the people of Missouri;
- continually assess the effectiveness of its programs in order to ensure their quality and integrity.

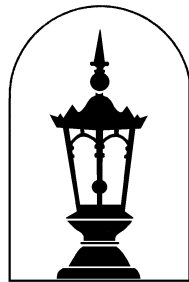
Philosophy Statement On Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Missouri Southern State University is committed to continually assess the effectiveness of its programs. This commitment is grounded in a collaborative desire to facilitate the successful learning and development of students. Assessment should be done through mutually accepted processes to improve or validate these programs. It collectively represents the mission, goals and objectives of the assessed entity.

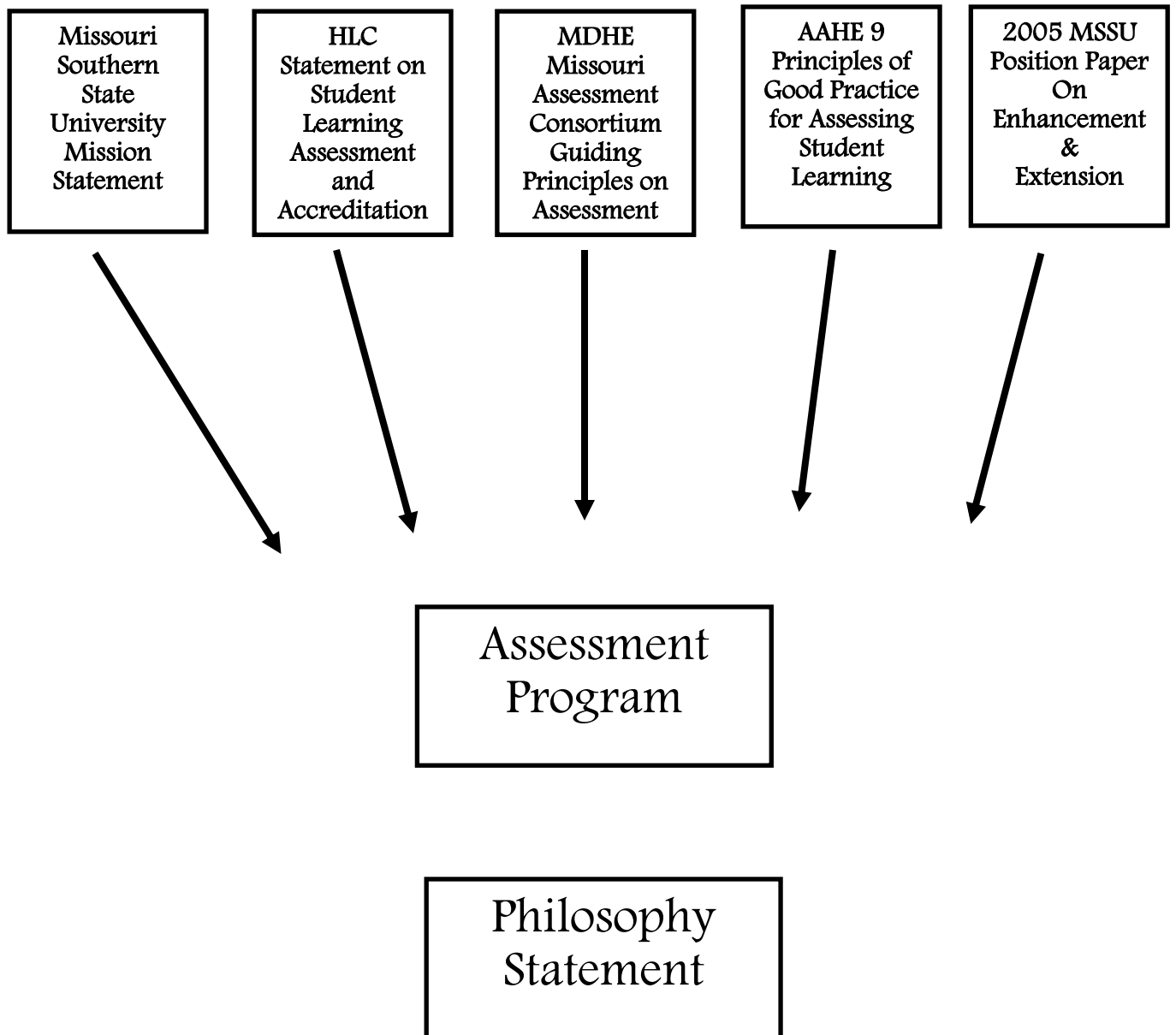
Specifically, assessment is a participatory process that provides information for: curricular revision, teaching and learning, academic advising, student support services, planning, accreditation, and public accountability. It is a means to inform decision makers at institution, program and course levels to accomplish the end goal of successful student learning. Effective assessment fulfills its purpose best when it employs multiple methods and is integrated into the longitudinal education practices of an engaged community.

Assessment Program Goals

1. To foster, maintain and continuously improve an institution that understands and appreciates assessment as a necessary, beneficial and rewarding component of a rich educational environment and ensures the integrity of the institution.
2. To implement and sustain quality practices in student learning outcomes assessment at institution program and course levels including effective communication of assessment policies, procedures and outcomes to relevant stakeholders.
3. To maintain historical records of assessment and provide information to facilitate and improve ongoing evaluation processes for the institution (strategic planning, program review, etc.).
4. To promote continuous improvement by analyzing assessment results, implementing improvements, validating current practices or improving assessment processes.



Influences on Missouri Southern's Assessment Program and Philosophy Statement



Assessment Advisory Committee

Organization

The terms of the full-time faculty committee members shall be three years. Others serve indefinite terms. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice President for Assessment & Institutional Research serve ex-officio. A full-time faculty member chairs the committee.

Membership

Four full-time faculty members, one from each school, appointed by the President of the University
Director of Learning Center
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Assistant Vice President for Assessment & Institutional Research

Purpose

To give guidance and advice on assessment and the interpretation of the assessment results in the areas of core curriculum, the majors/programs and student development at Missouri Southern.

An annual report of the State of Assessment is reported in Summary to and discussed with the campus-wide community. It is based on reports from several program committees on campus including Core Curriculum, Oversight Committee, First Year Experience Task Force, HLC Assessment Academy Team, and the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee.

History of MSSU Assessment

Since 1985, assessment has been an increasing part of the campus culture at Missouri Southern. Seniors were assessed, first in small selected groups, then in 1991, Senior Assessment Day was inaugurated and all seniors were tested in settings administered by faculty during a day set aside in the spring calendar for this event. No classes were held and the focus of the day each year was the assessment process. Both General Education and Major Field Tests were administered that day and surveys asked students for their opinions of services and instruction issues. Freshman Assessment Day was initiated in 1993 and is given on Thursday before the start of the each fall semester.

The assessment efforts have been championed by the President and have been guided by a Committee of Faculty and Administrators with a person designated to direct the effort. In several cases (1994 & 1997) faculty and administrators have analyzed the results of assessments in small groups and made recommendations for changes to our core curriculum (general education).

Our emphasis has focused on two areas in the last three years: First, the development of our department level efforts to take responsibility and to better understand their assessment results in order to make appropriate improvements based on that evidence. Second we have focused most recently on evaluating the freshman year experience so that we can build a model of success for our sophomores through seniors.

While our assessment program has had many successes, we now seek improvement in processes to better understand, communicate and use the results to increase involvement across campus. We want to be more effective in using assessment data for improvement, thereby, “closing the loop”.

Milestones in Assessing and Improving Learning:

- 1985 Ad-hoc Faculty Committee named by President to study assessment options.
- 1987 Assessment Director and permanent Assessment Advisory Committee named.
- 1991 Instituted Senior Assessment Day – classes are dismissed, faculty administer tests.
- 1991 Departments began assessment of their seniors – this provided departments a benchmarking process for tracking their student outcomes.
- 1993 Faculty and Administrators launched a study of the “Core Curriculum.”
- 1994 Faculty and administrators analyzed ACT COMP results using item analysis disaggregated by student groups and majors.
- 1995 Recommendations from Core Curriculum Study.
Assessment Plan developed and distributed.
- 1996 Implementation of New Core Curriculum Faculty Development Workshops. Selected departments began doing improvement studies.

- 1997 Seven principles of Good Practice in General Education Study (surveys of students and faculty). Faculty, administrators and students reviewed results in Focus Groups and made recommendations.
- 2001 Instituted International Mission Survey and subsequent studies.
- 2003 Freshmen to senior “Gain Score Analysis” instituted on Academic Profile (MAPP) test.
- 2004 Annual Department Assessment Results Reports initiated.
- 2005 Core Curriculum and Assessment Advisory Committee met together to analyze assessment results as they related to Missouri General Education and institutional goals.
- National Survey of Student Engagement/Faculty Survey of Student Engagement. Both surveys were administered in Spring 2005 and results were analyzed by faculty, administrators, students and staff in Fall 2005. This effort was funded by the Missouri Southern Foundation.
- Position Paper developed by MSSU participants in HLC/AAHE Workshop on assessment which recommended several initiatives. These initiatives were accepted by the Assessment Advisory Committee and endorsed by the Administration.
- Senior Day Luncheon for Board of Governors, Administration, faculty and professional staff with nationally known speaker (John Gardner) was initiated.
- “Assessment Fair” initiated to allow academic departments to share their good practices and results of assessment.
- Inaugural “Closing the Loop” award presented at Senior Assessment Day Luncheon.
- 2006 Missouri Southern was selected for the pioneer cohort of fourteen institutions to launch the HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. This new initiative is targeted at accelerating and advancing efforts to assess and improve student learning by building institution-wide capacity for and commitment to assessment.
- Initiated web-based assessments in Core Curriculum.
- Full time faculty members appointed Chair of Assessment Advisory Committee. Assessment Advisory Committee requested departments to develop or enhance a departmental mission statement, goals and objectives.
- 2007 Initiated web-based department level assessment.
- Assessment Advisory Committee requested academic departments develop their Assessment Plan Template based on their mission, goals and objectives.
- Senior Assessment Day speaker, George Kuh.

MSSU

Schedule of Assessment Activities

1986 – Present

Year	Core Curriculum	Departmental Assessment	Student Development
1986	ACT-COMP - Selected Groups (Fr/Sr)		
1987	ACT-COMP - Selected Groups (Fr/Sr)		
1988	ACT-COMP - Selected Groups (Fr/Sr)		
1989	ACT-COMP - Selected Groups (Fr/Sr)		
1990	ACT-COMP - Selected Groups (Fr/Sr)		
1991	ACT-COMP Assessment Day (All Seniors) Tested at Orientation (All Freshmen)	10 Depts. gave locally developed 7 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 1 Depts. gave exit interviews	ESS/SOS
1992	ACT-COMP Assessment Day (All Seniors) Tested at Orientation (All Freshmen)	12 Depts. gave locally developed 7 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 1 Depts. gave exit interviews	ESS/SOS
1993	ACT-COMP Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	8 Depts. gave locally developed 11 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 1 Depts. gave exit interviews	Alumni/Currently enrolled ESS/SOS
1994	ACT-COMP Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen) Analyze COMP Data/Core	4 Depts. gave national exam 6 Depts. gave locally developed 10 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 2 Depts. gave exit interviews	ESS/SOS
1995	ACT-COMP Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen) Focus Group Reports Recommendations from 1993-95 Core Curriculum Study Analyze COMP Data/Core	4 Depts. gave national exams 5 Depts. gave locally developed 11 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 2 Depts. gave exit interviews	Currently enrolled ESS/SOS/COS
1996	ACT-COMP Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen) Implementation of Recommendations: Faculty Development Workshops Departments Stress Areas of	4 Depts. gave national exams 5 Depts. gave locally developed 12 Depts. gave MFAT from	ESS/SOS/Alumni

	Improvement	ETS 2 Depts. gave exit interviews	
1997	ACT-COMP Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen) Implementation of Recommendations: Faculty Development Workshops Departments Stress Areas of Improvement	4 Depts. gave national exams 5 Depts. gave locally developed 12 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 2 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/SOS
1998	ACT-COMP, ACT-ARC, ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	6 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 11 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/SOS
1999	ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	6 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 11 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/SOS
2000	ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	6 Depts. gave national exams 5 Depts. gave locally developed 10 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/SOS
2001	ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	6 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 10 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/SOS/IMS
2002	ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors) Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	8 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/CSS/IMS
2003	ETS Academic Profile Assessment Day & Evening (All Seniors)	8 Depts. gave national	CIRP/IMS/*

	Assessment Day (All Freshmen)	exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	
2004	ETS Academic Profile, Collegiate Learning Assessment Assessment Day & Evening (AP All Seniors) Assessment Day (AP, CLA Selected Freshmen)	8 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	CIRP/CSS/IMS
2005	ETS Academic Profile, Collegiate Learning Assessment Assessment Day & Evening (AP, CLA Selected Seniors) Assessment Day (AP, CLA Selected Freshmen)	8 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	ESS/SOS/IMS
2006	ETS Academic Profile, ETS Measures of Academic Proficiency & Progress, Collegiate Learning Assessment Assessment Day & Evening (AP, CLA Selected Seniors) Assessment Day (MAPP, CLA Selected Freshmen)	8 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	ESS/SOS/IMS
2007	ETS Measures of Academic Proficiency & Progress, Collegiate Learning Assessment Assessment Day & Evening (MAPP, CLA Selected Seniors)	8 Depts. gave national exams 4 Depts. gave locally developed 9 Depts. gave MFAT from ETS 3 Depts. gave exit interviews	COS

ESS Entering Student Survey from ACT (freshmen)

=

SO Student Opinion Survey from ACT (seniors)

S =

CO College Outcomes Survey (seniors)

S =

CIR Cooperative Institutional Research Program (freshmen)

P =

CSS College Student Survey (seniors)

=

IM International Mission Survey (seniors/freshmen; 2005 the name of this survey changed to Cross Cultural Survey for the freshmen assessment and S = remained International Mission Survey for senior assessment)

MFAT= Major Field Achievement Test

ETS= Educational Testing Service

AP= Academic Profile Test, now called MAPP (Measures of Academic Proficiency and Progress)

CLA= College Learning Assessment

*note, due to budget constraints no senior survey was given in 2003

ASSESSMENT PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Levels	Responsible Parties	Roles & Responsibilities	Resource/Guiding Documents
Institution	Vice President, Academic Affairs Asst. VP, Assessment & Institutional Research Assessment Advisory Committee	Administrative support of Assessment Program Oversight and coordination of assessment at all levels	HLC Statement on Assessment Mo Guiding Principles of Assessment Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE) Mission Statement Catalog Statement on Assessment Assessment Plan (1995) Position Paper on Assessment Annual Institutional Assessment Updates
Program	Deans Academic Department Heads Academic Department Faculty Core Curriculum Oversight Committee First-Year Experience Task Force Assessment Academy Team Writing Across the Curriculum Committee (WAC)	Oversee departments Oversees and implements programs Oversees curriculum Oversees FYE implements assessment projects for HLC Oversees WAC program	Department Assessment Plans HLC Reports Each Program prepares an annual report on its assessment efforts and outcomes to the Assessment Advisory Committee
Course	Department Heads Department Faculty Academic Policies Committee Faculty Senate	Oversees delivery and curriculum Approves academic courses	Course evaluations, new and changed course program Other course-specific assessment processes

Explanation of Assessment Roles and Responsibilities in Structure

The Assessment Program at Missouri Southern State University operates on three levels: institutional, program and course.

Responsible parties at the institutional level include the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Institutional Research and the Assessment Advisory Committee. The Assessment Advisory Committee includes one faculty representative from each of the four schools and one representative from the Learning Center. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Institutional Research serve as ex-officio members. The committee is charged with the oversight of the assessment of student learning outcomes for the institution and makes an annual executive summary report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the President, the Academic Policies Committee, and the Faculty Senate regarding the program status. The Center for Assessment and Institutional Research will collect and archive the institutional assessment data for analysis by the campus community.

Responsible parties at the program level include the academic departments who report their updates of assessment processes and results on an annual basis to the Assessment Advisory Committee. These department reports also flow to the appropriate Dean of each school. Faculty administration and staff of each department are to be involved in their assessment analysis and decision making processes. Other responsible parties at the program level include the Core-Curriculum Committee, FYE Oversight Committee, Writing Across the Curriculum Program, and the non-academic departments. Each of the groups will submit a report to the Assessment Committee at least annually to give the status of assessment results or any changes or validations of current practice that occur from that activity.

Assessment at the course level includes in-class evaluations that are designated as assessments for core-curriculum or program purposes, course evaluations, and new/changed course proposals. They are presented first to Academic Policies Committee and then continue through the established approval process. Other course-specific assessment processes may be used to answer questions for entities such as the Core-Curriculum Oversight Committee.

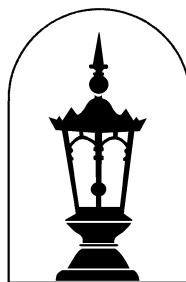
Resources that guide the assessment of student outcomes include documents that represent the national, state, and local agencies to whom the institution is responsible. Guidance is also provided through university documents such as institutional and department mission statements, June 2005 Position Paper on Assessment, Institutional assessment update reports and the university catalog.

Assessment results will be used to inform Program Review and Strategic Planning processes.

Campus Support for Assessment

Evidence includes:

1. **Administration support:** Financial resources and staff allocations that allow assessment processes to be accomplished.
2. **Faculty support:** Involved with departmental assessment and planning, implementing and executing assessment activities, analyzing results of assessment, determining improvement on validation from assessment results. Implementing educational and assessment improvements where needed.
3. **College-wide support:** Representation (administration, faculty and staff) on Assessment Advisory Committee, work groups and support services that provide information on assessment results to the campus and external stakeholders.
4. **Student support:** Participation in assessment activities that provide the foundation for collective analysis of assessment results.



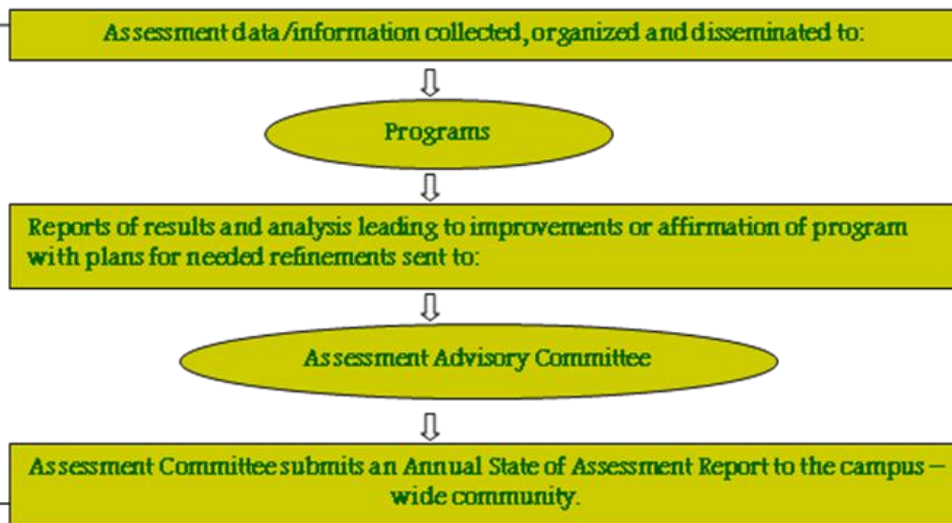
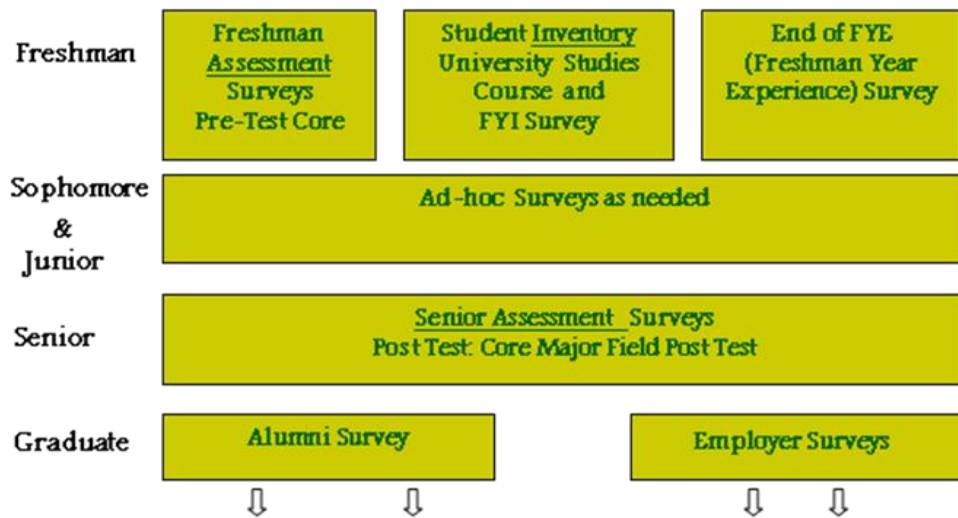
Assessment Planning

Mission, goals and objectives for student learning outcomes are developed for each program.



Collecting Assessment Data

Measures are used to assess whether learning outcomes objectives, goals and mission are achieved.



Department Assessment Plan Summary

Initially, academic departments were asked in spring semester 2007 to submit assessment plans that included the following information:

- Mission Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Goals and Objectives by major(s).
- Identification of courses fulfilling Departmental Goals and Objectives
- Assessment Instruments by Direct and Indirect Measures
- Assessment Results by each Measure
- Improvements based on Assessment Results

This process will continue as the assessment cycle continues and new information will be added for each department's assessment results and processes. These Assessment Plans are filed in the Center Assessment and Institutional Research. Assessment Advisory Committee members review the plans and make suggestions for necessary revisions as the improvement process continues.

Fundamental Questions for Conversations on Student Learning From HLC

Five fundamental questions serve as prompts for conversations about student learning and the role of assessment in affirming and improving that learning:

1. How are your stated student learning *outcomes appropriate* to your mission, programs, and degrees?
2. *What evidence* do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do you *analyze and use evidence* of student learning?
4. How do you ensure *shared responsibility* for assessment of student learning?
5. How do you evaluate and improve the *effectiveness of your efforts* to assess and improve student learning?

An emerging question added in spring 2007 by HLC was largely driven by the Spellings Report and the general environment that is demanding more accountability in higher education:

6. In what ways do you *inform* the *public* about what students learn and how well?

Glossary of Assessment Terms

Assessment	The process of judging student behavior or product in terms of some criteria (Clark, 1975), it includes various means of gathering information about the quantity, quality and progress of students, their performance/studio and academic work
Authentic Assessment	Assessment that fits meaningful, real-life experiences; it includes recording evidence of the learning process, applications in products and performances, perception of visual and audio relationships, integrations of new knowledge, reflecting profitably on one's own progress, and interpreting meaning of consideration of contextual facts
Benchmark	A point of reference or standard for measurement: a threshold for success (an expected score on a standardized test, achievement of identified characteristics, progress noted from longitudinal data, portfolios, accreditation expectations, etc.)
Direct Measures	Demonstrated success in achieving outcomes (portfolios of tests, writing and evaluating essays.)
Findings	Conclusions drawn from analysis of assessment information (learning outcomes are or are not being achieved, levels of performance are increasing or decreasing, a significant number of graduates excel or are deficient in a specific area, students perceptions do or do not match their performance, etc.)
Formative Assessment	The gathering of information about student learning, during the progression of a course or program and usually repeatedly, to improve the learning of those students
Goals	Statements of expectations of general capabilities or student outcomes resulting from planned educational experiences and give a framework for more specific educational objectives.
Higher Order Thinking	A complex level of thinking that entails analyzing and classifying or organizing perceived qualities or relationships, meaningfully combining concepts and principles verbally or in the production of art works or performances, and then synthesizing ideas into supportable, encompassing thoughts or generalizations that hold true for many situations
Improvements	Changes to curriculum, scheduling, facilities, equipment, classrooms, labs, advising, etc., that respond directly to assessment findings
Indirect Measures	Perceived success in achieving outcomes (student responses to survey or interview questions about the writing instruction they received at MSSU)
Learning Outcomes	Knowledge, skills and abilities that students should attain by completing the degree program
Measures	Methods of assessment (surveys and questionnaires, interviews, written or oral tests, focus groups, portfolios, simulations, etc.)
Non-referenced Testing	A score that compares a student's performance to that of people in a norm group
Objectives	Specific measurable expected accomplishments of graduates
Portfolios	Collections of students' work over a period of time
Rubric	A brief statement describing a certain quantity or quality of work, learning or behavior; rubrics are often organized in descending order, with statements describing, for example, excellent behavior, good behavior, acceptable behavior, and poor behavior
Standardized Tests	A test that is administered and scored under the same conditions for all students
Summative Assessment	The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands
Triangulation	Involves the collection of data via multiple methods in order to determine if the results show a consistent outcome.
Value Added	The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program or undergraduate education

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE)

Appendix B

April 2005

Student Learning, Assessment, and Accreditation (HLC)

Appendix C

Missouri Assessment Consortium

Guiding Principles on Assessment (MDHE)

Appendix D

Position Paper: Enhancement and Extension of Assessment at MSSU

Guiding/Resource Documents

Appendix A

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

American Association for Higher Education (AAHE)

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.
2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.
3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.
4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.
5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.
6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a

way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.
8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.
9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the public that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

Authors

Alexander W. Astin; Trudy W. Banta; K. Patricia Cross; Elaine El-Khawas; Peter T. Ewell; Pat Hutchings; Theodore J. Marchese; Kay M. McClenney; Marcia Mentkowski; Margaret A. Miller; E. Thomas Moran; Barbara D. Wright This document was developed under the auspices of the AAHE Assessment Forum (Barbara Cambridge, <mailto:bcambrid@aahe.org>, is Director) with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education with additional support for publication and dissemination from the Exxon Education Foundation. Copies may be made without restriction. AAHE site maintained by: Mary C. Schwarz, mjoyce@aahe.org
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Appendix B

April 2005

Student Learning, Assessment, and Accreditation

Among the public's many expectations of higher education, the most basic is that students will learn, and in particular that they will learn what they need to know to attain personal success and fulfill their public responsibilities in a global and diverse society. Student learning is central to all higher education organizations; therefore, these organizations define educational quality--one of their core purposes--by how well they achieve their declared mission relative to student learning. A focus on achieved student learning is critical not only to a higher education organization's ability to promote and improve curricular and co-curricular learning experiences and to provide evidence of the quality of educational experiences and programs, but also to fulfill the most basic public expectations and needs of higher education.

In October 1989, the Commission first posited that assessment of student learning is an essential component of every organization's effort to evaluate overall organizational effectiveness. In February 2003, The Higher Learning Commission adopted a newly revised position statement on assessment of student learning (see Section 3.4-2 of the *Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition*) to reaffirm and strengthen this position. Through the Criteria for Accreditation and multiple Core Components, the Commission makes clear the centrality of student learning to effective higher education organizations and extends and deepens its commitment to and expectations for assessment. Indeed, the Commission asserts that assessment is more than a response to demands for accountability, more than a means for curricular improvement. Effective assessment is best understood as a strategy for understanding, confirming, and improving student learning.

Fundamental Questions for Conversations on Student Learning

Five fundamental questions serve as prompts for conversations about student learning and the role of assessment in affirming and improving that learning:

1. How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, and degrees?
2. What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?
4. How do you ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?
5. How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?

In using these questions, an organization should ground its conversations in its distinct mission, context, commitments, goals and intended outcomes for student learning. In addition to informing ongoing improvement in student learning, these conversations will assist organizations and peer reviewers in discerning evidence for the Criteria and Core Components.

The fundamental questions and the conversations they prompt are intended to support a strategy of inquiry into student learning. Further, the questions are intended to support this strategy of inquiry, built on principles of good practice, as a participative and iterative process that:

- ◆ Provides information regarding student learning,
- ◆ Engages stakeholders in analyzing and using information on student learning to confirm and improve teaching and learning,
- ◆ Produces evidence that confirms achievement of intended student learning outcomes, and
- ◆ Guides broader educational and organizational improvement.

In other words, organizations assess student learning in meaningful, useful, and workable ways to evaluate how they are achieving their commitments and to act on the results in ways that advance student learning and improve educational quality. Effective assessment of student learning is a matter of commitment, not a matter of compliance.

Evaluating the Organization's Efforts to Assess and Improve Student Learning

Using the framework of the Criteria and Core Components, peer reviewers will evaluate an organization's efforts to assess and improve student learning within the context of the mission, values, and distinct learning goals of that organization. Therefore, peer reviewers will not approach the review with expectations for specific ways in which assessment efforts are structured and implemented, since it is both inevitable and desirable that diverse organizations exhibit a wide variety of approaches and embed assessment of student learning in a variety of institutional forms and processes. Rather, peer reviewers will approach their roles as generalists, focused on evaluating the evidence that the organization meets the Criteria and Core Components.

To remain focused on student learning and assessment within the context and design of the organization, peer reviewers will use the fundamental questions as prompts to engage faculty, students, and administrators in conversations about the organization's (a) sustained effort to assess and improve student learning, (b) evidence that students have achieved the stated learning outcomes, (c) shared responsibility for assessing student learning outcomes, and (d) commitment to improving student learning and educational quality. These conversations will assist peer reviewers in understanding the organization's efforts and commitment to assessment of student learning, in discerning areas for consultation and organizational improvement, and in identifying and validating evidence related to the Criteria and Core Components. Most importantly, peer reviewers will base their accreditation-related judgments and recommendations on this evidence as it relates to the Criteria and their Core Components, not as the evidence relates to the fundamental questions.

Finally, the Commission realizes that assessment of student learning is an ongoing, dynamic process that requires substantial time; that is often marked by fits and starts; and that takes long-term commitment and leadership. It is reasonable for organizations to use different approaches and timetables in implementing its assessment of student learning efforts. Nevertheless, the Commission expects that each organization has developed assessment processes that are workable, has implemented a reasonable schedule for collecting and using assessment results, and can demonstrate a sustained effort to affirm and improve student learning, educational quality, and organizational effectiveness.

Additional resources related to assessment of student learning, including the document, *Regional Accreditation and Student Learning: Principles For Good Practices*, which was endorsed by all regional accrediting agencies, can be found on Commission's website:

www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org. Simply follow the "Policy and Resource Documents" link, scrolling down to "Assessment of Student Learning Resources."

Appendix C

Missouri Assessment Consortium Guiding Principles on Assessment

I. Philosophy statement

PHILOSOPHY OF ASSESSMENT. Assessment should be guided by clearly stated, externally validated student learning processes and outcomes that flow from and support the institutional mission. Principles of assessment apply to all modes of instructional delivery.

Assessment is a means for general process improvement and accountability that occurs at different levels and in different contexts. Assessment should be fully integrated into the institution's entire operational system.

Each institution shall assume responsibility for conducting assessment, analyzing and interpreting the data collected, using the information to improve the assessed processes, and disseminating the results in a professional and ethical manner. It is particularly important that institutions involved in joint ventures cooperate in sharing and developing assessment instruments and processes. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the degree granting institution to ensure that its graduates meet appropriate standards of performance. Institutions have an obligation to disseminate assessment results through appropriate channels for accountability and improvement.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT. Assessment is a key process that is used in the academic, administrative, and student support services areas. Because the core process of higher education institutions is student learning, assessment in Missouri serves three primary purposes: A) improvement of student learning and instruction, B) accomplishment of institutional mission, and C) accountability for achievement of educational goals.

A. Improvement of Student Learning and Instruction. Assessment cannot be effective without first clearly defining what is to be assessed. It is the responsibility of faculty to determine the student learning outcomes that drive the curriculum. Outcomes can be thought of as student "needs" as defined by faculty, employers, alumni, etc., and consist of specific sets of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is likely that an institution has a set of outcomes common to all graduates (e.g., the eight statewide general education goals and other institution-wide requirements) and other outcomes unique to the various degree and co-curricular programs. In order to continually improve student learning and instruction, student data derived from assessment of outcomes must be used as feedback to students and faculty.

B. Achievement of Institutional Mission. Every department/unit mission should be aligned with the overarching mission of the institution and assessment should be used as a means of pursuing and documenting achievement of that mission.

C. Accountability for Achievement of Educational Goals. Institutions of higher education in Missouri recognize a variety of constituencies to which they are appropriately accountable for the effectiveness of their educational programs including but not limited to students, parents, employers, taxpayers, the respective governing boards, the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, the state legislature, and accrediting bodies. To this end, each institution should collect evidence measuring progress toward meeting its goals based on state, national, and/or international academic standards and best practices.

MODES OF ASSESSMENT. Assessment should be based on multiple measures appropriate to the program and institution. The data collected should be longitudinal and should include both quantitative and qualitative elements. Assessment programs should be based on reliable research and proven practices. In addition, assessment instruments and methods should be continually evaluated to determine their utility in the assessment process.

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY. It is essential that institutions have flexibility in selecting the assessment procedures that the faculty, administration, and staff judge to be consistent with the institution's specific mission, the students being assessed, and the purposes for the assessment. Each institution should establish an external evaluation mechanism whereby both the institution's program outcomes and assessment methods and instruments are regularly reviewed and evaluated by a unit or group external to the institution.

USE OF RESULTS. Institutional comparisons are appropriate and desirable. In order to be valid, institutional characteristics must be considered when choosing methods and groups for comparison. Students are best served when comparisons are used for institutional improvement, not for establishing rankings. Institutions should work with each other and external agencies to help the public understand the complexities involved in comparing results across institutions.

II. Facilitating continuous improvement

A. General Education

Accountability for Achievement of Educational Goals. The eight statewide general education goals constitute the foundation for general education design and implementation. The 42-credit hour general education matrix provides basic information about how institutions fulfill their obligation to meet statewide expectations for accountability. Documentation should include relevant information about how assessments are administered, how student performance is measured (e.g., the criteria or rubrics used), how results are used for curriculum improvement, and how the assessment processes are reviewed and validated. Selected results are reported to the CBHE through the Performance Indicator Report, Mission Review, and Program Review processes which are periodically aligned to state policy issues, North Central Association Higher Learning Commission requirements, the national report card, and other sources.

There is no single instrument or method for universal measurement of general education student outcomes. Methods for measurement can include:

- Documentation of students attaining or surpassing defined competencies.
- Pre/post testing demonstrating gains in student learning.
- Improvement trends over time.
- Comparative data against appropriate peers.
- Combinations of the above.

Appendix D

Position Paper

Enhancement and Extension of Assessment at MSSU

June 2005

Prepared by the MSSU team at the June 2005 HLC/AAHE Workshop: Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy. Participants: Delores Honey, Jack Oakes, Betsy Griffin, Eillen Godsey, Kelly Wilson and Mark Comstock.

The new criteria for the Higher Learning Commission focus on student learning and view assessment as central to demonstrating students are learning the intended outcomes and to making educational and institutional improvements. Clearly stated learning outcomes are a must for the institution and all its programs. The HLC expectations for assessment are that a program of assessment involves campus wide participation, includes multiple measures of outcomes, and uses the results to inform program changes, planning, and budgeting processes. While a variety of measures can provide useful results, direct measures of program outcomes are considered the most valuable. Direct measures, or authentic assessments, go beyond showing what the student knows to showing what the student can do. Demonstrating that students are meeting the desired outcomes and using assessment data to “close the loop” and show continuous improvement of educational processes have become more important than ever in the current environment of accountability.

Missouri Southern has a long history of assessment including a mixture of direct and indirect measures of student learning and perceptions. Our history of assessment puts MSSU in a strong position relative to many other institutions. However, our use of assessment results has not reached the level currently expected for our accreditation. In order to move Missouri Southern toward accreditation goals and make the most effective use of our assessment processes and data, the MSSU team for the HLC /AAHE assessment workshop makes the following recommendations.

1. To increase campus involvement and more effective utilization of assessment data, the team recommends that assessment results be shared more fully with the campus community. The Assessment Committee should facilitate the dissemination and analysis of appropriate reports to the President, vice presidents, deans, department heads, Core Curriculum Oversight Committee, Academic Policies Committee, Administrative Council, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, and the Board of Governors.
2. In addition to its increased role in facilitating the dissemination and analysis of assessment data, the team recommends the following changes for the Assessment Committee.
 - a. To increase a sense of faculty ownership of the assessment process, the chair of the Assessment Committee should be a full-time faculty member. The Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Institutional Research would continue to provide information and advice as an ex officio member of the Assessment Committee.
 - b. The Assessment Committee should facilitate campus discussion about the evaluation of the data. They may do this by sponsoring workshops and upon request helping departments determine how they can utilize the data for continuous improvement of student learning.

- c. The Assessment Committee should sponsor training for departments who want assistance in writing measurable objectives and in measuring them.
 - d. The Assessment Committee should meet annually with the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee to examine the results of the core curriculum assessments and aid the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee in its evaluation of the Core. The two committees met for this purpose in spring 2005. This will help facilitate this committee as it makes periodic reviews of the Core Curriculum and reports its findings to the Academic Policies Committee.
3. All departments and programs need to have clearly stated student learning outcomes. We recognize that some of our departments have well developed missions, goals and learning objectives. However, other departments have not developed these documents. We recommend that during the 2005-2006 academic-year all academic and support departments develop missions, goals, and objectives that align with the MSSU mission.
 4. To increase campus-wide shared awareness of and engagement in assessment a component would be added to Senior Assessment Day that would provide sessions to showcase the results of assessment and innovative departmental or individual faculty assessment projects. The day's events could include an awards reception or program to recognize outstanding projects. The small monetary awards would be a symbolic gesture to underscore the importance of continuous improvement efforts to our campus culture. This would be a strong model to show we are "closing the loop". The audience for this event would include faculty, administrators, staff, students and possibly Board of Governors members and advisory boards of various departments.
 5. It is recommended that each department meet at least once per semester to discuss the topic of student achievement and success. This conversation should begin with an analysis of appropriate assessment data. This data should focus upon indicators or benchmarks that not only signal learning outcomes but also track progress made toward enhanced retention and graduation rates. Part of this departmental discussion should also focus upon future implications or required follow-on actions. In other words, what decisions or actions were made subsequent to the analysis of the data? Does the analysis validate the present curriculum? Or, does the analysis suggest the need to change/modify the curriculum? Since it is essential that these conversations be documented, written minutes should be prepared and filed following each departmental meeting. Additionally, these minutes should be shared with the Dean, VPAA and the President.
 6. Once the campus community understands and embraces the use of current assessment results for continuous improvement efforts, we suggest the Assessment Committee explore the possible use of an e-portfolio project to extend the direct assessment of our student learning of the Core Curriculum. Such an endeavor would include the electronic collection of specific projects in selected core courses and the training of faculty to evaluate samples of these portfolios for specific general education skills and knowledge relative to our goals.

The first five recommendations could be initiated during the 2005-2006 academic year. It may take a few years before the process has reached the level that e-portfolios can be explored.

Revised: August 12, 2005