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Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski
Senior Executive Associate Director
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
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Dear Dr. Sibolski:

The review by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in April 2005 led to the Commission reaffirming Penn State's accreditation. The self study and the subsequent external review focused on teaching and learning in undergraduate education. The review team's letter of June 23, 2005, reaffirmed the accreditation, and reiterated the sole recommendation of *"documenting the development of a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning that is linked to the overall assessment of institutional effectiveness and to the institute's strategic planning process."* This progress letter, which was requested by April 1, 2006, communicates the approach used to develop The Pennsylvania State University Assessment Plan for Student Learning (attached) and the accomplishments to date toward implementing elements of that comprehensive plan.

The self study conducted in preparation of the MSCHE review identified the need for systematic, evidence-based assessment in order to make substantive improvements in areas within undergraduate education. Consequently, the Provost formed and charged the Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA) to:

- *develop a university-wide plan that prioritizes the University's assessment needs;*
- *develop an implementation plan that identifies appropriate individuals or teams to carry out assessments in a timely fashion;*
- *develop mechanisms for the assessment data to be used to make curricular or program changes;*
- *create effective approaches to be used across a variety of academic programs; and*
- *produce annual reports outlining assessment findings.*

The *Self-Study Report* and the Provost's charge letter, combined with the April 30, 2005 Middle States Accreditation Team report which highlighted strengths and identified opportunities, formed a strong foundation for the CCUA to begin its work.

The CCUA began meeting in September 2005. Shortly thereafter, the majority of its members participated in the two-day MSCHE regional workshops to better familiarize themselves with effective strategies to design a sustainable, comprehensive plan that assists with improving student learning. The entire committee met every two weeks for the first several months to develop a strategy for developing the plan, to identify partners, and to discuss the scope of the standing committee's responsibilities in relation to units either conducting the assessments or with some level of responsibility for programs—e.g., the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate and its role in ensuring implementation of the General Education program consistent with stated goals.

By the end of the first semester, the CCUA had developed the framework for The Pennsylvania State University Assessment Plan for Student Learning. The plan consists of four major sections: the principles that guided the development of the plan; the spheres of assessment (institutional level, general education program, cocurricular programs, academic programs, and course level); the five-year goals in each sphere; and the responsibilities and function of the standing committee charged with designing and implementing the plan. For the next stage of their work, the CCUA identified four focus areas of greatest opportunity, namely, the development an assessment plan for general education, an assessment plan for cocurricular programs, an assessment plan for academic programs, and a communication plan. They noted that the course level assessment plan would be developed to support the academic programs—recognizing that that course level assessments should emphasize the contribution they make to the programs they serve. Furthermore they recognized that the assessment plan for the institutional level programs would be supported by the University's strategic efforts to include learning outcomes assessment into general education and cocurricular experiences, and extend those expectations to other university-wide initiatives, such as expanding access via online courses.

The CCUA formed subcommittees, organized around the four areas of greatest opportunity as identified above, added members as needed, and met frequently to share data, debate approaches, provide definition, details, and timelines, and recommend activities or pilot projects for the upcoming year. Additionally, the entire committee would continue to meet to share findings and progress toward articulating a plan for ongoing assessment in those focused areas—each of which are described in more detail below.

Since General Education goals are already explicitly defined, and the Faculty Senate has identified areas in need of assessment (Writing Across the Curriculum, International Competence, First Year Seminar, etc.), the General Education subcommittee focused its attention on a variety of national assessment instruments which could provide additional data to support our understanding of the extent to which our students are achieving the intended goals. The subcommittee directed its efforts to those instruments which purport to provide direct measures of skills that are often associated with general education goals and that result from the collective educational experiences of the students rather than from one course or program. As a result, the subcommittee selected the Collegiate Learning Assessment for a small-scale study to explore the appropriateness of this tool to provide a direct measure of reasoning and written communication skills. Complementary data from the Faculty Senate and others, and further discussions with the Writing Subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee will guide use of this tool and other instruments and surveys.

Unlike the General Education program that has well-defined goals from which to build an assessment plan, the cocurricular programs at Penn State have not had a set of learning outcomes, nor a clear definition of what constitutes the cocurriculum. Therefore, the Cocurricular Programs subcommittee began by developing the following definition:

> "The cocurriculum at Penn State involves formal and informal out-of-classroom experiences and interventions that provide students with learning opportunities. These include involvement in clubs and student organizations, educational workshops, lectures, debates, and cultural events. Also included are leadership experiences, service learning, internships and co-ops, interaction with faculty and peers, and study abroad."

Additionally, this subcommittee established a list of cocurricular learning outcomes that span the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors aligned with cocurricular programs. It shared the document and sought feedback from the Student Affairs units at every campus and the Student Affairs Research and Assessment Advisory Board. Gathering additional input on the document and building measures that map to these outcomes are the next steps toward implementing the assessment plan for cocurricular programs.

Assessment at the academic program level varies widely throughout Penn State. Several academic programs have a strong history of assessment via external accrediting processes that are tied to the profession, e.g., ABET for engineering, NCATE for education, etc. Others have used less formalized approaches to guide improvements in their undergraduate programs. The Academic Program subcommittee recognized that some of those formal or informal assessment practices may be helpful in shaping a process for programs that do not have regular evaluation. Thus, in conjunction with the Planning and Institutional Assessment office they began building a comprehensive list of all programs that undergo regular, external, outcomes-based assessment.

The subcommittee then directed its efforts toward exploring general program assessment practices and designing a guideline applicable for programs without regular external evaluations. The guideline they have proposed is an adaptation from an existing guide at Penn State Abington, with refinements from faculty and staff who have interest or responsibility in program evaluations. Communicating this guide, showcasing best practices, and facilitating its use are important elements in the next steps of the academic programs assessment plan.

The communication plan goals are to build a culture of assessment and support implementation of the assessment plan. The subcommittee structured the plan around communication objectives for different constituencies, and it identified the basic content or message points for each audience. Furthermore, the communication plan lists strategies and existing units that can assist with specific elements of the implementation so that assessment becomes embedded in the culture. The need for a single website to provide links to broadly distributed resources has also been recognized by the subcommittee. In this way, the communication plan intends to draw on Penn State's "good examples of assessment activities" (as noted in the Middle States accreditation team report) and organizes the information to facilitate use. Additionally, the website will provide access to assessment reports and examples of how assessment led to improvements.

The above actions appear as steps in the comprehensive assessment plan. We are moving to the next phase which involves communicating the plan more broadly throughout Penn State. We fully expect that the plan will continue to evolve as we gather additional input, learn from various assessment projects, communicate the findings and approaches, and seek the most effective ways to respond to the internal and external factors that affect our learning environments.

We look forward to sharing with you in 2010 examples of how the assessment plan has assisted us in making decisions that have enhanced learning and improved the undergraduate experiences of our students.

Sincerely,

Graham B. Spanier

Attachment

# The Pennsylvania State University Assessment Plan for Student Learning

## A. BACKGROUND

With the following excerpt from President Spanier's 2002 State of the University address, the stage was set for Penn State's 2005 Self-Study for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

> "Although a university's national reputation is substantially based on the research productivity and stature of its faculty, we must never forget that our University exists first and foremost to provide an advanced education to our students. I truly believe students must be our top priority, and this is why Penn State must be a model of a student-centered university. As a learning community, we must put our students and their development at the heart of what we do."

Consistent with that message is a vision statement from the Undergraduate Education Committee of the Faculty Senate on creating a more vibrant learning culture (April 24, 2000).

> "Imagine an atmosphere thick with the continual exchange of knowledge and ideas, teacher working with student, student working with student, researchers, graduate students, visitors, scholars of all types working together to learn and understand more, creating, clarifying what is unclear, learning to apply knowledge with technology, uncovering the unknown and assimilating the known. Imagine a Penn State where faculty and students are continually engaged in intellectual activity, *where learning is so thick in the air it is palpable* and where knowledge and understanding are explored everywhere, in classes, in residence halls and outdoor commons areas, in seminars, films, lectures, debates."

These two statements reflect the commitment of the Penn State community—its leadership and faculty—to the education of its students. Concurrent with this vision, is the administrative culture which values continuous improvement and planning. Combined, these factors provide the *purpose* and the *process* for establishing a systematic and on-going assessment of student learning.

The assessment plan, presented herein, provides a set of guiding principles, a brief description of the areas of assessment, a five-year plan, and a description of the committee whose responsibility it is to promote and foster the plan's implementation.

## B. PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE PENN STATE'S ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Penn State has a long history of engaging faculty, administrators, staff, and students to work together toward common goals. A set of principles which are congruent with, and build upon, existing practices have influenced the development of the assessment plan and will be instrumental in carrying the plan forward. The guiding principles are summarized around the following themes: value, focus and ownership, methodology and application.

- **Value**
  i. The fundamental purpose of assessment is to enhance the quality of our educational programs.
  ii. Assessment of student learning should be on-going and be embedded throughout the university where plans are developed.
  iii. Assessment should be placed in the context of understanding the effectiveness and should be used to drive improvement with efficient use of resources.
  iv. Assessment should not be viewed as an end in itself but rather as a part of a process of periodic examination and improvement of our educational programs.

- **Focus and Ownership**
  i. The learning dimension of student centeredness is the focus of the assessment plan and is driven by a desire to produce educated and productive graduates of the University who contribute to their communities.
  ii. Assessment is the responsibility of those individuals or units who deliver the programs. For example, course and program assessment is the collective responsibility of the departmental faculty; general education assessment is the responsibility of the university faculty through the Faculty Senate; assessment of the cocurricular learning and the overall academic climate should involve academic and administrative units, including the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Undergraduate Education.
  iii. Assessment must be administratively supported and driven by the faculty and staff responsible for the learning outcomes.

- **Methodology**
  i. Assessment shall involve analysis and review of educational goals and processes including how university goals link to program goals and program goals link to course goals.
  ii. Multiple methods and measures which complement each other should be used.
  iii. Assessment data should be collected for the purposes of making a decision or, monitoring effectiveness, i.e., to answer questions related to learning outcomes.
  iv. Qualitative and quantitative data may be employed. Benchmarking with comparison groups, longitudinal evaluations, and assessment methods which gather input from students, graduates, and those with whom they interact, should be used appropriately.

- **Application**
  i. Assessment should help units articulate their educational goals, how they are achieving them, and how to improve the quality of the learning experience.
  ii. Results of assessment will be used to make decisions about how to improve courses, curricula and programs, and not to evaluate individuals.
  iii. Effective strategies that demonstrate the role of assessment to improve a program or process will be shared across units as guides in closing the loop to improve the educational experience of students.

## C. SPHERES OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment plan is organized by spheres of activity—some addressing broad institutional goals and others targeting specific discipline goals. The spheres of activity are connected such that the outcomes and processes from one level should map to or support goals at other levels, e.g., course

goals should support program goals. In all cases, a cyclic process is proposed such that the achievement of stated learning goals is evaluated through a number of direct and indirect measures, and the outcome is used to make decisions, or to guide the further development of programs. The areas of initial focus in this plan are as a result of challenges identified in the self study conducted in preparation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Accreditation visit, and the visiting team's report which highlighted strengths and delineated additional recommendations.

## 1. Institutional Level

The vision and mission of the University and the associated strategic goals have been widely communicated throughout the University as part of Penn State's strategic planning process. In place for many years, the strategic planning process has provided a cyclic and systematic approach to align program planning with budgeting. The process guides individual unit efforts in such a way that university goals are achieved by the collective achievements of the individual units.

While each of the stated strategic goals has implications for student learning, there are three which directly relate to the educational experience and learning outcomes of our students. They are:

- to enhance academic excellence through support of high-quality teaching, research and service;
- to enrich the educational experiences by becoming a more student-centered university; and
- to create a more inclusive, civil and diverse learning community.

Specific strategies identified with each of these goals place emphasis on conducting program reviews, building learning outcomes assessment plans for university initiatives, and identifying areas which increase access and enhance quality.

The communication of the assessment plan and the support to facilitate its implementation will be linked to the University's strategic planning process. Additionally, assessment will be built into the charge for new University-wide initiatives, such as those related to online learning. Existing structures (e.g., Academic Leadership Council, Faculty Senate, Administrative Council for Undergraduate Education) and venues (e.g., Quality Advocates Network, Academic Leadership Forum) will provide mechanisms to communicate the plan and to discuss effective assessment approaches. Finally, implementation will be supported via central coordination of resources, consistent communication of assessment priorities, and timely reporting of findings.

## 2. General Education Program

The inclusion of General Education (Appendix A) in every degree program reflects Penn State's deep conviction that a sound university education should encompass a breadth of knowledge in the arts, sciences, and other disciplines. This includes the ability to reason logically and quantitatively and to communicate effectively; a basic understanding of the biological and physical sciences; a familiarity with the cultural movements that have shaped societies and their values; and an appreciation for the enduring arts that express, inspire, and continually challenge these values. General Education augments and rounds out the specialized education students receive in their majors and aims to cultivate a knowledgeable, informed, literate human being.

Assessment of the general education program at Penn State has long been of interest at the University, owing to its prominence as a substantial component of the curriculum and degree requirements. Initial efforts to assess general education rightly focused on surveying to determine the level of adoption of mandated requirements. Recent efforts of the assessment strategy indicate that assessment "should be founded on the goals for teaching and learning; owned and implemented at multiple levels – by major programs and the principal "delivery" units; and geared, not at improving specific courses, but at the general education curriculum as a whole and the multidimensional opportunities it affords to students in meeting the career and life goals that they, as well as other stakeholders – faculty, future employers, etc.– deem important." [Bechtel, et al., 2005]

Rigorous assessment of general education requires multiple measurement methods including direct measures of general education outcomes, student surveys and interviews, and strategies, such as portfolios, that also improve students' learning. The assessment plan should provide an opportunity to build on the work of the Faculty Senate's articulation of the general education objectives by making those objectives visible via course syllabi and achievable via course work and cocurricular programs. Specifically, course and program objectives intent on addressing the goals of general education shall be mapped to general education objectives as defined by the Faculty Senate. Because Penn State's general education program is experienced uniquely by each student and is met by general education courses, program-specific courses, and cocurricular programs, the assessment plan will, over time, be able to provide information on patterns of course and extracurricular experiences that result in better outcomes, and findings will lead to data-based models of best practices for departments and students. We seek to use these models to develop ways to encourage the practices associated with better outcomes and to evaluate our progress.

## 3. Cocurricular Programs

At Penn State, we have recognized that there is a positive relationship between out-of-class learning and the level of student engagement—or the extent of student involvement in purposeful cocurricular activities.  We acknowledge our role in helping to prepare students to become lifelong learners with effective information literacy skills, to interact with others in an increasingly diverse society and to become active and engaged citizens.

Over the past decade, Penn State has been experimenting with programs that are designed to bridge the gap between classroom learning and cocurricular learning.  From living-learning housing to service learning programs, staff members with responsibilities for out-of-class programs have been creating partnerships with members of the faculty to foster stronger ties and to promote learning experiences that integrate elements of student life. In part, these programs have been influenced by a shifting ideology in the student affairs profession – away from a focus only on student development to a stronger emphasis in student learning.  Three influential documents: *Learning Reconsidered* (NASPA & ACPA, 2004), *The Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1996), and *Powerful Partnerships* (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998), published  by professional organizations in higher education, articulate the importance of a holistic approach to learning and encourage student affairs practitioners to take a more active role in the education of students. These documents suggest that the long-standing division between academic and student affairs should be bridged because student learning happens both in and out of the classroom.

Assessment of cocurricular programs, although not formalized with an adopted set of general cocurricular learning outcomes, has been a long-standing component of many programs, including those in Student Affairs, which routinely coordinates several assessment projects through the Student Affairs Research and Assessment office. The focus of recent projects from that office (Appendix B) have targeted new and evolving cocurricular programs where understanding the effectiveness of the intentional interventions help shape future programs and impact student learning in the existing programs. Additionally, these assessment efforts have established measures and methods appropriate for the knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes aligned with cocurricular programs.

As part of this assessment plan, an intentional and organized approach to assessment of cocurricular programs has begun. First, a working definition for the cocurriculum at Penn State has been developed: "The cocurriculum at Penn State involves formal and informal out-of-classroom experiences and interventions that provide students with learning opportunities. These include involvement in clubs and student organizations, educational workshops, lectures, debates, and cultural events. Also included are leadership experiences, service learning, internships and co-ops, interaction with faculty and peers, and study abroad." Next, a list of cocurricular learning outcomes for Penn State (Appendix C) has been proposed and will evolve as they are applied to a variety of cocurricular programs.

### 4. Academic Programs

Assessment at the academic program level varies widely across Penn State. Several academic programs have a strong history of assessment via external accrediting processes that are tied to the profession, e.g., AACSB for business, ABET for engineering, NCATE for education, etc. Among those, some accrediting agencies have moved rapidly toward outcomes-based models while others are making the change gradually from more traditional methods based on reporting of data for compliance purposes. Even without the requirements for external accreditation, some academic programs have established a history of using formalized approaches, on-going data collection, and analysis to guide improvements in their undergraduate programs. For example, a 2004 survey of program chairs showed that over half of the programs are subject to regular evaluation and that two-thirds have written learning outcomes.

Regardless of the external influences, we recognize that periodic review of academic programs is a valuable process to identify strengths and provide insights into gaps between intended program outcomes and actual program outcomes. This process helps insure that the faculty members of the program are working effectively and students are receiving the best education possible. It allows for showcasing best practices and the information gleaned from those practices can be invaluable when meeting with prospective students and families. Clearly, one of the most powerful elements to help foster a culture of assessment and to improve student learning is the ability of an institution to provide access to the processes and tools that support assessment of learning outcomes. In particular, formal or informal assessment practices that are currently being used by some departments may be helpful in shaping a process for programs that do not have regular evaluation.

The assessment plan recognizes that programs with external accreditation based on learning outcomes should use the assessment protocols to address the university plan. For programs without external accreditation processes and with no history of departmental assessment, the

*Guidelines for Internal Review of Programs* (Appendix D) can be used to help develop assessment plans, measures, etc. These *Guidelines* will be mounted on the University Assessment website for use by academic units in the process of developing specific disciplinary program assessment measures. As they are implemented, reports demonstrating how assessment has been used to improve student learning or enhance the educational experience will be added to the website.

5.  **Course Level**

    Course level assessment of student learning is the responsibility of the instructor teaching the course. Methods vary according to the type of course, whether it is project-based, information-rich, or focused on skill development. Regardless of the content and the style of delivery, the following elements are expected for each course: articulation of learning outcomes and their relation to support program objectives; identification of activities and assignments that address the stated learning outcomes; and formal or informal processes by which modifications to a course can be made to improve learning. Additionally instructors can use student feedback related to the effectiveness of the course in meeting the stated learning objectives and to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

**D.  GOALS AND FIVE-YEAR PLAN**
(Acronyms: CCUA-Coordinating Committee on University Assessment; SA-Student Affairs; ACUE-Administrative Council for Undergraduate Education; FS-Faculty Senate; PIA-Planning and Institutional Assessment; SITE-Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence; SARA-Student Affairs Research and Assessment; TLC-Teaching and Learning Consortium; TLT-Teaching and Learning with Technology; UE-Undergraduate Education)

1.  **Institutional Level**

    2006-2007
    - Provide venues to discuss what it means to be a student-centered, research university, and establish a definition with attributes that can be measured. [CCUA, SA, ACUE, FS]
    - Establish a process that ensures university-wide initiatives include an expectation for learning assessment and assign a liaison with CCUA to new initiatives that affect student learning. [CCUA]
    - Review assessment of student learning for university-wide initiatives identified in 2005-2006 (e.g., Blended Learning Initiative). [CCUA]

    2007-2008
    - Establish measures for the attributes of student-centered university, recommend methods of collecting data, and provide guidance using the methods. [CCUA, PIA, SITE, SARA]
    - Review assessment of student learning process for university-wide initiatives identified in 2006-2007. [CCUA]

    2008-2010
    - Showcase best practices of assessment for institutional level projects. [CCUA]

## 2. General Education Program

Spring – Summer 2006
- Review, identify and maintain an inventory of national instruments that provide direct measures of student learning outcomes that are part of the general education program goals. [CCUA, SITE]

2006-2007
- Conduct a pilot study including the administration of a student questionnaire and a performance evaluation of critical thinking and analytic writing, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), to a sample of first-year and senior undergraduate students. [SITE, TLC, TLT]
- Identify and describe the relationship of indirect measures of critical thinking using existing data and responses from the student questionnaire. [SITE, SARA, PIA]
- Develop a scope for an assessment plan for other general education outcomes (FYS, IC, etc) working with Faculty Senate, and academic support units. The Faculty Senate should lead the selection of the general education outcomes and/or processes to be assessed. [FS, CCUA]

2007-2008
- Use the assessment strategies for the particular learning outcomes assessed in 2006-2007 to share best practices, clarify objectives, make connections between experiences and outcomes, and measure changes, i.e., develop a culture of assessment. [CCUA]
- Begin to develop strategies to address other general education goals using appropriate measures as part of a plan that can be implemented economically, efficiently, and effectively. [FS, CCUA]
- Explore e-portfolios as a means to document and retrieve learning outcomes relevant to general education. [CCUA, TLT, FS]

2008-2010
- Use the assessment strategies for the particular learning outcomes assessed in previous year, and portfolios to share best practices, clarify objectives, make connections between experiences and outcomes, and measure changes. [CCUA, TLT]
- Return to the inventory of assessment methods and research findings to design better models that can be used across the University. [CCUA, SITE, PIA]
- Work with Faculty Senate to restate the general education goals (Appendix A) as measurable learning outcomes. [Faculty Senate, CCUA]
- Integrate the collection, reporting and evaluation of significant indicators of general education outcomes into existing assessment programs. [FS, CCUA]

## 3. Cocurricular Programs

Spring and Summer 2006
- Develop a definition of cocurricular learning. [SA, CCUA]
- Define student learning outcomes (Appendix C) and share it with the broader Penn State community. [SA, CCUA]

2006-2007
- Refine student learning outcomes and map assessment measures to the learning outcome goals. [SARA, UE]
- Design and implement assessment plans for two programs within the Office of Student Affairs: career management and multicultural learning. [SA]

- Develop a student portfolio project and a tool to pilot the data collection (the tool should be generalizable so that it can be applied to existing or new programs). [SA, CCUA, TLT]
- Explore assessment questions with cocurricular programs that are outside of Student Affairs, e.g., International Programs, Internship Offices. [SA, UE]

2007-2008
- Showcase findings and the use of the assessment tools at appropriate venues. [SA, CCUA]
- Apply the tool to two new programs (identified in 2006-2007). [SA, UE]
- Establish process for coordinating assessment of cocurricular activities that are found across many units, e.g., undergraduate research, internships, co-ops including student teaching, etc. [CCUA, UE, SA]

2008-2010
- Showcase findings and the use of the assessment tools at appropriate venues. [SA, CCUA]
- Apply the assessment tools to two new programs, identified in previous years.

## 4. Academic Programs

Spring – Summer 2006
- Develop guidelines for programs without external accreditation processes. [CCUA]

2006-2007
- Identify academic programs that have external accreditations based on outcome-based assessment (AACSB, ABET, NCATE, etc.) and identify elements of their reviews that address the university plan. [PIA, academic units, TLT]
- For programs without external accreditation processes and with no history of departmental assessment, use the *Guidelines for Internal Review of Programs* to develop assessment plans, measures, etc. [academic units, UE, PIA]
- Promote use of the *Guideline* and seek venues to assist academic units to develop assessment plans. [PIA, SITE, CCUA]

2008-2010
- Promote use of the *Guideline* and seek venues to assist academic units to develop assessment plans. [PIA, SITE, CCUA]
- Showcase findings and the use of the assessment tools at appropriate venues. [CCUA]

## 5. Course Level

Spring and Summer 2006
- Develop an Assessment Academy (Appendix E) which will be offered to faculty across the university in fall 2006. [SITE]
- Build or link to various online resources to support course-level assessment activities. [SITE, UE]

2006-2007
- Offer Assessment Academy to faculty face-to-face and develop a companion online version to expand the reach of the Assessment Academy. [SITE]
- Communicate good practices of course-level assessment via website and through various teaching and learning symposia, Quality Advocates events, etc. [CCUA, SITE, PIA]

- Work with Faculty Senate to explore ways to have learning outcomes communicated in curricular proposals, emphasized on syllabi and reflected in the evaluation criteria for student learning submitted in the proposal. [CCUA, FS]

2007-2010
- Offer Assessment Academy to faculty in both face-to-face and fully online versions. [SITE, TLT]
- Communicate good practices of course-level assessment via website and teaching and learning symposia, Quality Advocates events, etc. [CCUA, SITE, PIA, TLT]

## E. COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

The Coordinating Committee on University Assessment (CCUA), charged by the Provost on February 18, 2005, serves as a standing committee of the University with initial responsibility to develop a university-wide plan for the assessment of student learning, and on-going responsibility to facilitate the implementation of the plan. Members of the committee (Appendix F) collectively have direct responsibility to support undergraduate education, institutional assessment, cocurricular programs, and advising. Membership includes faculty and administrative leaders from the Faculty Senate, Student Affairs, and a subset of colleges, campuses, and administrative units. The Office of Undergraduate Education provides leadership to the Committee.

The CCUA conducts its work throughout the year and has responsibility to
- **Guide university-wide assessment related to student learning** by reviewing and prioritizing University assessment needs related to student learning and identifying appropriate individuals or teams to carry out those assessments in a timely fashion.
- **Promote and facilitate discussions** to define and measure the attributes of a student-centered research university which directly address student learning.
- **Develop a culture of assessment which is faculty-driven and administratively supported** by recommending approaches to build capacity among the faculty, administrators and staff to conduct assessment and expand their knowledge about outcomes-based assessment. CCUA will explore, evaluate, and provide access to appropriate resources to support assessment activities and will identify and recommend support for assessment projects that have broad university implications.
- **Collect and disseminate** mechanisms for the assessment data to assist those who are making decisions regarding curricular or program changes.
- **Report to the academic community** through the Provost, Faculty Senate, Administrative Council on Undergraduate Education, Academic Leadership Council, and Executive Council, the identified priorities and resource needs, summaries of the findings from specific assessment projects, and how findings from assessment projects have been used to make decisions to improve student learning.
- **Communicate the plan and on-going activities related to the systematic assessment of student learning** by providing easily accessible information related to effective assessment practices, including effective approaches and instrumentation to be used across a variety of academic program areas; internal unit reports that demonstrate assessment and resulting decisions to improve student learning; and national and internal assessment tools. (See Appendix G.)
- **Review and update the university assessment plan** to reflect new strategic goals that affect student learning and evolving standards and expectations for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

**APPENDIX A. GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM GOALS (EXCERPTS FROM THE UNDERGRADUATE BULLETIN AND FACULTY SENATE DOCUMENTS)**

An effective general education program enables students to:

- acquire knowledge through critical information gathering - including reading and listening, computer-assisted searching, and scientific experimentation and observation;
- analyze and evaluate, where appropriate in a quantitative manner, the acquired knowledge;
- integrate knowledge from a variety of sources and fields;
- make critical judgments in a logical and rational manner;
- develop the skills to maintain health, and understand the factors that impinge upon it;
- communicate effectively, both in writing and orally, and using the accepted methods for presentation, organization and debate particular to their disciplines;
- seek and share knowledge, independently and in collaboration with others;
- gain understanding of international interdependence and cultural diversity, and develop consideration for values, lifestyles, and traditions that may differ from their own;
- comprehend the role of aesthetic and creative activities expressing both imagination and experience.

The typical baccalaureate Penn State academic program requires the completion of between 120 and 130 credits. The General Education requirements are common to all degree programs and compose about one-third of the course work (45 credits). All students must also complete a writing-across-the-curriculum course as part of their degree program. For simplicity, those courses are included with the General Education program as described in this booklet. The course selections are designed to provide students with a well-rounded academic experience within an integrated curriculum that allows for individual flexibility. The components of the program are:

*Skills courses* help develop quantitative and communication skills.

Studies in the *Knowledge Domains* of the *Arts, Humanities, and the Sciences* (including the Health Sciences, Natural Sciences, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences) provide a broad overview of the world in which we live.

*First-Year Seminars (FYS)* help introduce students to the scholarly community of the University.

*Writing Intensive* courses of the "Writing Across the Curriculum" component further enhance writing skills.

*United States Cultures* and *International Cultures* provide opportunities to increase understanding of the relationship between people of different cultures and widen international perspective.

**APPENDIX B.  RECENT ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES BY STUDENT AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT**

*Newspaper Readership* – an expanded assessment effort of the effectiveness of the student newspaper readership program including other institutions. The project includes measures of outcomes such as civic engagement and classroom and campus engagement, self-reported development of civic-mindedness and cognitive skills, and self-reported ratings of being informed about national and international news. While the emphasis is on correlating these outcomes to newspaper readership, these are general measures of progress as well.

*First-Year Experience assessment* – a longitudinal project this year looking at various measures of outcomes of first-year students at University Park.

*Student Engagement* – a first-year pilot of a survey to measure more comprehensively the level of student engagement in the cocurriculum including students' rating their progress in a number of broad outcomes for which we will then conduct analysis between types of involvement and progress on these outcomes. This will most likely become an ongoing project.

*Fraternity and Sorority Assessment* – use of the AFA/EBI national survey to measure the effectiveness and outcomes associated with Greek life at Penn State including leadership skills, personal development skills, interpersonal skills, and attitudes related to diversity. Other measures examine community service and philanthropic involvement and drinking and drug use.

*Educational Program Record* - Staff in Student Affairs enter summary data into an online database about the educational workshops that are presented each year.  Data include the presenter, sponsoring unit, number of attendees, targeted audience and method of assessment.

**APPENDIX C. COCURRICULAR LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**Knowledge Acquisition/Application**
Students will:
- Develop an understanding of knowledge from a range of disciplines/areas
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply ideas and themes across the curriculum and cocurriculum

**Cognitive Competency**
Students will:
- Acquire learning skills to assist in their academic success
- Develop critical and reflective thinking abilities
- Apply effective reasoning skills

**Live Skills and Self-Knowledge**
Students will:
- Determine their career interests and acquire career management skills
- Develop the ability to manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts
- Cultivate a propensity for lifelong learning
- Improve self-understanding and awareness and develop an integrated personal identity (including sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture and spiritual)
- Exhibit responsible decision-making and personal accountability

**Intercultural Development**
Students will:
- Possess multicultural awareness and knowledge
- Develop sensitivity to and appreciation of human differences
- Exhibit the ability to work effectively with others in diverse groups and with those different from themselves
- Demonstrate a commitment to social justice

**Leadership and Active Citizenship**
Students will:
- Effectively communicate with others both verbally and in writing
- Demonstrate an understanding of group dynamics and effective teamwork
- Understand leadership theory and styles and identify their own style in working with others
- Develop a range of leadership skills and abilities such as effectively leading change, resolving conflict, and motivating others
- Assume a sense of civic responsibility and a commitment to public life

**Personal Integrity and Values**
Students will:
- Acquire ethical reasoning skills
- Effectively manage their emotions
- Develop a sense of personal integrity and clarify their personal values
- Appreciate expression and aesthetics
- Demonstrate compassion and empathy for others

**APPENDIX D. GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

**Why Review?**

Periodic review of academic programs is a valuable process to identify strengths and provide insights into gaps between intended program outcomes and actual program outcomes. This process helps insure that the faculty members of the program are working effectively and students are receiving the best education possible. It allows for showcasing best practices and the information gleaned can be invaluable when meeting with prospective students and families. The following guidelines provide the broad outline of what needs to be considered in a program review, but it is up the faculty themselves to decide how to carry out the work.

**How to review?**

The first stage consists of the evaluation of the program by the program faculty to determine the extent to which the initial goals and objectives are being achieved and how to make improvement to the curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and learning. Program goals and outcomes should include communication, problem-solving, and competency components. The appropriate Program Chair needs to identify the individual, or committee, that will carry out the assessment.

In preparing the assessment report, the following five elements are required. At each step it is important to consider that each element should contain assessable and measurable indicators.

1. **Background, purpose, and goals of the program.**
   A historical overview of the program should be provided along with the scope and purpose of the assessment.
2. **Specify Evaluation Areas.**
   Areas of assessment should clearly be stated. They include, but are not limited to; faculty, who they are and how they contribute to stated program goals along with relevant indicators of effectiveness: curriculum coherence: enrollment and related data: student information including academic preparation, demographics, and other relevant information; advising effectiveness; information on who graduates, where they go, and how they are followed after graduation; indicators of teaching and learning effectiveness; relationship to other programs in the University and; other areas of evaluation deemed necessary by the faculty of the program.
3. **Data Collection Plan**
   What data needs to be collected and who will collect it? Are questionnaires and/or other survey instruments required and if so, who is responsible for their development? If interviews are required, who will carry this out? What is the time frame for collecting data and what resources are required?
4. **Data Collection and Analysis**
   How will the collected data be compiled and how will accuracy be maintained? What procedures and methods will be used to analyze the data and how will it be reported?
5. **Recommendations**
   What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? How should programmatic strengths be reinforced and weaknesses addressed? What improvements are needed and what will be the long- and short-term benefits? Will improvements require additional resources, or can improvements be made by reorganization (and/or both)?

**APPENDIX E. ASSESSMENT ACADEMY**

This multi-session academy designed by the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence is intended to assist faculty improve their use of assessment in courses by learning how to
- connect learning objectives to program/department/general education/university objectives
- connect assessments to learning objectives
- use a variety of low-stakes and high-stakes assessment methods, both quantitative and qualitative
- construct rubrics for grading assignments
- use learning outcomes assessment to validate the effectiveness of classroom strategies
- use assessment as data that can be published in appropriate journals
- use student feedback to help improve courses

There will be four 4-hour sessions within a single semester. Participants of the Academy will develop a comprehensive assessment plan for a single course. They will be asked to return the following semester to present the data they have collected in their course. This session may be a "stand-alone" session or perhaps could be incorporated into the first day of the next session so that new assessment academy participants can see the results from previous academies.

Materials: Walvoord, B.E. and Anderson, V.J. (1998). *Effective Grading: a Tool for Learning and Assessment*, and *Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources.* The Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Session 1:  Course Objectives - The Driving Force of Assessment
Session Goals:
- o  Introduce basic terms and concepts to participants (assessment, evaluation, formative, summative, feedback loop, etc)
- o  Discuss objectives for course in the context of departmental, general education, and university objectives/mission
- o  Introduce participants to cognitive taxonomies, i.e., Bloom
- o  Write course objectives for specific course

Activities:
- o  Background knowledge probe (collected in advance; discussed in course)
- o  Myths about assessment (Group activity to be developed)
- o  Linking course objectives with university/departmental objectives
    - o  Ask participants to bring course syllabus
    - o  Ahead of time, gather copies of the departmental objectives and university mission for each participant
    - o  Write and discuss course objectives
- o  Minute paper
- o  Revise your syllabus including the new course objectives
- o  For next time, bring your revised syllabus, textbook and/or course notes, and any multiple-choice tests/quizzes they have created or used in their courses.  Additionally, if they have used scanning services at Schreyer, bring in the scanning reports.

Session 2:  Toolbox of assessment tools (Part 1)
Session Goals
- o  Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various types of assessment techniques (constructed vs. forced-choice response)
- o  Introduce participants to the process of writing multiple choice tests
- o  Provide examples of items that do not follow item-writing guidelines

- o Provide examples of items that measure higher-order cognitive skills, including interpretive exercises
- o Explain the results of a Schreyer Institute scanning report
- o Introduce participants to computer-based testing tools (CBT) available at the Schreyer Institute

Activities:
- o Write test blue-prints for one unit on syllabus
- o Write one item for each level of Bloom's taxonomy (for a quiz or test)
- o Create one interpretive exercise item for their test
- o Go over item analysis report for participants who brought one
- o For next time, bring examples of other types of assessment activities done in the class.
- o Background knowledge probe of constructed response/authentic assessment

Session 3: Toolbox of assessment tools (Part 2)

Objectives:
- o Introduce participants to the range of assessment techniques considered to be constructed response, including essays, portfolios, and performance assessment
- o Provide sufficient examples of each type of assessment technique
- o Provide an introduction to rubrics
- o Discussion of informal classroom assessment techniques (i.e., from Angelo & Cross) including mid-semester feedback
- o Introduce participants to a method of developing an assessment plan for their course

Activities:
- o Develop a project idea considered to be authentic assessment
- o Develop a rubric that effectively assesses this
- o Create several informal classroom assessment techniques that are driven by course objectives
- o Start creating an assessment plan for the course
- o Rework syllabus from previous semester including an assessment plan for the next semester
- o Background knowledge probe – How do faculty members give feedback to their students?

Session 4:  The Assessment Loop

Objectives
- o Discussion and presentation of faculty assessment plan
- o Discussion of the feedback loop and techniques to bring information back to students
- o Provide examples of methods to provide sufficient feedback to students  (i.e. CBT feedback mechanisms, Just-in-Time Teaching)
- o Answer any questions from faculty members about assessment
- o Discussion of the scholarship of teaching including how the assessment of classroom innovations and strategies can be publishable

Activities:
        Collect feedback from students in the current or upcoming semester and develop a brief presentation to be delivered in the following semester.  This feedback can be in the form of mid-semester or end-of-semester data, an analysis of some assessment task (i.e. test or project), or other assessment-related activity.

Session 5:  Data Days ( in following semester)
Forum for faculty members to present what they have collected.

**APPENDIX F. COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT**

**Lori J. Bechtel**
Chancellor
Penn State Altoona

**Philip J. Burlingame**
Associate Vice President
Office of Student Affairs

**Mary Beth Crowe**
Assistant Dean
Undergraduate Education

**Richard Cyr**
Assistant Department Head and Professor
Department of Biology

**Dwight Davis**
Staff Physician
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**Renata S. Engel**
Executive Director and Associate Dean
Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence
Undergraduate Education

**Nancy L. Herron**,
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Office of Commonwealth Campuses

**Arthur C. Miller**
Distinguished Professor
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**David H. Monk**
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**Robert N. Pangborn**
Vice President and Dean
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**Louise E. Sandmeyer**
Executive Director
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**John H. Selzer**
Associate Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate
    Studies
College of the Liberal Arts

**Kim Steiner**
Professor Forest Biology
School of Forest Resources

**Eric R. White**
Executive Director for the Division of
    Undergraduate Studies and Associate Dean
    for Advising
Undergraduate Education

**APPENDIX G. COMMUNICATION PLAN**

Overall communication goals:
- Build a culture of assessment
- Support implementation of the assessment plan

| Constituent Group | Communication Objectives | Content/Message Points | Strategies/Timelines |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students | <ul><li>Educate about the purpose of assessment</li><li>Obtain student input into methods</li><li>Share results</li></ul> | Context, Input | Work with faculty to infuse into classes (Faculty Senate, ACUE, Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence)<br>Consult with Student Affairs re student involvement/communication. Strategies (CCUA) |
| Faculty | <ul><li>Build buy-in and application</li><li>Inform practice Share results</li><li>Prompt improvements</li></ul> | Input, Process, Response<br><br>The Plan<br>Resources/Tools<br>Reports<br>Dialogue | Faculty Senate committee agendas as appropriate<br>ACUE agenda<br>Faculty/new dept head orientations<br>SITE Programs<br>Website<br>Reports |
| Administration:<br>  Executives, Deans, Chancellors, Department Heads | <ul><li>Establish expectations</li><li>Provide accountability</li></ul> | Context, Product, Response<br><br>Priority/process<br>The Plan<br>Results | Pres./Prov remarks<br>ALC/CCA/ALF agendas<br>Website<br>Reports |
| Staff:<br>  Advisers,<br>  Student Affairs<br>  Others | <ul><li>Inform</li><li>Support faculty</li><li>Share results</li><li>Prompt improvements</li></ul> | Input, Process, Response | Schreyer Institute Programs<br>Website<br>Reports |
| Other:<br>  Board of Trustees<br>  MSCHE and other accrediting bodies | <ul><li>Provide information about current practices, results, and future actions (accountability)</li></ul> | Context, Product, Some response | Report |

This table was filled in using a variation of the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) Model. It makes sense to think about how each group fits into each "step". Context would be the background information about assessment, input could be thought of as the development phase, process would then be the implementation phase and the product would involve reporting the results. A category was added here called "response" that involves the feedback loop aspect of assessment or the point where recommendations are used in response to accountability and CQI concerns.

**APPENDIX G. COMMUNICATION PLAN (CONT'D)**

**Communication Methods**

| Stakeholders | Website | Newsletter | Workshops | Presentations to Organizations | Reports |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students | X | | | X | X |
| Faculty | X | X | X | X | X |
| Administration | X | X | X | X | X |
| Staff | X | X | X | | X |
| Other | X | X | | X | X |

1. Website-Information on website would be accessible and appropriate for all groups
2. Newsletter information-could be appropriate for all groups but seems less so for students unless we're talking about an article in the Collegian or something similar
3. Workshops-Good for targeting faculty, administration, and staff for providing new information, skills, etc.
4. Presentation to Organizations-making a presentation to existing groups such as SGA, the Senate, Advisory Boards, Orientations, etc. would make sense
5. Reports-self-explanatory

**APPENDIX H. REFERENCES**

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