

# **UMKC Assessment Plan**

**Developed by**

**The Assessment Task Force**

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## I. Executive Summary

The Assessment Task Force (ATF) was created by Interim Provost Bruce Bubacz in October 2005 to update UMKC's Assessment Plan. Based upon its review of the assessment plan and earlier studies<sup>1</sup> of UMKC's assessment and evaluation practices, ATF identified three major issue areas that needed to be addressed:

1. Articulate UMKC's Assessment Policy and Philosophy (i.e., why should we do assessment?)
2. Specify all the topics/objects that need to be regularly assessed or evaluated (i.e., what needs to be assessed?)
3. Delineate the organizational processes and structures needed to carry-out assessment (i.e., how should we carry out assessment organizationally?)

ATF's deliberations on these matters were guided by assessment and evaluation standards from the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission, a variety of professional organizations, and a review of assessment practices at colleges and universities with reputations for effective assessment. One of the key issues ATF wrestled with was the potentially conflicting purposes of assessment. If assessment's purpose as a tool for program improvement is not sufficiently established and rigorous, it may be compromised by pressures to report good results for accountability or resource allocation purposes. Consequently, ATF concluded that assessment's use as a program improvement tool should be firmly established before it is used for other purposes. Below is the three-phased approach and timeline recommended by ATF.

**Phase I.** Focus on strengthening the use of assessment and evaluation for program improvement purposes. Efforts should be directed toward identifying, building upon, and sharing effective assessment tools currently being used at UMKC at the class-, course-, and program-level. An Assessment Committee should be formed to encourage, support, and guide the growth of effective assessment practices. (Beginning Spring 2006)

**Phase II.** Retool Collective Assessment Efforts at the School/College- and University-levels (Beginning Fall 2008). Examine the effectiveness of current assessment practices (Academic Profile, MAPP) in measuring and improving general education outcomes for undergraduates. Recommend and implement any needed processes for improving general education assessment.

**Phase III.** Strengthen Assessment and Evaluation Linkages with Planning and Resource Allocation (Beginning Fall 2009). The Assessment Committee, Program Evaluation Committee, and the Budget Advisory Committee should develop linkages among planning, assessment, and evaluation. The linkages should provide incentives for focusing activities on university priorities and for improving the quality of programs and services.

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<sup>1</sup> Suggested areas for improvements were provided in studies from NCA during their 1998 accreditation visit, the University of Missouri System Office in 2005, and in UMKC's 2005 self-study of its assessment and evaluation processes in preparation for the UM System Office visit.

## II. Overview and Development of the Assessment Plan

In October 2005, Interim Provost Bruce Bubacz created the Assessment Task Force (ATF) and charged it with updating the plan that guides the development of UMKC's assessment system. (*ATF's membership is shown in Appendix A.*) The Task Force was to develop a plan that does the following:

- states the purposes of assessment activities at UMKC;
- articulates the philosophy and principles that will guide UMKC assessment work;
- identifies the types of programs and outcomes that need to be assessed;
- outlines the processes that will be used to conduct assessment;
- aligns closely with the Program Evaluation Committee work - defining how academic program review is integrated with other assessment activities and institutional processes;
- delineates the committee structures and processes needed to oversee assessment activities;
- recommends methods for integrating assessment with strategic planning and budgeting;
- provides an implementation schedule for the proposed assessment system; and
- meets the accreditation standards of the North Central Association's (NCA) Higher Learning Commission, with particular attention to the assessment of student learning outcomes.

After two preliminary meetings in the fall, ATF began meeting bi-monthly in January 2006. ATF's initial work involved reviewing UMKC's Assessment Plan from 1995 and NCA's suggestions for improving this approach offered during their 1999 reaccreditation visit. Information was then gathered from colleges and universities with exemplary assessment practices to stimulate thinking about the types of assessment approaches most likely to effectively fill UMKC's assessment needs.

## III. Evolution and Analysis of Current Assessment Practices at UMKC

### A. Brief History of UMKC's Assessment Planning

Over the past twenty years, much work has been done at UMKC related to planning, assessment, and evaluation of academic programs and outcomes. (A brief timeline of the key events and projects is shown in Appendix B.) UMKC's Assessment Plan was last updated in 1994. The Plan provides a framework for assessing student academic outcomes in all academic units and degree programs. It was initially developed by an *ad hoc* committee of faculty and staff in response to guidelines issued by the University of Missouri's Board of Curators.

In December 1997, the Chancellor's Committee on Assessment (CCA) was formed to further develop UMKC's plan and provide oversight for its implementation. CCA's membership was comprised of representatives of each academic unit with undergraduates and related departments.

CCA recommended the following two policies to the Chancellor:

1. All students in the identified population be required to complete the assessment activity.
2. The results of assessment activities would not be recorded on the student's permanent record.

The committee also made policy recommendations regarding the outcomes and processes to be assessed and the appropriate methods and tests for assessing them. The plan was divided into three sections:

1. Undergraduate Programs
2. Professional Programs
3. Graduate Programs.

In 1999, the NCA reviewed UMKC's Assessment Plan and activities and found a number of practices and resources in place to promote effective assessment. In particular, they noted that quality assessment work was being done in the professional schools:

All the professional schools have excellent assessment programs in place and are using them effectively to maintain or improve academic achievement. All colleges report the desired level of passing rates for students taking the national boards. (p. 25, NCA Evaluation Team Report, 1999)

Some of UMKC's valuable assessment resources they mentioned were:

A core group of faculty and staff members with a commitment to meaningful assessment.

Sound assessment activities in some areas that can serve as internal models for other departments or units...

Several years of data collection, available for further analysis and longitudinal studies.

Administration of a number of surveys by both the Office of Assessment and the Division of Student Affairs, on regular schedules (p. 24, NCA Evaluation Team Report, 1999)

NCA's report offered a number of suggestions for how UMKC might build on these practices and resources to develop a more comprehensive, integrated, and intentional use of data and information to enhance institutional effectiveness. Excerpts from NCA's 1999 report on UMKC's assessment program are shown in Appendix C. In brief, NCA recommended:

- The need to articulate, at the institutional-level, the purposes for doing assessment at UMKC. The absence of an overarching rationale and framework for talking about assessment makes it difficult to develop a coherent institutional assessment and evaluation system. NCA recommended that UMKC "articulate an institutional policy statement on assessment, including definitions of assessment and student outcomes assessment, an overall philosophy of assessment, and expectations of departments, schools, colleges, and the University." (Advice and Suggestions #36)

- This rationale then needs to inform the design of an assessment approach that becomes embedded in the university culture, operations, and reporting. (Advice and Suggestions #37-40, #47)
- Overall responsibility for development and administrative support of the assessment system needs to be clearly defined. (NCA Advice and Suggestions #41-42)
- Some of UMKC's current assessment practices should be re-examined when the needed assessment framework has been developed. (NCA Advice and Suggestions #43-46, #48-50, #56-57)

In the fall of 2005, in preparation for a University of Missouri System visit in December of that year, UMKC conducted a self study of its program review and assessment processes. The study identified a number of improvements in assessment processes since the 1999 NCA Visit. However, UMKC's self-study conclusions were consistent with the NCA recommendations about the need for a university-level framework to define, support, develop and integrate assessment within the university's culture and operations. The following steps were recommended in the self-study:

- Clarify the purpose, goals, and philosophy for UMKC's assessment and evaluation system
- Systematize the collection, analysis, and dissemination of essential data on an annual basis
- Develop an assessment process that examines all aspects of university functions and relations among administrative and academic units.
- Develop new methods for measuring alumni success, community opinions, faculty and staff satisfaction
- Develop mechanisms for applying the outcomes of assessment to planning and budgeting
- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff in program evaluation and assessment – increase awareness of best practices and models
- Provide consulting and technical support to assist departments with the development of their evaluation and assessment approaches
- Enhance the communication of results - make self studies, reports, and implementation of recommendations available via the web and organize sessions with faculty, administrators, and staff to discuss these materials
- Evaluate the assessment and evaluation processes each year to identify areas for improvement

## **B. Current University Bodies Involved in Assessment**

In addition to the activities within individual units and departments, UMKC has several bodies whose purposes and activities relate directly to assessment of student learning.

*Assessment Task Force* is developing an Assessment Plan to ensure that UMKC's purposes for doing assessment and assessment philosophy are specified and put into practice. The plan will outline the needed components of the assessment and evaluation

system and provide mechanisms for ensuring that assessment is effectively integrated with related institutional planning and decision-making processes.

***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching*** provides forums for discussing teaching and learning issues with faculty, including the assessment of student learning. Best practices and effective assessment techniques can be discussed and disseminated through Center activities.

***Data Integrity and Reporting Group*** was formed in December 2005 to improve access to accurate institutional data reports and information. The Group's charge is to: 1) define needed core data sets and reports; 2) develop a calendar for routinely producing these data sets and reports; 3) design a systematic process for handling ad hoc data requests; 4) identify and resolve any related data integrity issues to ensure that reported data are reliable and appropriate for their intended use(s); and 5) create a centralized repository containing the documentation and data definitions (i.e., DED) needed to develop and maintain these reporting processes. As assessment processes produce data, this group will insure the accuracy and security of reports generated from this data.

***Program Evaluation Committee*** continues to refine and improve UMKC's program review approach. The PEC's work is related to, but much broader than, assessment of student learning. The PEC reviews all aspects of programs at UMKC. In November 2005, the PEC approved a new program review approach to be pilot-tested with five academic departments during the 2006-07 Academic Year. UMKC also continues to participate in the UM Academic Affairs Office's pilot-test of Massy's Academic Audit process. This experience has provided useful information for PEC to consider in further refinements of its program review methods. Preliminary feedback from the departments and the College of Arts and Sciences indicates that the Academic Audit generated greater faculty discussion and involvement than previous program reviews. The English Department's review also uncovered some important issues in governance that they will address to improve the departments' functioning. Yet, some participants suggested the Academic Audit process would benefit from inclusion of more evidence- or data-based discussions of departmental operations. Such data would also be helpful for planning purposes at the College-level. Further discussion of the Academic Audit pilot-test results, coupled with the upcoming pilot-tests of PEC's new process, will provide PEC with substantial information on potentially beneficial refinements to their new program review process

***Budget Advisory Committee*** (BAC) is developing budgeting methods that could provide linkages with program review, assessment, and planning results. The BAC has a cross-section of representation: its members include the Provost; the Vice-Chancellor of Admin. & Finance; some Deans; several faculty members; staff from academic and support units; and a student representative. The BAC is taking both near-term and long-term approaches in working on the development of recommendations to the Chancellor on UMKC budgeting policies and budgeting models.

### C. Current UMKC Assessment Practices

A summary of UMKC's current assessment practices is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. Summary of Assessment Practices used at UMKC.**

Instrument	Who Takes It?	Developed Internally (I) or Externally (E)	Type	Indirect (I) or Direct (D) Outcomes Measure
Beginning College Student Survey	First-Time Freshmen	E	Survey	I
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Sample of Freshmen and Seniors	E	Survey	I
Writing English Proficiency Test	All students before enrolling in a writing intensive course	Some E, Some I	Performance Assessment	D
Academic Profile	All undergraduates after reaching 90 credit hours	E	Nationally Normed Exam	D
Major Field Exams	Seniors	Some E, Some I	Nationally Normed or Local Exam	D
Senior Survey	Seniors	I	Survey	I
Capstone Courses	Seniors / Junior	I	Performance Assessment	D
Alumni Survey Nursing	Alumni	Some E, Some I	Survey	I
Employer Surveys	Employers of Alumni	Some E, Some I	Survey	I
HERI Faculty Survey	Faculty and Administrators	E	Survey	I
Faculty Survey of Student Engagement	Faculty	E	Survey	I
Staff Survey	All Employees	I	Survey	I
CBHE Performance Indicators	Bachelor Degree Recipients	E	Performance Assessment	D
Faculty Accomplishment System	Faculty	I		D
Course Evaluations	Faculty	I	Survey	I
Comprehensive Exam	Masters/Doctoral Students	I	Local Exam	D
Dissertation/Thesis Report	Masters/Doctoral Students	I	Report Evaluation	D

More detailed discussions of the assessment practices in various areas of the University are described below.

**1. Undergraduate Program –Under the current plan for assessment at UMKC, the following elements are used to assess undergraduate programs. One of the tasks of the ATF is to determine how to review the efficiency and effectiveness of these assessment plans and practices.**

**a. General Education Assessment** – in 1989-90, the long form of the Academic Profile test was selected as the “commercially-available test that best matched the goals of the general education program.” (p. 8, UMKC Assessment Plan, 1995). This decision was reviewed and supported by a second committee in 1994. Results from this test are to be reported annually in a general report on assessment to be distributed to all Deans, Directors, and the members of CCA. Department-level summaries are also to be made available.

In Fall 2000, the short-form of the Academic Profile test began to be administered to all graduating seniors. The short-form is a 1 hour exam compared to the long-form which is a 2 hour exam. In Fall 2004, students with 90 credit hours became eligible to take the Academic Profile exam compared to 80 credit hours previously. In January 2006 the name of the Academic Profile has changed to The Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP)

**b. Major Field Assessment** – This is the responsibility of individual departments. After examining the goals for its graduates, faculty select or create assessment measures that they agree measure the expected outcomes for their major. Faculty also have primary responsibility for interpreting the results. In cases where departments chose the ETS Major Field Achievement Tests, the Assessment Office is charged with administering the tests and summarizing the results.

Tests used for major field assessment include:

Educational Testing Services Major Field Achievement Test (MFAT)

- Accounting, Business Administration, Computer Science, Biology, Chemistry, History, Mathematics, Physics, Political Science, and Psychology
- The Academic Profile is used as the Major Field for Liberal Arts majors

Licensure and Certification Tests

- Six-Year Medical students, Six-Year Dental students, and Dental Hygiene

Other National Tests

- ETS Praxis – School of Education
- National League for Nursing’s Post-RN Exam – School of Nursing
- Watson-Glaser Test of Critical Thinking – Communication Studies

Locally Developed tests

- Conservatory of Music
- College of Arts & Sciences – Geosciences, Sociology/Criminal Justice and Criminology

**c. Writing Assessment** – All students are required to pass the WEPT exam before enrolling in junior- or senior-level, writing-intensive courses. Summary results are provided to individual departments and to UMKC’s primary feeder schools. Campus-level results are included in the Annual Assessment Report.

**d. Surveys** – information from various student populations are captured through a number of standard survey instruments

- National Survey of Student Engagement – NSSE survey of freshmen and seniors conducted annually since 2000. The results of the survey yield important information about the quality of undergraduate learning and contribute to national benchmarks of effective educational practice.
- Surveys of Graduating Students – This locally-developed survey has been used since 1991 to inquire about students’ plans after graduation, growth while at UMKC, and satisfaction with university services and programs. Changes to the format and questions occurred in 2002 and 2004.
- Surveys of Alumni – Alumni have been surveyed about their satisfaction with UMKC, educational achievements, and jobs status since 1988. The survey is conducted every three years.

**e. Program Review** – Until recently, each academic department was evaluated through the COPE Program Review Process every five years. The COPE Reviews have been replaced by a new program review procedure developed by UMKC’s Program Evaluation Committee.

**f. Accreditation** – In addition to institutional accreditation every 10 years through the North Central Association, many departments have programs accredited through professional associations or specialty organizations.

## **2. Professional Programs – the following elements are used to assess professional programs.**

### **School of Dentistry**

Their assessment plan includes the following elements:

- Senior survey
- Alumni survey
- Standardized examination scores
- Faculty self reports
- Accreditation reviews
- Student evaluation of instruction

Each of these elements is explicitly linked to the goals of the program. The school is accredited through the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation

### **School of Law**

The primary outcome measure for the program is the pass rate of J.D. recipients on the state bar examinations. Additionally, the school surveys students at the end of each course and all program graduates the October after their graduation. Graduates are asked about their current employment and their satisfaction with their education at UMKC. Additional current Law School Assessment devices include:

- ABA/AALS reporting forms (annually)
- ABA/AALS accreditation site visits (six years)
- Self study processes (historically about every 4-6 years)
- State bar exam statistics
- Grade normalization policies
- Law School Survey of Student Engagement
- Measures of alumni achievement (e.g., “best of the bar”)
- Student competitions (moot court, negotiation, client counseling)
- Student employment rates and placements

### **School of Medicine**

The assessment program is extensive and focused on determining whether students are attaining the goals of the program. It contains the following elements:

- Quarterly Exam/Subject Examinations – testing whether or not students have acquired the factual elements of the curriculum. Test questions are drawn from the 13,000 item bank of questions designed to measure factual knowledge in Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics, Gynecology, Surgery, and Basic Science. Faculty monitor the test results to assess the progress of each level of student in each of the curriculum areas. The quarterly examination was used until 2004 when it was replaced by subject examinations from the National Board of Medical Examiners.
- Board of Medical Examiners Licensure Examination (Steps I, II, and III)
- Placement of students in residency and research programs after graduation (match rate, quality of residency program, specialty area, and geographic region).
- Residency supervisors are surveyed every year to assess the performance of UMKC graduates at the end of their first year of residency.
- American Association of Medical College’s Graduation Questionnaire – completed by students in their final semester.
- Survey of Alumni to gather information on career patterns and achievement, satisfaction with medical education, and both personal and professional attitudes and values.
- An Annual Report summarizing the above information is compiled by the Office of Medical Education and Research. The reports are reviewed by the Dean and

office staff and then referred to appropriate departments and faculty committees for further review and any needed actions. The Curriculum and Student Performance committees review the subject exam results and the National Boards.

The school is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, a national body representing the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association

### **School of Pharmacy**

A number of assessment measures and processes are used to monitor and enhance the quality of the program. The results from the following data are thoroughly reviewed by faculty and administrators.

- Students' performances on the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy licensure examination is the primary outcome measure.
- Students participate in seminars during their last year of the program. Faculty, peer, and self-evaluation of performance are part of this seminar.
- An Alumni Survey is conducted every five years to assess graduates' satisfaction with the pharmacy program and the preparation it provided for entrance into career employment.
- Students in their final year participate in a clerkship rotation. Their performances are evaluated by faculty members, preceptors, and through self-evaluations.
- Program graduates are used as a source for continuous evaluation and enhancement of the program. Graduates are asked to serve as preceptors for clerkships where they evaluate the performance of current students. Additionally, they participate in the admissions interview and serve on various SOP committees.

The School of Pharmacy recently hired a Director of Assessment, Dr. Marcus Izard, who is leading the development of SOP's assessment plan.

The School of Pharmacy is accredited through the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE).

### **3. Graduate Programs – the following elements are used to assess graduate programs.**

The Graduate Council is responsible for coordinating the assessment of graduate student outcomes for all graduate programs at UMKC. The Ph.D. Executive Committee monitors graduate student outcomes for the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program. Deans report annually on the ways that they used assessment data to improve their graduate programs. Measures used to assess graduate programs include the following: an exit survey that is administered annually to all students completing graduate programs at UMKC, analyses of theses and dissertations, and annual evaluations of all students in the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program.

#### **IV. Purposes and Philosophy of Assessment at UMKC**

The primary purpose of assessment is to create an environment that promotes educational excellence through evidence-based dialogue about academic programs and services.

Successful assessment accomplishes this by:

- encouraging us to think deeply about the outcomes we desire for our students and the methods by which those outcomes might be encouraged;
- giving us reliable data upon which to measure whether our students are achieving those outcomes or whether our methods are contributing to or detracting from that achievement; and
- stimulating us to achieve and maintain high quality teaching and learning

Secondarily, assessment also enables us to communicate the effectiveness of our efforts to a variety of stakeholders and to use resources more wisely in carrying out the mission and goals of the University. Assessment facilitates these functions by:

- providing a basis for communicating our achievements to our constituents in an objective and accountable fashion; and
- providing a basis for making resource allocation decisions.

We recognize that there is some tension between the primary and secondary purposes. Through our assessment design and practices, we work to make room for genuine assessment, not merely advocacy or advertisement. A more detailed discussion of these issues from the Missouri Assessment Consortium Handbook is included in Appendix D.

#### **V. Assessment System Design Considerations**

##### **A. What needs to be included in the plan?**

In considering the components of an assessment plan, the ATF was strongly influenced by comments from Section II.B, II.C, and from Core Components 2 & 3 of the accreditation criteria from The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (October 2003). These criteria are shown in Appendix E and are cited here.

##### *1. Institutional Assessment Policy and Philosophy.*

NCA recommends that UMKC “articulate an institutional policy statement on assessment, including definitions of assessment and student outcomes assessment, an overall philosophy of assessment, and expectations of departments, schools, colleges, and the University.” (Advice and Suggestions #36)

##### *2. Topic/Objects to be Assessed or Evaluated.*

The primary objective of an assessment plan is the evaluation of whether students are attaining the institution’s learning outcomes. (NCA, Criterion 3a) This includes outcomes at the class and program-level as well as general education outcomes.

Assessment of learning will naturally include an evaluation of whether learning resources are being used effectively to enhance student learning and effective teaching. (NCA, Criterion 3d). Assessment should be an integral part of overall program review, included in periodic review of academic and administrative subunits. (NCA, Criterion 2c) These ongoing assessment processes should be designed to provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that should, in turn, inform strategies for continuous improvement. (NCA, Criterion 2c) Finally, an assessment plan should provide for regular review of the assessment processes themselves. (NCA, Criteria 2c, 3a, 3c)

### 3. *Organizational Components:*

Most fundamentally, faculty must be involved with assessment - in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved (NCA Criterion 3a). Assessment must be embedded within UMKC's culture, operations and reporting at every level.-(NCA suggestions 37-40, 47) If assessment is to truly support improvement and excellence, organizational structures must provide appropriate data and feedback loops (NCA 2c). Thus, assessment processes and outcomes must be visibly linked to planning, budgeting, and program review. Assessment results must inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services (NCA Criterion 3c)

Despite the necessity for diffuse and pervasive responsibility for assessment, an assessment plan must also clearly identify an entity with overall responsibility for development and administrative support of the assessment system as a whole. (NCA Advice and Suggestions #41-42)

- **Faculty involvement with Assessment** - faculty are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved (NCA Criterion 3a)
- **Overall responsibility for development and administrative support of the assessment system** needs to be clearly defined. (NCA Advice and Suggestions #41-42)

### **B. What criteria are used to measure the quality of the assessment plan?**

In developing their recommendations for how to address the above concerns, ATF's deliberations were guided by the principles outlined in the Program Evaluations Standards shown in Appendix F. These standards were developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. The Joint Committee is accredited by the American National Standards Institute. For further information about the Committee see <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/> .

The major standard areas are:

*Utility* - The utility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.

**Feasibility** - *The feasibility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.*

**Propriety** - *The propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.*

**Accuracy** - *The accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated.*

Additional good institutional practices for assessment are provided in AAHE's and NASULGC's guidelines shown below.

AAHE offers the following principles of good practice to guide the development of institutional assessment programs:

- *The assessment of student learning begins with educational values*
- *Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.*
- *Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.*
- *Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.*
- *Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.*
- *Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.*
- *Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions people really care about.*
- *Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.*
- *Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.*

With respect to the measurement of student outcomes, the National Association of State University and Land Grant Colleges' (NASULGC) "Statement of Principles on Student Outcomes Assessment" state that programs should:

- *focus primarily on the effectiveness of academic programs and the improvement of student learning and performance;*
- *be developed in collaboration with the faculty;*
- *be appropriate to the particular mission and goals of the institution;*
- *use multiple methods of assessment;*
- *be fiscally conservative and not impose costly programs on institutions;*
- *be linked to strategic planning and program review processes within the institution.*

### C. Definition of Key Terms

One of the more difficult tasks of the ATF, was to determine what we meant when we were speaking of assessment. We developed the following working definitions to guide our discussions.

At UMKC, **evaluation** refers to inquiries into the functioning of programs and services. Program inputs, processes, and outcomes of all types may be objects of study in an evaluation. **Assessment** is inquiry designed to ascertain and improve levels of student learning. Both types of inquiry are undertaken at UMKC primarily to improve the **effectiveness** and **efficiency** of programs and services. However, results from these inquiries will also be used to communicate UMKC's performance to internal and external constituencies. The success of the University's performance is gauged by the extent to which it accomplishes its mission; this will be referred to as the level of **institutional effectiveness**. More explicit definitions of these terms are provided below. Additionally, a glossary of assessment related terms is provided in Appendix G.

**Assessment** is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.” (Angelo, T. A., AAHE Bulletin, November 1995, p. 7)

**Effectiveness** (results of operations) is how well an approach, a process, or a measure addresses its intended purpose. (Christopher Newport University web site [athttp://assessment.cnu.edu/about/plans/glossary.htm](http://assessment.cnu.edu/about/plans/glossary.htm))

**Efficiency** (methods of operations) is the expenditure of effort with which an institution carries out its responsibilities (Reider, 2001). (Christopher Newport University web site [athttp://assessment.cnu.edu/about/plans/glossary.htm](http://assessment.cnu.edu/about/plans/glossary.htm))

**Evaluation** is systematic, data-based inquiry into the effectiveness and/or efficiency of a program, service, or unit (college, department, institution). (Based on guiding principles for evaluators at American Evaluation Association web site at: <http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp> )

**Excellence** refers to high levels of achievement determined either through comparison to a performance standard (criterion-based) or by assessing performance relative to similar programs/institutions with comparable goals (normative-based). (UMKC ATF Workgroup)

**Institutional Effectiveness** is how well an institution succeeds in accomplishing its mission, and it is best determined by the accomplishment (or no accomplishment or accomplishment somewhat) of explicit objectives within a given time. An analysis of IE data measures (i.e., effectiveness, efficiency, and excellence) via outcomes

assessment allows identification of opportunities for improvement. (Christopher Newport University web site at <http://assessment.cnu.edu/about/plans/glossary.htm>)

#### **D. Institutional Models for Effective Assessment and Evaluation**

The ATF reviewed the assessment programs of many different colleges and universities. Of these, Iowa State University and Kansas State University provided models that appear to be the best fit for UMKC. Both universities have assessment systems that appear to be widely understood and implemented throughout the university and have the necessary flexibility and autonomy built in to accommodate diverse programs. The ATF carefully reviewed the website materials provided by these two institutions in developing its plan and suggests that the assessment plan build in opportunities for exchange of ideas between UMKC and these institutions to promote the growth of UMKC's assessment program.

### **VI. Recommended Approach for Assessment at UMKC**

To develop an effective assessment approach in keeping with the purposes and principles outlined above, ATF recommends a three-phased approach. The first stage focuses primarily on enhancing UMKC's capacity for developing, supporting, and disseminating practical and useful assessment approaches that faculty can use to improve learning in their academic programs. As assessment efforts mature, Phase II will begin and place greater emphasis on establishing the accuracy of assessment measures and re-examining assessment tools that are to be used at the school/college- and university-level. Phase III of the process, linking assessment with planning and resource allocation, should be approached with caution. Assessment processes must be sufficiently developed, tested, and trusted by the University community before they can become effectively linked with other processes. Premature attempts to use such measures for resource allocation purposes will likely compromise their usefulness for program improvement purposes. Below is a brief description of the phased approach and a suggested timeline for implementation.

**Phase I. Focus on strengthening the use of assessment and evaluation for program improvement purposes. Efforts should be directed toward identifying, building upon, and sharing effective assessment tools currently being used at UMKC at the class-, course-, and program-level. An Assessment Committee should be formed to encourage, support, and guide the growth of effective assessment practices. (Beginning Spring 2006)**

#### *Key Actions:*

- Discuss UMKC's Assessment Plan with the Provost and seek approval for the plan. (ATF Task Force)
- Form an Assessment Committee (AC) to oversee the development and integration of assessment into a university-wide assessment and evaluation

system. Membership in the AC should include a cross-section of faculty. To insure continuity and expertise, faculty should commit to a multi-year term on the AC.

- Work with the Program Evaluation Committee to integrate assessment with departments' program review in the following areas:
  - develop University guidelines for assessment and assist departments with the development of their student learning outcome statements and assessment strategies that are reported in their program review self-study; and
  - review departments' assessment plans to ensure that they meet the University's guidelines (AC)
- Develop an annual assessment report for UMKC that summarizes the results of key assessment measures collected centrally (NSSE, APT, MFAT) and includes summaries from the schools/colleges of their assessment results and highlights their uses of assessment for program improvement purposes. Periodically, this report should include an analysis of the effectiveness of UMKC's assessment and evaluation system. (AC)
- Create a web site for AC – display the assessment plan highlighting the purposes for doing assessment and UMKC's assessment philosophy, glossary of assessment terms, assessment resources (links to web sites, conferences, articles, successful practices at UMKC) (Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning Office - IRAP)
- Provide data sets and reports to support departmental self-study and assessment processes (IRAP, in consultation with PEC, AC, and the Data Integrity and Reporting Group)
- Develop ways to increase awareness of useful assessment techniques and models by:
  - Working with FaCET to organize workshops that feature effective assessment practices at UMKC;
  - Integrating assessment training with existing development opportunities such as new faculty orientation; and
- Develop ways to support faculty engagement in assessment scholarship by:
  - Providing incentives to support faculty with the development and implementation of more effective assessment practices at the classroom-, course-, or program-level;
  - Offering incentives to assist departments with the transition to more effective assessment techniques; and
  - Providing travel grants for faculty to attend assessment conferences.

## **Phase II. Retooling Collective Assessment Efforts at the School/College- and University-levels (Beginning Fall 2008)**

### ***Key Actions:***

- Examine the effectiveness of current assessment practices (Academic Profile, MAPP) in measuring and improving general education outcomes for

undergraduates. Recommend and implement any needed processes for improving general education assessment.

- Examine school/college-level structures for assessing and improving learning outcomes. Recommend and implement any needed processes for improving school/college-level assessment. Departmental-level measures might be aggregated to provide an overview of school/college performance.
- Examine university-level assessment processes. Recommend and implement any needed processes for university-level assessment. School/college-level measures might be aggregated to provide an overview of University performance.

### **Phase III. Strengthening Assessment and Evaluation Linkages with Planning and Resource Allocation (Beginning Fall 2009)**

#### ***Key Actions:***

- Develop a process for examining the extent to which UMKC's mission and strategic goals are being accomplished and how performance can be improved – perhaps through the establishment of key performance indicators and some related process measures. (AC & PEC)
- AC, PEC, and the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) should develop linkages among planning, assessment, and evaluation. The linkages should provide incentives for focusing activities on university priorities and for improving the quality of programs and services.

# **Appendices for the UMKC Assessment Plan**

**Developed by**

**UMKC's Assessment Task Force**

**April 2006**

## APPENDIX A Assessment Task Force Membership

Rick Axelson	Co-Chair; Asst Vice Provost Acad Affairs
Linda Breyspraak	Co-Chair, Assoc Prof Sociology
Louise Arnold	Assoc Dean Medicine
Barbara Glesner-Fines	Prof Law
Steve Krantz	Assoc Prof Nursing
Steve LaNasa	Assoc Dean & Asst Prof Education
Peggy Mullally-Quijas	Lib II - Asst Dir Health Sciences Library
Deb O'Bannon	Assoc Prof SCE
Pam Overman	Assoc Dean & Assoc Prof Dentistry
Max Skidmore	Curator's Prof Political Science
Karen Vorst	Interim Dean & Prof A&S
Jakob Waterborg	Faculty Senate Rep, Assoc Prof SBS
David Wieliczka	Prof Physics
STAFF	
Russ Wilson	Research Assoc A&S
Natalie Alleman	Research Analyst
Debbie Jarvis-Ferguson	Assessment Coordinator & Committee Staff

## APPENDIX B

### Timeline of Assessment and Evaluation Events at UMKC

#### **A. Student Learning Outcomes and Academic Program Quality Emphasis (1987-2000)**

**1987 – Council on Program Evaluation (COPE) Reviews – UM System Executive Guidelines** issued for five-year reviews of all existing academic programs.

**1987 – Developed an Undergraduate Assessment Plan.** In response to the UM-Board of Curators guidelines, UMKC developed a plan to assess the general education outcomes (including writing skills) and major field outcomes for students in undergraduate programs. Annual reports were written to synthesize these findings with survey data (alumni, graduates, and enrolled students), COPE Reviews, and Accreditation reports.

**1988 - Began Implementation of the Undergraduate Assessment Plan**

**1994 –Graduate and Professional Programs are added to the UMKC Assessment Plan**

**1997-99: NCA Higher Learning Commission Self-Study & Reaccreditation Visit**

- UMKC special emphases on interdisciplinarity, assessment, and new partnerships
- NCA congratulated UMKC on its extensive work, data collection, and strong foundation for assessment efforts
- NCA observed the need to make UMKC’s assessment more systematic and noted that linkages among planning, budgeting, assessment, and program review needed to be strengthened
- Taskforce on Assessment Databases formed – charged with developing a specific plan for improving awareness, use, availability and validity of current assessment databases.

#### **B. Strategic Planning and Budgeting Focus (2000-03)**

**2000: Council on Program Evaluation (COPE) – Develops suggested guidelines for Strategic Planning**

- Develop a “Vision Statement” for academic unit’s faculty and administration
- State the unit’s mission and describe the relation to the University of Missouri’s strategic directions. Relate the mission to the general mission of UMKC
- State the unit’s goals for the next five years
- Propose a budget for the plan

**2000-02: Our Emerging Future** – focus on institutional mission, strategic goals, and key performance indicators to monitor progress

**2000-02: Budgeting for Excellence** - framework for new budgeting process developed

**2002-03: Resources to Fuel our Vision Committee (RFVC) was formed** and did the following:

- Conducted viability audits of academic programs
- Identified programs for elimination
- Made recommendations regarding ways to strengthen some programs
- Identified data integrity problems that hampered viability studies and provided a Data Integrity Plan to resolve these issues
- Outlined a set of data elements to be produced and discussed annually to support discussions about effectiveness
- RFVC disbanded in June 2004

### **C. Toward a Comprehensive Assessment System focused on Continuous Quality Improvement (2003-Present)**

**2003-05: UMKC's Communication and English Departments participate in UM System's Academic Audit pilot-test**

**January 2003: Budget Advisory Committee** - charged with developing a budget process that is open and encourages input from faculty, staff, administrator and students.

**2004: Program Evaluation Committee (PEC) formed** – charged with developing a new program evaluation process for UMKC

**August 2005 – Focus Commissions formed** to provide UMKC with direction regarding its three fundamental mission areas

- The Life and Health Sciences Commission
- The Urban Mission Commission
- The Visual and Performing Arts Commission

**November 2005 – PEC approves new program review process** for pilot-testing with a small number of academic departments

**November 2005 – Assessment Task Force (ATF) formed** – charged with developing a plan for a comprehensive assessment and evaluation system

**December 2005 – Data Reporting and Integrity Group to be formed** – charged with identifying and providing needed data sets and reports at regularly scheduled intervals. The Group is also charged with identifying and resolving any data integrity issues.

## APPENDIX C

### Excerpts from NCA Evaluation Team Report, 1999

The following excerpts list the NCA's advice and suggestions mentioned on pages 2-3.

36. The University should articulate an institutional policy statement on assessment, including definitions of assessment and student outcomes assessment, an overall philosophy of assessment, and expectations of departments, schools, colleges, and the University.
37. The University's leadership must demonstrate a strong commitment to assessment, and provide a clear sense of direction for implementing a comprehensive program.
38. The University should integrate assessment with program review, strategic planning, and budget processes. COPE inputs should include student assessment data. Until such time as program reviews, assessment of student learning, strategic planning, and budget processes become inextricably linked, complementary processes, opportunities for qualitative improvements will be lost.
39. The University's leadership should emphasize assessment not as a requirement to be met but as an integral part of an institutional culture of continuous improvement. In support of this, the institution could: increase communication about assessment processes and their results, promoting a "culture of assessment" and demonstrating gains to departments, colleges, and the institution; provide faculty development opportunities to enhance the faculty's skills and contributions to a "culture of assessment," and help students to understand the purposes and values of assessment.
40. Annual reports on assessment should be expanded to include a standard reporting format such as a rubric presenting a statement of the desired outcomes, how the outcomes can be achieved, measure(s) to be used, results of the measurements, and, most importantly, the use of results in effecting programmatic change for improvement in student learning. There should be more analysis and interpretation of data in regular assessment reports and data should be reported at the department or unit level when possible. There should be a mandated response by deans or others to each annual report. The responses should be prepared or endorsed by the unit's own assessment group. There should be consequences to and rewards for the results and there should be procedures for implementation of recommendations based on assessment results.

41. The University should replace the current committees with a strengthened steering committee for assessment, reporting to the Executive Vice Provost or equivalent position. The ongoing working group (task force) should oversee, coordinate, and assist with the faculty's development and implementation of assessment plans and the necessary cultural changes to create an effective ethos of assessment. Faculty working groups could also help change the culture.
42. The University should clarify and/or redefine the role of Director of Assessment and the relationship of this position to those of the new Director of Institutional Research and Chief Information Officer and to Student Affairs research. One person should be clearly accountable for the oversight of the overall assessment program.
43. In undergraduate assessment, the University should seek ways to combine the standardized examinations with other measures, using multiple measures to more appropriately assess the outcomes of UMKC programs.
44. For general education, the University should investigate alternatives for the meaningful assessment of outcomes. In this realm, ways need to be found through student governance or other means to help students understand the importance of assessment and to encourage them to participate meaningfully.
45. In the High School/College Program, the University should continue and expand the follow-up of students as they enroll in college programs at UMKC and other institutions.
46. The University should ensure that assessment activities in all off-campus and distance education programs are equivalent to those for on-campus students.
47. In all areas of assessment, the University should investigate ways to provide more information to key units and stakeholders. For example, faculty members who have been meritoriously noted in the Senior Survey currently do not, according to information provided the sub-team, receive notification, recognition or reward.

***Comments 48-50 were made about Graduate and Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Programs***

48. We did not find appropriate measures in place to assess the academic achievement of students. We suggest that attention be paid to this problem as a high priority. It is important to identify how data will be used and by whom before further collection and analysis are done. The existing graduate survey can be used as a base but must be analyzed consistently and results used to implement changes in the program.

However, insufficient data is now being collected about the academic outcomes for these students so that we cannot judge how successful the group is as a whole. An annual report from the graduate college could document academic achievements and note how they relate to the interdisciplinary mission. Data collection should be focused on items that could result in program improvement.

49. There does not appear to be any systematic study done of alumni of the graduate programs. This would help to establish the academic outcomes for the graduates.
50. It would help to identify and evaluate some common measures that are specific to the interdisciplinary program but distinct from the more traditional graduate education. These could be used to support the University's aspiration to become a national model for interdisciplinary graduate education. The list of departments is lengthy and these may be combined in a large number of combinations to tailor a research program to the student's interests. This is a weakness as well as a strength because there are no standard guidelines that can be used for normative evaluation of a program designed for only one student.

***Comments 56-57 were made about Professional Colleges***

56. It would be helpful to the professional schools to synchronize the professional accreditation reviews with the internal COPE process. However, the COPE cycle is every five years and the other processes are at longer intervals. To the extent possible, it would be sensible to align the two processes in both content and temporal sequencing.
57. Some academic course work is provided to the professional schools by other colleges or schools within the University. Thus, assessment data are collected at one place in the University but the concerns may only be addressed by a response from another unit across college or unit boundaries. This problem has been resolved in medicine by the return of some teaching lines to them. However, it remains an issue in the College of Dentistry where the Part One board scores are low but much of the basic teaching is provided by the School of Biological Sciences. The University needs to establish or strengthen mechanisms for appropriate responses across college lines, especially when there is a budgetary impact to the providing unit.

## APPENDIX D

### Excerpts from the Missouri Assessment Consortium Handbook

#### ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT

Assessment as a process is used to promote both accountability and improvement. The relationship between these two purposes is not always clear; some believe the purposes are quite distinct or contradictory while others suggest they should be seen as interdependent.

Assessment that leads to accountability usually takes the form of reporting the results of student and institutional performance on a set of agreed-upon measures, e.g., standardized test scores, freshmen completion rates, or graduation rates to boards and state legislatures. These reports provide a basis for evaluating the adequacy of knowledge and skills possessed by students, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions.

In contrast assessment for improvement involves using the results of assessment to make changes in programs, e.g., curricular development, course requirements, counseling strategies, or co-curricular activities. Feedback from assessment results are used by faculty, staff and administrators to identify areas in need of improvement, develop new initiatives and monitor the impact of proposed reforms.

It is often challenging to combine the goals of both accountability and improvement into an institution's assessment program. A major challenge for assessment programs is the creation of meaningful measures, appropriate benchmarks utilizing comparison groups, and target goals that can be monitored in a regular and systemic way.

Assessment for accountability is deficient if campuses choose measurements haphazardly simply to please policymakers and if the information gathered is not used for self-evaluation. Accountability in a vacuum may create the image of "looking good" to external constituencies, but has limited utility. Self-evaluation, grounded in evidence, should be a minimum expectation of students, parents, employers, and state taxpayers.

How accountable are institutions, which are not committed to continuous quality improvement? On the other hand, if improvements result from assessment practices, but cannot be used to demonstrate accountability, the significance of improvements will be questioned.

#### **PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT** – From Missouri Assessment Consortium Handbook

##### **A. STUDENT SELF ASSESSMENT**

**Assessment** efforts provide an important opportunity for encouraging students to reflect on their progress toward knowledge, skills, and attitudes objectives. These opportunities exist at the university, program, and individual faculty level. The university can request self-assessment in numerous ways.

Surveys can include questions asking students to evaluate their learning, ranging from knowledge of specific subject matter, to the values of citizenship, to the level of library skill. Symbolically, surveys also convey messages to students about the types of learning the university considers important. In the process of structuring self-assessment programs, the university or its programs can ascertain self-reports of student attitudes, student maturity, and student learning successes. For example, students might be asked to submit cover letters to portfolio collections describing their best learning experiences at the university or evaluating their educational growth as represented in their portfolio entries. Students might be asked to analyze their personal strengths

and weaknesses in student interviews. Writing assessments might include a process for students to analyze their writing habits as well as their writing results.

Within the classroom, faculty can use numerous strategies to get students to reflect on their papers, projects, and other assignments. The faculty member might have students use a criteria sheet to evaluate their own papers just prior to the faculty member returning the criteria-based grade to each student. Another self-assessment project with tremendous potential to provide insight for program assessment as well as individual student assessment is a seven day time-log project. Students can analyze their time spent studying, socializing, attending school events, participating in extra-curricular activities, and working on and off campus. As reflective skills are claimed to be an essential leadership and life skill, more attention should be given to structuring opportunities for students to engage in this type of thinking. Assessment initiatives provide us with an ideal opportunity to do so.

- Contributed by Pat Van Dyke

## **B. CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT**

The purpose most campuses identify as the ideal type of assessment is assessment for improvement. To begin the campus identifies the goals it has agreed upon for student learning. Just having a relative consensus on goals gives many faculty a clearer sense of purpose. For many institutions, this phase of assessment is the most dramatic in bringing about changes in the classroom and in the curriculum. University communities frequently feel uncertainty regarding the university's mission. Even if nothing else were to come from assessment, having a more precise view of the university's purpose would be a significant improvement.

As faculty implement methods for assessing student learning and begin to analyze the patterns of evidence relative to student learning goals, a recursive process of goal identification, assessment, and program development can occur. Similarly, faculty who interact with the data frequently find themselves continually adapting program curricula and classroom techniques. The more faculty are directly involved in the development of assessment and the analysis of assessment data, the more dynamic these recursive processes of continuous improvement are likely to be.

When using multiple assessment measures, evidence from many perspectives and values can be examined to identify points of convergence. When quantitative and qualitative evidence converge, momentum for change accelerates. Standardized tests provide information about student performance relative to local objectives and skill levels in such areas as writing, speaking, synthesis, and critical thinking. Examining student performance relative to national standards can be very helpful in identifying program strengths and weaknesses and may be one of the best ways to shock the university community out of its complacency. Instead of assuming that its quality is self-evident, faculty and staff might conclude that its programs could be improved.

Once a data baseline is established, changes in program can be evaluated based on trends apparent in the data collected. The administration can significantly assist campus use of assessment for improvement by emphasizing the importance of using the evidence to identify difficult questions regarding university performance. To be successful there must be a foundation of trust between faculty and administration. Faculty need to be supported in efforts to improve the quality of education on the campus and need to be reassured that assessment results will not be used punitively. Faculty are unlikely to identify weaknesses if there isn't trust in higher administration along with support for suggested efforts to improve.

- Contributed by Candy Young

## **C. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability is a concept that tends to be received by faculty with tremendous skepticism. For years educators have relied on faculty credentials, student GPA and credit hour measures, and anecdotal success stories to support their claims of quality. However, budget pressures, grade inflation, rising costs of tuition, and governmental efforts to evaluate program effectiveness (that began in the 1960s and escalated as budget constraints escalated) have all contributed to increased calls for accountability. The factors mentioned above as contributors to public calls for proof of educational effectiveness are not likely to diminish in the near future. Furthermore, the pressures for producing a well-educated work force in order to compete in a global economy continue to increase.

The United States has provided access to higher education at a level far beyond our economic rivals, yet the evidence of students' knowledge and skills achievements seems to lag far behind what U.S. businesses need especially in areas of communication, foreign languages, mathematics, and technology. While GPAs have escalated, student knowledge and skills seem inadequate.

Assessment on the one hand might be a way to demonstrate that students really do possess knowledge and skills. However, the data is likely to identify areas in need of improvement. To gain additional resources from the increasingly burdened public, higher education must improve its evidence of a job well done. As the rest of the public sector seeks methods of performance measurement, higher education cannot expect to be exempt from the expectation.

Another type of accountability is framed in the context of total quality management (TQM) wherein organizations are asked to address quality issues from the perspectives of its customers." In higher education, we have many. Society, taxpayers, parents, students, and employers come to mind immediately as consumers of higher education. However, faculty are also consumers of colleague's courses and graduate schools and professional/academic discipline associations are customers of our students. If higher education can't satisfy these entities, criticism of the educational enterprise will only grow stronger.

- Contributed by Candy Young

## **D. PLACEMENT & DIAGNOSIS**

In its broadest sense, "diagnosis" refers to the systematic and reasoned interpretation of a result or a cluster of results that leads to a particular statement of cause. In this context, diagnosis refers to the meaningful association of a test score with a local education experience. In other words, after careful study the institution has determined that students earning a score below a given point will not be successful in a particular course or pattern of courses without institutional intervention and individual scheduling decisions. To prepare for the individual diagnosis, then, an institution should have completed a self-assessment of its curricular experiences and the backgrounds of students who are/are not successful in them. Initially, the institution may administer a placement test or look to a particular element in the student's academic record (e.g. ACT scores or high school background) and study the relationship between those elements and academic success in specific courses. When the institution has defined what goals its students need to meet and what information seems to indicate the presence of the ability to achieve those goals, it can establish "cut scores" for placement in enrichment or remedial/developmental sections. In cases where more discriminating assessment is required (learning disabilities or other special cases), the institution may work with professionals in departments of psychology or licensed professionals in external agencies in order to develop an individual educational plan.

- Contributed by Pat Van Dyke

## E. ESTABLISHMENT OF MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

One of the most rewarding of the early stages of assessment is the process of establishing minimum competencies for entry-level experiences. Out of the dialog and holistic training come strengthened departmental and institutional perceptions about the skills and the sequencing of material that helps to develop increasing competence in the students. Variations in grading standards often diminish because the faculty have articulated their basic assumptions and affirmed their commitment to intentional development of basic skills; they have collaboratively declared their standards, and, with periodic reinforcement, maintain more commonality in assessing student performance than they had before commonality in assessing student performance than they had before attempting to establish minimum competencies.

One approach to establishing minimum competencies is readily accessible to the department or institution. The department seeking to establish minimum competencies for placement into a course might study the entering performances of students who were agreed to be successful in the course for which the entry level is being established. By establishing those competencies which were present at entry in the successful students, the department would be able to describe those competencies which were basic to success in the course. The minimum competencies, then, would reflect specifically what the professional faculty recognized as competencies expected in all students in a particular course or activity.

A more complex process might deal with minimum competencies after a student has taken a course or series of courses. This establishment of competencies oftentimes touches on elements of program review and curricular responsibility for the achievement of maintenance of acquired skills. As a consequence, the process of establishing minimum exit competencies can become a hot issue, detracting from the central concern of a clear articulation of those skills felt to be essential for a college education person. Moving the debate to the level of student learning, systematic reinforcement of that learning, and appropriate student demonstrations of it is a labor-intensive task. Some institutions have had very good results by stating their minimum competencies at placement, after the initial course, and at exit and matching the students' development of competencies with course experiences and specific tasks in a comprehensive assessment program, this, in effect, is a longitudinal audit of student experiences and competencies and can provide a larger picture of what the institution is addressing across the curriculum.

It should be noted that one of the chief dangers of establishing a minimum competency approach at any level--placement, after the initial course, and at exit--is that students may not feel sufficiently pressed to go beyond the minimum standards. An institution setting off to establish and publish minimum competencies as a basis for "passing someone through" or "waiving a requirement" should, at the same time, establish, publish, and strive for extraordinary results from those who easily meet the minimum standards. - Contributed by Pat Van Dyke

## MAC's PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSMENT BY MISSOURI'S PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

*...Assessment must be fully integrated into the entire campus environment--including academic administration, student affairs, and support services--and linked meaningfully with institutional planning processes and the allocation of resources.*

*An institution should have flexibility in selecting the assessment procedures that, in the professional judgment of the faculty, administration, and staff, are*

*consistent with the institution's specific mission, the students being assessed, and the purposes for the assessment.*

*Assessment should be based on multiple measures appropriate to the institution using them. 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.*

*Each institution shall assume responsibility for ensuring that it conducts assessment, analyzes and interprets the data collected, and disseminates the results in a professional and ethical manner.*

*Given the refinement of missions and the recognition of the need for multiple means of assessment, comparisons among public institutions should be based on multiple measures. The institutions collectively with the support of the CBHE, will work to help the public understand the complexities involved in assessing students given the mix of traditional, non-traditional, and transfer students of varying interest, backgrounds, and abilities served by higher education in Missouri.*

## APPENDIX E

### Excerpts from the Handbook of Accreditation, Third Edition, The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, Oct 1, 2003.

#### Criterion Two Preparing for the Future

Criterion Statement: **The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.**

##### Core Component - 2a

**The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.**

###### Examples of Evidence

- *The organization's planning documents reflect a sound understanding of the organization's current capacity.*
  - *The organization's planning documents demonstrate that attention is being paid to emerging factors such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.*
  - *The organization's planning documents show careful attention to the organization's function in a multicultural society.*
  - *The organization's planning processes include effective environmental scanning.*
  - *The organizational environment is supportive of innovation and change.*
  - *The organization incorporates in its planning those aspects of its history and heritage that it wishes to preserve and continue.*
  - *The organization clearly identifies authority for decision making about organizational goals.*

##### Core Component - 2b

**The organization's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.**

###### Examples of Evidence

- *The organization's resources are adequate for achievement of the educational quality it claims to provide.*
- *Plans for resource development and allocation document an organizational commitment to supporting and strengthening the quality of the education it provides.*
- *The organization uses its human resources effectively.*
- *The organization intentionally develops its human resources to meet future changes.*
- *The organization's history of financial resource development and investment documents a forward-looking concern for ensuring educational quality (e.g., investments in faculty development, technology, learning support services, new or renovated facilities).*
- *The organization's planning processes are flexible enough to respond to unanticipated needs for program reallocation, downsizing, or growth.*
- *The organization has a history of achieving its planning goals.*

##### Core Component - 2c

**The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.**

###### Examples of Evidence

- *The organization demonstrates that its evaluation processes provide evidence that its performance meets its stated expectations for institutional effectiveness.*
- *The organization maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using organizational information.*
- *Appropriate data and feedback loops are available and used throughout the organization to support continuous improvement.*
- *Periodic reviews of academic and administrative subunits contribute to improvement of the organization.*
- *The organization provides adequate support for its evaluation and assessment processes.*

##### Core Component - 2d

**All levels of planning align with the organization's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.**

###### Examples of Evidence

- *Coordinated planning processes center on the mission documents that define vision, values, goals, and strategic priorities for the organization.*
- *Planning processes link with budgeting processes.*
- *Implementation of the organization's planning is evident in its operations.*
- *Long-range strategic planning processes allow for reprioritization of goals when necessary because of changing environments.*
- *Planning documents give evidence of the organization's awareness of the relationships among educational quality, student learning, and the diverse, complex, global, and technological world in which the organization and its students exist.*
- *Planning processes involve internal constituents and, where appropriate, external constituents.*

## Criterion Three Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Criterion Statement: **The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.**

### Core Component - 3a

**The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.**

*Examples of Evidence*

- The organization clearly differentiates its learning goals for undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate programs by identifying the expected learning outcomes for each.
- Assessment of student learning provides evidence at multiple levels: course, program, and institutional.
- Assessment of student learning includes multiple direct and indirect measures of student learning.
- Results obtained through assessment of student learning are available to appropriate constituencies, including students themselves.
- The organization integrates into its assessment of student learning the data reported for purposes of external accountability (e.g., graduation rates, passage rates on licensing exams, placement rates, transfer rates).
- The organization's assessment of student learning extends to all educational offerings, including credit and noncredit certificate programs.
- Faculty are involved in defining expected student learning outcomes and creating the strategies to determine whether those outcomes are achieved.
- Faculty and administrators routinely review the effectiveness and uses of the organization's program to assess student learning.

### Core Component - 3b

**The organization values and supports effective teaching.**

*Examples of Evidence*

- Qualified faculty determine curricular content and strategies for instruction.
- The organization supports professional development designed to facilitate teaching suited to varied learning environments.
- The organization evaluates teaching and recognizes effective teaching.
- The organization provides services to support improved pedagogies.
- The organization demonstrates openness to innovative practices that enhance learning.
- The organization supports faculty in keeping abreast of the research on teaching and learning, and of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction.
- Faculty members actively participate in professional organizations relevant to the disciplines they teach.

### Core Component - 3c

**The organization creates effective learning environments.**

*Examples of Evidence*

- Assessment results inform improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, instructional resources, and student services.
- The organization provides an environment that supports all learners and respects the diversity they bring.
- Advising systems focus on student learning, including the mastery of skills required for academic success.
- Student development programs support learning throughout the student's experience regardless of the location of the student.
- The organization employs, when appropriate, new technologies that enhance effective learning environments for students.
- The organization's systems of quality assurance include regular review of whether its educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning.

### Core Component - 3d

**The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.**

*Examples of Evidence*

- The organization ensures access to the resources (e.g., research laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites) necessary to support learning and teaching.
- The organization evaluates the use of its learning resources to enhance student learning and effective teaching.
- The organization regularly assesses the effectiveness of its learning resources to support learning and teaching.
- The organization supports students, staff, and faculty in using technology effectively.
- The organization provides effective staffing and support for its learning resources.
- The organization's systems and structures enable partnerships and innovations that enhance student learning and strengthen teaching effectiveness.
- Budgeting priorities reflect that improvement in teaching and learning is a core value of the organization.

## APPENDIX F

### ***THE PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARDS***

#### **Summary of the Standards**

##### **Utility Standards**

The utility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.

**U1 Stakeholder Identification** Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified, so that their needs can be addressed.

**U2 Evaluator Credibility** The persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that the evaluation findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.

**U3 Information Scope and Selection** Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the program and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders

**U4 Values Identification** The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described, so that the bases for value judgments are clear.

**U5 Report Clarity** Evaluation reports should clearly describe the program being evaluated, including its context, and the purposes, procedures, and findings of the evaluation, so that essential information is provided and easily understood.

**U6 Report Timeliness and Dissemination** Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users, so that they can be used in a timely fashion.

**U7 Evaluation Impact** Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders, so that the likelihood that the evaluation will be used is increased.

##### **Feasibility Standards**

The feasibility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal..

**F1 Practical Procedures** The evaluation procedures should be practical, to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained.

**F2 Political Viability** The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups, so that their cooperation may be obtained, and so that possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted.

**F3 Cost Effectiveness** The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value, so that the resources expended can be justified

## Propriety Standards

The propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

**P1 Service Orientation** Evaluations should be designed to assist organizations to address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of targeted participants.

**P2 Formal Agreements** Obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, when) should be agreed to in writing, so that these parties are obligated to adhere to all conditions of the agreement or formally to renegotiate it.

**P3 Rights of Human Subjects** Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.

**P4 Human Interactions** Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation, so that participants are not threatened or harmed.

**P5 Complete and Fair Assessment** The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of strengths and weaknesses of the program being evaluated, so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

**P6 Disclosure of Findings** The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.

**P7 Conflict of Interest** Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly, so that it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.

**P8 Fiscal Responsibility** The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible, so that expenditures are accounted for and appropriate

## Accuracy Standards

The accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated.

**A1 Program Documentation** The program being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately, so that the program is clearly identified.

**A2 Context Analysis** The context in which the program exists should be examined in enough detail, so that its likely influences on the program can be identified.

**A3 Described Purposes and Procedures** The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail, so that they can be identified and assessed.

**A4 Defensible Information Sources** The sources of information used in a program evaluation should be described in enough detail, so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed.

**A5 Valid Information** The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the interpretation arrived at is valid for the intended use.

**A6 Reliable Information** The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.

**A7 Systematic Information** The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed, and any errors found should be corrected.

**A8 Analysis of Quantitative Information** Quantitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

**A9 Analysis of Qualitative Information** Qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

**A10 Justified Conclusions** The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified, so that stakeholders can assess them.

**A11 Impartial Reporting** Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation, so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.

**A12 Metaevaluation** The evaluation itself should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these and other pertinent standards, so that its conduct is appropriately guided and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.

# APPENDIX G

## Assessment Glossary

### BEYOND CONFUSION: AN ASSESSMENT GLOSSARY

By Andrea Leskes, vice president for education and quality initiatives, AAC&U

The articles and commentaries in this edition of Peer Review raise important issues for all college educators. Part of our professional responsibilities involves knowing if, what, and how well students learn what is being taught. Ideally, assessment would be a regular, inherent, and transparent part of all teaching and learning.

College professors regularly employ with comfort some types of assessment; they rightly point this out when challenged, explaining how they always evaluate student learning, using tests or homework assignments to do so. Assessment of this sort normally occurs within the confines of individual courses and can provide important information to both the student and the professor. However, higher education has less of a history of examining accomplishments that build cumulatively, over time, throughout a student's entire undergraduate career. Yet we acknowledge that many of the goals of college education are exactly these accomplishments (e.g., effective communication, ethical judgement, analytical acuity). These, too, are the complex accomplishments that the previous articles address.

Higher education lacks a common vocabulary about assessment; and individuals use terms in mutating ways to refer to varying levels of analysis. Some interpretations imply external oversight or control, an unpleasant idea for most college faculty. Miscommunication and mistrust result from this confused language and are likely to interfere with developing the kind of useful value added assessment proposed by Benjamin, Hersh, and Klein.

To shine a light, as Marc Chun so eloquently puts it, in the darkness and "where we should be looking," this "reality check" attempts to provide such a common vocabulary for the concepts used or implied in the preceding articles. Herewith, a glossary of educational assessment terms, within the college context and focusing on student learning.

#### Value Added

The increase in learning that occurs during a course, program, or undergraduate education. Can either focus on the individual student (how much better a student can write, for example, at the end than at the beginning) or on a cohort of students (whether senior papers demonstrate more sophisticated writing skills-in the aggregate-than freshmen papers). Requires a baseline measurement for comparison.

#### Standards

Sets a level of accomplishment all students are expected to meet or exceed. Standards do not necessarily imply high quality learning; sometimes the level is a lowest common denominator. Nor do they imply complete standardization in a program; a common minimum level could be achieved by multiple pathways and demonstrated in various ways. Examples: carrying on a conversation about daily activities in a foreign language using correct grammar and comprehensible pronunciation; achieving a certain score on a standardized test.

#### 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. Example: reading

the first lab reports of a class to assess whether some or all students in the group need a lesson on how to make them succinct and informative.

### Summative Assessment

The gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. When used for improvement, impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program. Examples: examining student final exams in a course to see if certain specific areas of the curriculum were understood less well than others; analyzing senior projects for the ability to integrate across disciplines.

#### Assessment for Accountability:

Assessment of some unit (could be a department, program or entire institution) to satisfy stakeholders external to the unit itself. Results are often compared across units. Always summative. Example: to retain state approval, the achievement of a 90 percent pass rate or better on teacher certification tests by graduates of a school of education.

#### Assessment for Improvement:

Assessment that feeds directly, and often immediately, back into revising the course, program or institution to improve student learning results. Can be formative or summative (see "formative assessment" for an example).

### Qualitative Assessment

Collects data that does not lend itself to quantitative methods but rather to interpretive criteria (see the first example under "standards").

### Quantitative Assessment

Collects data that can be analyzed using quantitative methods (see "assessment for accountability" for an example).

#### Direct Assessment of Learning:

Gathers evidence, based on student performance, which demonstrates the learning itself. Can be value added, related to standards, qualitative or quantitative, embedded or not, using local or external criteria. Examples: most classroom testing for grades is direct assessment (in this instance within the confines of a course), as is the evaluation of a research paper in terms of the discriminating use of sources. The latter example could assess learning accomplished within a single course or, if part of a senior requirement, could also assess cumulative learning.

#### Indirect Assessment of Learning

Gathers reflection about the learning or secondary evidence of its existence. Example: a student survey about whether a course or program helped develop a greater sensitivity to issues of diversity.

### Assessment of Individuals

Uses the individual student, and his/her learning, as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value added, and used for

improvement. Would need to be aggregated if used for accountability purposes. Examples: improvement in student knowledge of a subject during a single course; improved ability of a student to build cogent arguments over the course of an undergraduate career.

#### Assessment of Programs

Uses the department or program as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value added, and used for improvement or for accountability. Ideally program goals and objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment. Example: how sophisticated a close reading of texts senior English majors can accomplish (if used to determine value added, would be compared to the ability of newly declared majors).

#### Assessment of Institutions

Uses the institution as the level of analysis. Can be quantitative or qualitative, formative or summative, standards-based or value added, and used for improvement or for accountability. Ideally institution-wide goals and objectives would serve as a basis for the assessment. Example: how well students across the institution can work in multi-cultural teams as sophomores and seniors.

#### Embedded Assessment

A means of gathering information about student learning that is built into and a natural part of the teaching-learning process. Often uses for assessment purposes classroom assignments that are evaluated to assign students a grade. Can assess individual student performance or aggregate the information to provide information about the course or program; can be formative or summative, quantitative or qualitative. Example: as part of a course, expecting each senior to complete a research paper that is graded for content and style, but is also assessed for advanced ability to locate and evaluate Web-based information (as part of a college-wide outcome to demonstrate information literacy).

#### Local Assessment

Means and methods that are developed by an institution's faculty based on their teaching approaches, students, and learning goals. Can fall into any of the definitions here except "external assessment," for which is it an antonym. Example: one college's use of nursing students' writing about the "universal precautions" at multiple points in their undergraduate program as an assessment of the development of writing competence.

#### External Assessment

Use of criteria (rubric) or an instrument developed by an individual or organization external to the one being assessed. Usually summative, quantitative, and often high-stakes (see below). Example: GRE exams.