

# UMKC Assessment Plan

Developed by

The Assessment Task Force

# April 2006

## Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary.....	2
II. Overview and Development of the Assessment Plan.....	3
III. Evolution and Analysis of Current Assessment Practices at UMKC.....	3-11
A. Brief History of UMKC’s Assessment Practices	
B. Current University Bodies Involved in Assessment	
C. Current Assessment Practices	
IV. Purposes and Philosophy of Assessment at UMKC.....	12
V. Assessment System Design Considerations.....	12-16
A. Coverage – What elements need to be included?	
B. Principles of Effective Program Assessment and Evaluation in Institutions of Higher Education	
C. Definitions of Key Terms	
D. Institutional Models for Effective Assessment and Evaluation	

- Kansas State University
- Iowa State University

## VI. Recommended Approach for Assessment at UMKC.....16-18

### 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.

## 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 at <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 at <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.

---

[1] 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.