Mapping a Better Course for the Curriculum

Spring greetings to all of you! As announced to the Assessment Coordinators this past month, we are asking that faculty develop a curriculum map for each degree by October 1st. This effort is in conjunction with the development of “Major Maps” that help students and advisors chart a path to graduation.

In the article below is an overview of curriculum mapping and a list of instructions, indicating that there is an Excel file template that you can use to make your curriculum map. This template should be uploaded to the Document Management section in WEAVE by October 1st, 2013, and we also encourage you to post your learning outcomes on your departmental website.

Curriculum mapping is a method to align instruction with a degree’s learning outcomes. The map or matrix:
- Documents the content taught and when it is taught
- Reveals gaps in the curriculum
- Helps to refine the assessment plan

A curriculum map is beneficial because it:
- Improves communication among faculty
- Enhances program coherence
- Encourages a proactive approach to improving learning outcomes
- Supports the updated “major maps” that will be developed for each degree
- Encourages reflective practice

Here are the four steps for creating a curriculum map:

1. Faculty members begin with a) the program’s intended student learning outcomes, b) recommended and required courses (including General Education courses if appropriate) and c) other required events/experiences (e.g., internships, department symposium, advising session, national licensure exams).

2. Create the "map" in the form of a table (see the attached Curriculum Mapping Template).

Please note that the format of the curriculum map can vary by discipline/field, and that departments that already have a curriculum map for their learning outcomes do not need to develop a new curriculum map (unless their curriculum or learning outcomes listed in WEAVE have changed). Curriculum maps can focus on accreditation standards, and can also incorporate aspects of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

3. Mark the courses and events/experiences that currently address those outcomes:
- "I" indicates that students are introduced to the outcome
- "D" indicates the outcome is developed/reinforced and students are given opportunities to practice
- "M" indicates that students have sufficiently practiced and can demonstrate mastery
- "A" indicates where evidence might be collected and evaluated for degree-level assessment (collection might occur at the beginning and end of the program if comparisons across years are desired)

4. Faculty members analyze the curriculum map. They discuss and revise so that each outcome is introduced, developed, and then mastered. In addition, each outcome should have an "A" to indicate that evidence can be collected for degree-level assessment.

Continued on Page 5

[Curriculum mapping outline modified from University of Hawaii-Manoa]:
http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/mapping.htm
A+ Assessment in Academic Support and Mentoring

Academic Support and Mentoring (ASM), a department of the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM), supports students through various academic programs and initiatives, each with its own assessment goals. Supplemental Instruction (SI) is the flagship program of ASM. SI is an academic support program that utilizes a peer-assisted study model to target historically difficult courses in order to enhance student learning, bolster retention, and improve student graduation rates.

The overall goal of assessment in SI is to demonstrate that students benefit from learning study strategies they can use in their SI supported class(es) and generalize to other classes, as well. We want to help them succeed by earning better grades and matriculating into higher level courses. 2012 data revealed that chemistry students that participated in SI enrolled in the next sequential course at a rate two and a half times higher than those who did not participate in SI. The same results were found in history in 2011. It was also noted that, overall, students that attended SI received a half letter grade higher, than those who did not; they also earned D’s, F’s and withdrew from their courses at a rate 13% lower than their counterparts. In 2013, we hope to assess students’ ability to articulate the study strategies they gain from attending MaST.

The Coaching Program is designed to provide students with the skills necessary for their journey at UMKC by assisting them in becoming engaged with the university community and promoting life-long learning through critical thinking and social awareness. 2012 data indicated that students in the Coaching Program were helped with study skills, life skills, and academic foundations (i.e., scheduling, progress, resources, etc.). As of January, the Coaching Program officially moved from the auspices of ASM to be its own entity within the Division of SAEM. Despite this transition, in cooperation with the new Coordinator of the Coaching Program, as well as with the Dean of Students for Student Success, this year’s assessment plan examining goal setting and the implementation of Hope Theory is still moving forward.

Jumpstart (JS), a federally funded Americorps program, matches college students, or “Corps Members,” with preschool students in Kansas City’s urban core. The college students participate in planned curricula designed to enhance the children’s literacy skills. Upon completion of their service, 2012 data revealed that: 85% of Corps Members indicated an increased feeling of connectedness to UMKC; 98.4% felt that their experience helped them feel more connected to their community; 100% felt they had a better understanding of the issues that face the KC community; 78% indicated their service had helped them academically; and 28% had changed their major to education or a field related to human services. Similar outcomes will be evaluated this year utilizing focus groups and written reflections.

This year, we are also addressing the Division’s learning outcomes focused on Personal Responsibility and Culture and Diversity. Specifically, we are evaluating how students involved with ASM are able to identify personal challenges and life goals, formulate good solutions, and utilize campus and community resources. Additionally, we hope to demonstrate how students involved with ASM have an increased knowledge of diversity, and can utilize empathy skills that facilitate engagement in the lives of others.
Teaching Marsupials to Write
Innovative RooWriter Assessment Set to Push University Beyond WEPT

The University Writing and Reading Board (UWRB), charged with improving and assessing student writing at UMKC, set a unique and bold path this past year in developing a new writing assessment. The forthcoming “RooWriter” is a directed self-placement assessment that will offer students direct information regarding their ability to use academic reading and writing to engage in a wide variety of critical analyses of discourse.

The innovative initiative, though initially serving as a replacement for the Written English Proficiency Test (WEPT), will serve a different agenda than the latter mentioned assessment instrument. The WEPT’s design had a two pronged intent. First, it served as an entrance examination for university-wide Writing Intensive course work. Second, passage was required for graduation for all departments within the College of Arts and Sciences.

The RooWriter will now serve as a diagnostic test, with the aim of improving student outcomes in reading and writing, as opposed to the WEPT’s gateway approach. The updated focus on student learning will no longer result in a pass/fail grade. Further, although one valid submission of this new assessment is still required for university graduation, the measure will no longer be seen as a summative assessment of a student’s writing abilities, but as an instrument to help improve overall student writing. Additional testing will be available to students after the initial assessment if they wish to solicit further guidance.

The criteria for assessing student performance on the RooWriter are connected to the standards that will be used to assess student reading, writing, and discourse analysis in the new 30-hour University-wide General Education Program. The RooWriter will be implemented in fall 2013, alongside the new 30-hour University-wide General Education initiative. The RooWriter can be taken online over a 72 hour time period. This is in contrast to the three hour period offered for the WEPT.

A student taking the exam will be able to choose from a variety of topics, which should appeal to many different interest levels and majors. The RooWriter evaluators will be trained with regard to grading expectations for each topic that students can choose. Training will be spearheaded by the Coordinator of Writing Assessment. The online nature of the instrument and database will allow for easier analysis of students’ strengths and weaknesses in writing as a student body.

Newly enrolled students during fall 2013 will begin using the RooWriter. Those enrolled prior to the launch will remain attached to the WEPT requirements, although they will be taking the assessment online.

~Dan Stroud

The Writing Studio has a new home in the Atterbury Student Success Center

UWRB Board Members
Erin Blocher
Jo Ann Day
Richard Delaware
Stephen Dilks
Mary Phyl Dwight
Daniel Mahala
Michael Mahala
Diane McDonald
Nathan Mutti-Burke
Nathan Oyler
Alice Reckley
Brenda Walker-Williams
Cynthia Thompson
Cindy Pemberton
Nathan Lindsay
The “Honorable” Assessment of the Honors Program

How do you assess the student outcomes of a program that enrolls undergraduates from virtually every unit on campus? Students in the Honors Program major in everything from accounting to jazz, civil engineering to Spanish, mathematics to urban studies. And they complete an alphabet soup of degrees: BA, BS, BBA, BM, BLA, MD, BFA, Pharm D, BIT, BME…

When I was asked to set up an assessment process, I cringed. Assessment is difficult enough when it involves classes that demand exams, papers, projects, and presentations—the standard ways by which we can assess what a student is learning. But the only class that every honors student takes, the Honors Colloquium, is a lecture series. What had I gotten myself into?!

The first task was to establish SLOs for the Honors Program, which the faculty and staff of the program did quite quickly, honing in on critical inquiry and thinking across the disciplines as hallmarks of honors education. We chose to assess the senior honors theses that about 10% of the honors students write as a capstone experience in their major. This is a summative assessment that the thesis advisors complete. However, since only a small number of honors students choose to write a senior honors thesis, we also needed to find a way to assess the majority of students in the program. We decided to assess the short blog entries that Colloquium students write in response to the invited speakers’ presentations by creating a formative tool by which the honors students assess each other’s work. We thus devised a tool whereby each student also assesses one blog entry per semester. We asked them to rate a number of different elements: the writing quality, the creativity of the blog entry, whether the student made links between the speaker’s presentation and their own studies, and finally whether the student was sensitive to the interdisciplinary elements of the speaker’s presentation. Finally, in order to prepare the students for this task, we showed them examples of blog entries from the previous semester’s Colloquium—entries that we felt were successful and one or two that missed the mark. I asked the Colloquium students to talk about how these examples did or did not exemplify the elements we thought were important (communication, creativity, links, interdisciplinary).

So far we only have one semester of data (SP 12) and we are looking forward to analyzing the data from FS 12 and SP 13 in order to get a better idea of how the students are doing. Last spring 92% of the students scored a 4 or 5 on their written communication skills. However, only 70% of the students drew links between their own studies and the research presented by our guest lecturers and 82% showed a very good or excellent sense of the methodologies used by the speakers. We think that this low score (these are some of the best students at UMKC and we expected generally higher scores) is partially the luck of a draw. When an engineering student is asked to comment on a scholarly presentation about the Holocaust and a graphic art student then assesses that blog entry, interdisciplinary responses become difficult.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, this assessment experience makes clear that the limits posed by Colloquium, and the Honors Program structure more generally, lie at the heart of this problem. With no curriculum to speak, no mandatory classes that everyone must take (besides the one-unit Colloquium), we cannot ensure that students learn to think interdisciplinary. Many of our students are doing interdisciplinary work on their own, but others are not, and this is clear from the blog entries and the assessments. In order to really get our honors students to think more broadly, we need to institute a comprehensive curriculum in which students learn how to understand a subject or problem using interdisciplinary approaches. Although assessment still makes me shudder a bit, I find that both the process of setting up the tools and the information we gather to be incredibly useful.

~ Gayle Levy
Curriculum Mapping  (Continued from Page 1)

UMKC Curriculum Mapping Template

_______ Program

KEY:  
I = Introduced;  D = Developed/reinforced, with opportunities to practice; M = Mastery;

A = Assessment evidence collected

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From Nathan’s Desk

(continued from Page 1)

Here are some best practices for curriculum mapping:

—Involve as many faculty as possible in the development and analysis of the curriculum map.
—Try to introduce the learning outcomes early in the curriculum and then given sufficient practice and reinforcement before evaluation of students’ level of mastery takes place.
—Use the curriculum map to identify the learning opportunities (e.g., assignments, activities) that produce the program’s outcomes.
—Connect the Dots: Each faculty member can make explicit connections across courses for the students. For example, at the beginning of the course, a faculty member can remind students what they were introduced to in another course and explain how the current course will have them practice or expand their knowledge.
—Ask if the department/program is trying to do too much, or (conversely) if outcomes should be added. Eliminate outcomes that are not highly-valued and then focus on highly-valued outcomes by including them in multiple courses.
—Set priorities as a department/program. Everyone working together toward common outcomes can increase the likelihood that students will meet or exceed expectations.
—Communicate: Publish the curriculum map online and distribute to students and faculty, in conjunction with the major maps and/or list of a degree’s learning outcomes.

~ Nathan Lindsay

[Curriculum mapping outline modified from University of Hawaii-Manoa]: [http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/mapping.htm]
Assessment Down Under

"CAPTAINS OF ASSESSMENT"

2011—2012 WEAVE Assessment Honor Roll

### Academic Affairs

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<th>Studio Art</th>
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<th>Urban Studies</th>
<th>Communication Studies</th>
<th>Criminal Justice &amp; Criminology</th>
<th>Economics</th>
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<th>Multicultural Student Affairs</th>
<th>Student Health &amp; Wellness Center</th>
<th>Women’s Center</th>
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