UMKC Impact Report for the Higher Learning Commission Assessment Academy

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Introduction

We are pleased to report that the commitment and momentum supporting a culture of learning at the University of Missouri-Kansas City are stronger than ever. As evidenced in the initiatives, resources, mentoring, and outreach described in this report, the last several years demonstrate a strong upward trajectory in our institution's engagement with assessment. We have met and exceeded our Assessment Academy project goals, and many faculty and administrators have commented on the remarkable improvements that have been made in supporting assessment. Below are our responses to the 10 recommended questions for this report.

1. Describe your Academy project(s) as developed at the first Roundtable. Be as detailed as possible about the issues it was intended to address as well as the content and strategies of the project itself. Include in your discussion your reasons for joining the Academy and the degree to which you have dealt with those reasons. If you enrolled in the Academy in response to the recommendation of a site evaluation team, explain how your Academy work addressed the issues raised in that report.

UMKC joined the Academy six years ago to receive assistance on its fledgling assessment efforts, and we developed three projects at the first Roundtable. The first Academy project, "Departments Mentoring Departments," sought to provide collegial guidance to departments in the College of Arts and Sciences in assessing their degrees' learning outcomes. This extensive mentoring effort was to begin in the History department and then spread to other areas. The second project was a "College of Arts and Science Learning Assessment Inventory," designed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of current assessment practices in the College of Arts and Sciences. The plan was to develop strategies to enhance learning assessment, and then disseminate these practices across campus. The third project, "Learning Assessment Conversation Series through the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching" was a scheduled series of conversations about learning assessment to be held at UMKC's Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching (FaCET).

As described under question two, these three projects were modified in 2011, and our participation in the Academy was extended for two more years. The HLC proposed that the successful completion of our Academy projects would serve as a substitute for a follow-up site visit in spring 2013.

Our Academy Projects responded to the recommendations from the Higher Learning Commission site evaluation team, which suggested that a follow-up review should reveal the following six components (highlighted in italics). Each of the six components outlined below shows how UMKC addressed these issues.

1) A university wide assessment plan linked to the completion of the three phases found in the UMKC Assessment Plan including a timeline for implementation.

Our University Assessment Committee and Assessment Academy team developed an Assessment Plan for 2012-2015 (see http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/assessment-plan-timeline-3-21-12.pdf). Among other initiatives, this timeline outlines our efforts and goals to assess all academic areas, provide ongoing professional development, combine assessment with program evaluation, develop curriculum maps, involve more faculty, staff, and students in assessment processes, and provide better incentives and recognition for engagement in assessment. We have shared this Assessment Plan across campus in meetings and emails, and it has received widespread approval and support.

2) General Education learning outcomes clearly stated and documented at the University and academic-unit levels.

Our goals and processes for General Education assessment are outlined in our General Education Assessment Plan (see http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/general-education-assessment-plan-6-28-12.pdf). Assessment in general education focuses on eight General Education learning outcomes and will consist of course-embedded assessments, standardized instruments, and student surveys/reflections. General education assessment will be coordinated by the University Assessment Committee and the Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment, but will be conducted primarily by faculty who are teaching General Education courses.
http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/general-education-assessment.cfm

3) Documentation of student learning activities and their application to classroom, program, graduate studies, and professional fields should be available for examination.

Assessment plans have been developed for all majors and nearly all minors and certificates (which total 160 academic degrees). Assessment plans have also been developed for all areas in Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, as well as for the Library. These plans are catalogued in our WEAVE Online system (see https://app.weaveonline.com/umkc/login.aspx), and can be made available to accreditation reviewers.

4) Integration of student assessment with program evaluation activities, with illustrations of application to improve learning.

Assessment has become a stronger component of the Program Evaluation Committee (PEC), which reviews all academic programs on a rotating schedule every five years. The academic assessment plans developed in WEAVE are directly applicable to the learning outcomes assessment requirements for the PEC review, which helps faculty members recognize the value of their assessment work.

5) Collaboration between academic units to ascertain student learning linked to student matriculation in program stages. This should include the connections between IR, Assessment, and Academic Affairs review.

Since the 2009 HLC accreditation review, UMKC has devoted significant attention to student success and retention, an effort involving extensive collaboration across campus. For a review of the initiatives, please refer to http://www.umkc.edu/provost/student-retention/default.asp . Two major products of these collaborations were the development of a University College and the renovation of an older space into a more functional, one-stop Student Success Center in fall 2012. Considerable attention has also been given to general education courses with high DFW rates, leading to several course redesign efforts. Diagnostic exams are now being given in Mathematics and Foreign Languages.

6) Centralization of assessment activities through the Institutional Assessment office.

Assessment activities have been coordinated by the Provost's Office since the beginning of our participation in the Academy, and the Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment position was created in 2011 to lead the institution's assessment efforts. The development of this position has given greater legitimacy to assessment at UMKC, and the Assistant Vice Provost has worked with faculty and staff to lead assessment plan reviews, mentoring, and communications. The assessment process, definitions, deadlines, and reports have all been standardized, and each assessment plan is tracked through WEAVE Online. Outreach has been made to assess all aspects of curricular and co-curricular learning.

2. Describe any changes that you made to the project(s)—or that had to be made to it—other than personnel changes. What were the reasons for these changes? Did the changes improve the project?

The first project, entitled "Assessment Integration through Academic Degree Programs," is a combination of our original three projects into one overall project. This initiative included all academic degree programs and the support aspects (such as mentoring and FaCET workshops) to ensure the development of a campus culture of assessment. The goal was that all programs would have detailed assessment plans utilizing demonstrated effective best practices in student learning assessment. In addition, we wanted academic programs to demonstrate that they are using the student learning assessment results to modify curricula, courses and/or policies and procedures to improve student learning.

The second project, entitled "Assessment of General Education" emerged from our initial work on assessment, a program revision process directed by our strategic planning, and a clearer campus focus on student success. The goals of general education revision at UMKC have been fourfold: 1) to increase student engagement, thereby increasing student retention and persistence; 2) to define

the student learning outcomes for general education and the mechanisms to assess the achievement of the outcomes so that continuous improvements can be made; 3) to facilitate transfer from other higher education institutions and between academic units within UMKC; and 4) to ensure alignment with state and national guidelines for general education.

Before this project, our general education program had not been systematically reviewed and revised by our campus community for several decades. There were numerous student success related challenges with our current program of requirements and none of the existing assessments were used by academic units to make changes in courses, the curriculum or policies/procedures.

Starting with this project, and for the first time in campus history, the entire academic campus community became involved in the general education reform process and the development of an associated assessment plan for general education. This past year, the Faculty Senate voted to support a proposed 30-hour model of General Education, which will be implemented in Fall 2013. This model follows the suggestions made by the American Association of Colleges and Universities that General Education programs should:

- Foster integrative knowledge and lifelong learning
- Incorporate interdisciplinary methods, critical thinking, cultural diversity, and civic engagement
- Integrate high-impact learning experiences (e.g., service learning, study abroad, and undergraduate research)
- Involve tenure-line faculty

3. What challenges to the success of your project arose in your four Academy years? How did you deal with those challenges?

Many obstacles needed attention during our participation in the Academy. Before this time, the environment at UMKC could have been appropriately described as the "Wild, Wild West of Assessment." Many academic degrees were without assessment plans, and most faculty members were unaware of best practices and the benefits of assessment. There was a lack of standardized assessment language, with no common format for reporting. In general, widespread apathy and non-compliance plagued our assessment efforts. As noted above, our General Education program was disjointed and disorganized.

Despite these challenges, there were some positives at the outset, including faculty who cared about teaching and were engaging in assessment-like activities without knowing it. Strong assessment processes existed in the Professional Schools, and there was a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration in Arts & Sciences. The University Assessment Committee, the Director of Assessment, and the Institutional Research Office had all been working to improve assessment efforts across campus.

We dealt with the above mentioned challenges by creating a more faculty-centered and faculty-led initiative. The Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching (FaCET) provided incredible support, sponsoring symposia, workshops, and webinars focused on assessment. Invaluable mentoring sessions have been provided by FaCET Faculty Fellows, as well as other faculty across campus. As momentum started to grow, assessment coordinators and department chairs responded more readily to outreach. Perhaps most importantly, faculty and administrative assistants put in hours of work to ensure that assessment plans were in place for each degree.

We cannot overstate the importance of continual outreach to assessment coordinators, department chairs, and deans. This outreach includes offering support, answering questions, and providing training. An emphasis has been placed on developing quality rubrics, collecting data, and creating concrete action plans. Nathan Lindsay (the Asst. VP for Assessment) has met with approximately 400 faculty and staff in group and individual sessions to review assessment principles and plans. Drew Bergerson (a History Professor) served for two years as a FaCET Faculty Fellow for Assessment, and his assessment expertise led to an invitation to participate in the National Tuning Project in the field of History. Leah Gensheimer (a Psychology Professor) has served as the FaCET assessment mentor during this past year. Both Dr. Bergerson and Dr. Gensheimer have offered mentoring sessions on Wednesdays for several hours. This peer-mentoring model has been very popular and successful.

4. What have you achieved as a result of your work in the Academy? Consider the range of these achievements, from the very specific (development of a rubric) to the more general (outcomes-based curriculum approval processes). To what degree have these achievements been institutionalized?

As noted in the first section, our participation in the Assessment Academy has helped us develop assessment plans for all of our majors, as well as a structure for reviewing these plans each year. The Assessment website, Handbook of Learning Outcomes Assessment, Assessable Roo Newsletter, and ongoing faculty mentoring and FaCET workshops have been critical resources in this effort. Assessment plans are now an integral part of our Program Evaluation reviews. We are using a broader range of both embedded and standardized assessment to assess students' learning.

For General Education, we are delighted that the eight general education learning outcomes were approved in a campus-wide faculty vote. These learning outcomes have been disseminated and re-emphasized to faculty through bulletins and meetings, and were also posted on the assessment website (http://www.umkc.edu/provost/academic-assessment/general-education.asp).

We are very proud of the new General Education curriculum, which was designed by UMKC's General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) and approved by the Faculty Senate. As noted earlier, the model builds on UMKC's core commitments to integrative knowledge and interdisciplinary approaches—commitments that are at the heart of UMKC's signature

Interdisciplinary Ph.D. (IPhD) programs. GEOC members met with faculty bodies in many Schools throughout the last year, explaining the benefits of a more common, integrated, and interdisciplinary curriculum. In reviewing our General Education revisions, the Assistant Commission for Academic Affairs from the Missouri Department of Higher Education described our curriculum as a "model for others to review."

The interdisciplinary and integrative foundation of these models resides in three "Discourse" courses that synthesize learning outcomes in writing, reading, speaking, listening, and critical thinking. These three Discourse classes are coupled with team-taught "Anchor" courses that emphasize Reasoning & Values, Culture & Diversity, and Civic & Community Engagement. The model is completed with other grouped elective courses (named "Platform" courses) in the Natural & Physical Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Social & Behavioral Sciences, and a capstone course that features a high impact practice. A matrix (or curriculum map) connecting the learning outcomes to General Education courses has been developed.

This past year we outlined a General Education Course Approval Form, and faculty worked diligently to submit nearly 100 courses for the General Education program. A well-functioning University General Education Committee has reviewed these proposals, only accepting those proposals where the course content is appropriately tied to the General Education learning outcomes and an assessment plan has been outlined. We have offered numerous professional development sessions through FaCET (the teaching and learning center) to help faculty design their General Education courses in the revised model.

We have been asked to share our positive experiences with assessment in several venues. At the Assessment Academy Roundtable, we gave a presentation entitled, "Rejection, Revolution, and Transformation: Assessing Academic Degrees and General Education," reviewing several of the recent initiatives that have worked well at our institution. At the Academy Exchange in Chicago, we led a roundtable session on "Accelerating Faculty Leadership and Mentoring in Assessment." WEAVE also invited us to share our story of recent successes in their newsletter, which we did in an article entitled, "WEAVE Works Wonders at UMKC" (see http://www.weaveonline.com/PHPages/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/WEAVE-Newsletter-IV1.pdf).

Several academic departments have also disseminated their innovative assessment efforts at national conferences. For example, faculty from the Math Department and administrators from the Provost's Office gave an AAC&U STEM conference presentation about the assessment of the redesigned College Algebra course. The Conservatory gave a presentation entitled "Assessment and Outcomes for a New Generation: Developing Meaningful Ways to Improve Teaching and Learning" at the National Conference of the College Music Society.

5. What effect has your time in the Academy had on institutional commitment to the assessment of learning? How broad is that commitment? How has institutional capacity for assessing student learning changed?

The support and promotion of assessment from top university leaders has been very helpful in moving our assessment initiatives forward. The Provost has used her blog to thank the faculty for their involvement in assessment, and this message was also shared with faculty through workshops. Similarly, assessment has been discussed at Dean's Council, which helped deans in following up with the few programs that had not completed their assessment plans. Associate deans and department chairs have also been instrumental in ensuring the quality of assessment plans. Given the support from university leaders and the assessment positions and committees we have in place, we are confident that we have developed a sustainable infrastructure for effective learning outcomes assessment for the months and years ahead.

Training for faculty and staff throughout the last few years has been extensive. Assessment strategies and initiatives have been addressed in New Faculty Orientation and the Preparing Future Faculty program, as well as in unit faculty meetings, department faculty meetings, and departmental committee structures. Assessment coordinators have been identified for all programs, and assessment is the most regularly scheduled topic of all workshops in in Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching (FaCET). We have kept a record of faculty and staff members who have participated in assessment trainings, which now includes hundreds of individuals. Sessions offered this past year include the following:

- "Assessment for Learning: Workshop for New Assessment Coordinators and Faculty"
- "Clicking in the 21st Century: How to Use Clickers and Digital Recorders"
- "General Education Assessment: Best Practices and Models"
- "Sizing Up Standardized Assessments: Major Field Tests, the ETS-Proficiency Profile, and the RooWriter"
- "Developing Surveys to Measure Student Satisfaction and Learning Outcomes"

UMKC's broad commitment to assessment is conveyed in a quarterly assessment newsletter, named the "Assessable Roo," which is disseminated to faculty and staff across campus (see http://info.umkc.edu/provost/2012/04/20/the-assessable-roo-umkcs-outcomes-assessment-newsletter/). Four issues of the newsletter have been published, covering topics such as the scholarship of assessment, the benefit of assessment in recent accreditation reviews, the innovative assessment of introductory experiential learning, the goals and assessment of the new University College, and the importance of achieving balance between formative and summative assessment. Each issue has been six pages long, with articles from several departments on campus and updates from the Office of Assessment.

The commitment to assessment has been conveyed through the annual UMKC Faculty Symposium, which has focused on aspects of assessment several times. For example, Paul Handstedt gave the

keynote address and workshop about General Education assessment last year, and there were multiple workshops presented on assessment (e.g., "What Assessment Teaches us about Our Students"). The symposia have served as good opportunities for faculty to showcase their work, as well as to train faculty regarding assessment language, processes, and reports. The symposia have also helped faculty find colleagues for collaborative work in assessment.

A prime example of such collaboration has been the work of the University Writing and Reading Board, which was recently formed to assess student writing. This past year the committee revised a university required pass/fail writing exam and transformed it into an assessment that is more diagnostic in nature. The newly designed "RooWriter" is a directed self-placement assessment designed to provide students with direct information on their current ability to use academic reading and writing to engage in the critical analysis of discourse. In taking the RooWriter, a student writes a "documented, critical essay" about a topic based on a Reading Packet of articles. The criteria for assessing student performance on the RooWriter are based on the criteria used to assess student reading, writing, and discourse analysis in the new 30-hour University-wide General Education Program. Students can take the RooWriter exam online over a period of 72 hours, and they will receive detailed feedback on their writing (which will also be available to faculty of these students in future classes). The assessment will be implemented in fall 2013. Compared to the utility and the data available to faculty members from the previous writing assessment, we are very excited about the potential benefits of this new instrument.

6. What effect has your Academy work had on institutional culture, structures, and processes?

The pressure to improve assessment from the Higher Learning Commission was in important impetus in significant institutional change. However, as more faculty members see the benefits of assessment in their teaching and in students' learning, we are starting to see an attitudinal shift from "compliance" to "commitment" in assessment. Focusing on students' learning has fostered this commitment. Assessment committees have been established in many departments and schools, such as the Bloch School of Business Management, the Conservatory, the School of Education, and numerous departments within Arts & Sciences. The quality of assessment in Student Affairs and the Library has also dramatically improved, allowing these areas to have more engagement on the issue of student learning at UMKC.

Several assessment resources have been developed for faculty and staff during our participation in the Academy. The Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment created a new assessment website (see http://www.umkc.edu/provost/academic-assessment/default.asp), featuring information on Assessment in Academic Degrees, Assessment in General Education, Assessment for the Program Evaluation Committee, WEAVE Online, and many other resources.

As an additional resource, the University Assessment Committee updated the Handbook for Learning Outcomes Assessment, which was first developed in 2006. The Handbook (see http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/handbook-2011.pdf) includes information on the core principles and processes regarding assessment at UMKC, the process for submitting assessment plans, an assessment glossary, a list of frequently asked questions, and several appendices. We can update the Handbook in coming years as our assessment plans and processes are refined.

Our Academy participation has also helped emphasize the importance of learning outcomes at the course and department level. Faculty members submitting a new course proposal are required to list the learning outcomes for the course. The language of assessment is now regularly used by members of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Program Evaluation Committee, the Faculty Senate, and other governing bodies.

7. What effect has your Academy work had on student learning?

The oft-quoted mantra at UMKC is that we are not just conducting an "assessment *of* learning," but rather are engaging in "assessment *for* learning." Faculty members are encouraged to engage in inquiry-based assessment that focuses on questions and concerns about their students' learning. Recognizing that just having an assessment plan for each degree is not sufficient, there has been a heavy emphasis on encouraging best practices and enhancing quality throughout this process. With detailed feedback given to every academic department after the last two annual reviews, our faculty and staff have engaged in an iterative process of assessment plan development that has led to much stronger and more robust plans.

UMKC has had success in using WEAVE because it has provided us with a common template for standardizing our practices across programs and units. WEAVE has also facilitated the use of a standard language across campus. The areas outlined in WEAVE are the mission statement, goals, learning outcomes, measurements, achievement targets, findings, and action plans. Adhering to this common format is balanced with the flexibility for departments to conduct assessment using a mixture of formative and summative assessments, direct and indirect assessments, and qualitative and quantitative assessments.

WEAVE is not a perfect software application for documenting assessment plans, however, and we decided to implement a few additions to address what we perceive to be some of its limitations. In conjunction with reporting their assessment plans per se as they were entered into WEAVE (referred to as "Part I" of the assessment report), assessment coordinators for the academic degrees have also told the story of their area's assessment process over the course of the academic year, as well as the positives, challenges, and support provided during the process. This "Part II" of the assessment report, uploaded to the Document Repository of WEAVE as a supplement, invited faculty to provide a richer description of the exploration, improvement, and implementation of

assessment practices in their departments or units in order to make the work being conducted on assessment at UMKC more transparent. Part II has been labeled "The Assessment Narrative."

For many academic degrees, the effects on student learning are captured in the "Positives" section of the Assessment Narrative. Departments have outlined how their assessment work led to changes in the curriculum, pedagogy, policies, or faculty collaboration in teaching. In other degrees, improvements to learning have been outlined in the "Findings," as current data are compared to previous results. Some improvements are also conveyed in the "Action Plans" section, which outlines how the faculty members plan to address the deficiencies in their findings. Our University Assessment Committee review consisted of comparing the previous year's assessment plans to the current assessment plans, which showed significant growth and improvement for dozens of departments.

8. What concrete evidence do you have to demonstrate the effects you described in questions 5-7?

As noted above, the concrete evidence for learning improvement can be found in the Assessment Plans catalogued in WEAVE. The "Findings" and "Action Plans" sections allow for comparative analyses and follow-up reviews to occur. Departments where exceptional assessment work has occurred include Accounting, Counseling and Guidance, Dental Hygiene, English, Foreign Languages, History, Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, Psychology, and Theatre. Although the quality of assessment plans varies from department to department, the remarkable fact is that all degrees have an assessment plan. The language of assessment is no longer foreign to most faculty, and learning outcomes are being discussed with students with greater frequency.

As we strive for greater "Institutional Effectiveness," we are documenting specific areas where faculty and staff have "closed the loop" to enhance student learning. A few examples of improvements that have come from assessment include:

- In reviewing their learning outcomes, goals, and assessment criteria, the Creative Writing faculty reported a "revelation" regarding the capstone requirements. They had been using the undergraduate capstones as their primary area for assessment, but realized they had not established formal capstone guidelines. That is, each faculty member worked individually with each student to create a capstone guideline, which might vary from what another faculty member required of his/her students. The new guidelines established a set number of poems and stories, page requirements, formatting considerations, etc., and included a critical introduction to the capstone that requires students to discuss their coursework in literature, their literary influences, and their writing and revision process. They recognized the value in having students reflect on their literary influences and writing processes.
- The Mathematics Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees had identical requirements, and as such were assessed the same way. The assessment plan analysis

highlighted this deficiency. The undergraduate curriculum committee addressed this issue by changing the B.S. requirements to include Math 345 (Ordinary Differential Equations).

- In the Biology Master's of Science Degree in the School of Biological Sciences, third-year students who scored below the 30th percentile on the Fall 2011 Self-Evaluation Exam (SEE) have been sent a letter about the correlation between performance on the SEE and the Certification Exam, and have been offered help in developing an individualized study program. Starting this year, all second-year students who score below the 30th percentile on the SEE exam will be put on an individualized study program or improvement plan. As part of the plan, they will meet periodically with the Educational Director to discuss how things are going and to get a sense of whether they are sticking to the plan.

- For the Composition Bachelor of Music degree, student feedback highlighted a serious weakness in their curriculum: the "listening labs". The students unanimously agreed that this time was not being utilized to their benefit. As a result, over the summer, two faculty members devised a way to completely revolutionize the use of these labs, to give the students more of what they felt was missing.

- The Computer Science Bachelor of Science faculty found that approximately 50 percent of the students could not express the complexity of an algorithm as a recurrence relation and then solve it. They introduced extra materials on recursive algorithms into the curriculum, and students' exam scores in this area increased significantly.

- In the School Counseling Master's degree, the data in 2011-2012 showed improvement in students' abilities related to data collection and analysis and use of technology. Scores also improved in the clinical portion of student training, where development and delivery of guidance curriculum was severely lacking.

- For the Curriculum and Instruction Education Specialty degree, the 2011-2012 data demonstrated higher scores than the previous year in the areas of "Writing Ability," "Summary of Assignment," and "Critical Thinking."

For our General Education project, we discovered great benefits in conducting pilot projects in English 225, Communication Studies 110, and Math 110 to assess written communication skills, oral communication skills, and quantitative reasoning skills. We analyzed the results for these assessments, and we had an especially productive review session with the English 225 instructors. For each of these courses, we have a better sense for how the assessments can be improved, as well as how the pedagogy and/or curriculum can be enhanced to produce higher scores. The AAC&U VALUE rubrics served as the foundation for the English 225 rubric, and we will be using other VALUE rubrics in our General Education efforts.

Pilot studies were also conducted to assess the General Education learning outcomes of information literacy and culture and diversity. When students were asked to name one thing they learned in the information literacy session for their English 225 class, their responses mapped to the Libraries' information literacy student learning outcomes. The culture and diversity learning outcomes were measured in the Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course, in which it was found that students'

ability to pose anthropological questions is largely contingent upon their capacity for cultural self-reflection and their curiosity about foreign ways of life.

In addition to embedded assessments, concrete evidence of student learning is being measured through standardized tests, the results of which are now more carefully analyzed and connected to the curriculum. Undergraduate students at UMKC participate in standardized tests measuring their learning outcomes for General Education (through the ETS-Proficiency Profile test), as well as learning outcomes for students' majors (in the Major Field Tests). Detailed reports have been written outlining the results each of these tests. In the bullet points below, we have summarized the findings:

ETS—Proficiency Profile (1,448 students)
- Scores were above our benchmark peers for all four areas: Reading, Critical Thinking, Writing, and Mathematics
- On individual items, our scores were better than the national average on 51 out of 53 items

Major Field Tests (MFTs)
- Biology (87 Students) – UMKC scored above average on 8 of 9 Assessment Indicators.
- Business (192 Students) – UMKC scored above average on 4 of 9 Assessment Indicators.
- Psychology (81 Students) – UMKC scored above average on 2 of 6 Assessment Indicators.
- Political Science (20 Students) – UMKC scored above average on 1 of 3 Assessment Indicators.
- Chemistry (117 Students) – UMKC scored above average on 0 of 2 Assessment Indicators.

UMKC students also take MFTs in Computer Science, Mathematics, and Physics, but there were insufficient numbers of students who took these tests to allow for comparable samples. The ETS reports have been sent to all relevant departments, and the General Education scores have been reviewed by the General Education Committee, the University Assessment Committee, and the Assessment Academy Team. Departments have been encouraged to discuss how they can enhance their curriculum to address the areas of weakness within each test. Several departments are working to enhance motivation on the Major Field Tests by connecting the test with a specific course. We will continue to collect data to determine changes over time, and as these departments discuss how to address the lower scores, we expect that our relative performance will improve.

The General Education learning outcomes were also measured indirectly through the institution's Senior Survey, conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. There were 438 students who completed the survey, and scores indicated that students felt that their education at UMKC was most helpful in improving their critical thinking ability, their ability to communicate in writing, and their ability to understand people and ideas that were different from them.

9. What do you see as the next logical steps for continuing the work you have begun in the Academy? In particular, what new student learning initiatives do you see developing from your Academy work?

In February 2012, a team of three UMKC faculty/administrators attended the Assessment Academy Roundtable, where we created a sustainability plan for our assessment efforts (outlined in our L.E.E.D. Certified Assessment poster). Based upon these ideas, our University Assessment Committee and Assessment Academy team developed an Assessment Plan for 2012-2015 (see http://www.umkc.edu/assessment/downloads/assessment-plan-timeline-3-21-12.pdf). We are using this timeline as a benchmark for our progress and as a guide for our goals. We have been publicizing each of these efforts through emails to Assessment Coordinators, workshops, and our Assessable Roo newsletter.

As outlined in this timeline, UMKC's current and upcoming assessment initiatives include the development of formal honors and incentives for assessment, a stronger connection to promotion and tenure, and the encouragement of the scholarship of assessment. This semester, the Office of Assessment partnered with FACET to co-sponsor Teaching Enhancement Grants, giving funds to faculty and staff to conduct innovative assessment and then share their findings through workshops or newsletters.

We are working to assess high impact practices, such as service learning, undergraduate research, and study abroad. With the advent of University College, we will assess the impact of advising and new courses on the learning outcomes and retention of students without a major. Student involvement in assessment planning and analysis is also being encouraged, and two student representatives now serve on our University Assessment Committee.

The effective use of technology for assessment is another area for future growth. The Office of Assessment purchased 70 TurningPoint clickers that have been used for presentations and assessment, and we will continue to encourage faculty and staff to implement these. We purchased digital recorders to be used for focus groups in our Tuning initiative. The History Department and Dental School have been using Foliotek portfolio software to document and analyze their students' work, and other departments have explored using this as well. UMKC also just started a contract with Campus Labs, which will help us conduct more indirect assessments (i.e., surveys) in academic and student affairs.

We acknowledge that our assessment efforts and general education initiatives have many areas for improvement, and we will continue to address various weaknesses and obstacles. Ongoing challenges include engaging some faculty in the assessment culture, and responding to faculty concerns about the speed with which the General Education reform is being implemented. We recognize that assessment plan improvement and General Education curricular reform is an iterative process requiring years of work and modifications.

10. What plans have you made to sustain the energy and momentum of your Academy work?

We plan to ensure sustainability by building upon intact structures, using the processes and resources that faculty members are now familiar with and continually utilize. We recently extended our contract with WEAVE for three more years, and we will keep the reporting format and schedule as consistent as possible. The 5-year Program Evaluation Committee review will encourage faculty to analyze how their learning outcomes assessment fits within the broader goals of the department.

The University Assessment Committee is as strong as it has ever been, meeting monthly with good attendance and productive discussions. For example, the committee conducted a SWOT analysis of our assessment efforts over the last few years, which was especially helpful in identifying various weaknesses and threats. As noted above, we are working on developing more incentives for faculty to mediate the research emphasis on promotion and tenure.

Recently, the University Assessment Committee has been providing feedback on our efforts to develop curriculum maps and to post learning outcomes on department websites. In conjunction with the Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment, the committee will continue to review academic degree assessment plans each fall.

As we complete our Assessment Academy participation, we plan to build upon our current efforts by analyzing the longitudinal assessment findings for many departments, as well as how the assessment findings have been used to make changes that led to higher learning scores. More effective rubrics need to be developed and implemented in many areas. Based on a spreadsheet that indicates the quality of each academic degrees assessment plan, we have a clear roadmap of which departments will need targeted mentoring and follow-up to conduct effective assessments.

In conclusion, we affirm that enhancing students' learning is a stronger priority than ever at UMKC, and we believe that we have the resources and organization in place to sustain this momentum. Most importantly, we have many faculty and staff who are deeply committed to their students. In our efforts to enhance student learning, we seek to implement the advice of Barbara E. Walvoord, who explained, "People don't want to 'do assessment'; they want to realize a dream, improve what they're doing, or be excited by a new initiative" (Assessment Clear and Simple, 2010, p. 12). The focus has been on inquiry-based assessment, allowing faculty to explore the questions that are important to them. We have observed that UMKC faculty and staff want to make a difference in their students' lives, and focusing on students' learning outcomes is one way to measure this difference.