

Sept. 25, 2007

To: Dr. Bassam Harik, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Eileen Evans, Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness

From: Dr. Thomas Kent, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Alex Enyedi, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Susan Stapleton, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Re: 2006-07 Assessment Report

The College of Arts and Sciences comprises 26 departments or units through which programs are offered. This document consists of a) a discussion summary, which is based on the evidence provided on the implementation and use of assessment data, and which indicates how assessment data is being utilized to improve programs; and b) a summary of plans for the college as a whole to foster a culture of assessment. Full assessment impact reports for the departments/units are attached in a separate document, which includes each chair's memorandum to Dean Kent.

DEPARTMENTS/UNITS

Comparative Religion:

No data was collected and thus nothing to report. This department has gone through an administrative change, and program planning along with assessment is anticipated for next year. The college will work with the department in this regard.

School of Communication:

All majors within the school have been assessed with regard to knowledge outcome. Other selected outcomes have also been used that reflect program-specific needs. Refinement of the assessment plan to include a broader sample of capstone courses to increase sample size will be discussed this fall. Feedback from assessment data has been discussed by faculty, helping to drive mission and set long-term goals for the school.

English:

Assessment of the undergraduate program has been ongoing. In May 2006, the departmental assessment committee revised its Student Learning Outcomes and included outcomes measured in first-year students as well as more senior students. Review of data in 2007 indicated that there was noticeable success in achieving learning outcomes. During the coming academic year, the undergraduate committee will discuss adding a junior-level writing course and a senior capstone requirement through the curriculum process to further evaluate and improve student writing.

Foreign Languages:

The department's assessment plan was implemented in 2005 and contained rubrics established according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines. Assessment data on graduating seniors in its three majors have been reported back to faculty. Changes in entry-level French courses have been implemented as a result of the assessment data. Re-evaluation of the assessment plan as well as an evaluation of all data is planned in the coming academic year.

Philosophy:

While no formal assessment plan that measures specific outcomes has been utilized by the department, two outcomes for the M.A. program have been empirically measured. These include time to degree completion for the M.A. and placement of these students into Ph.D. programs at other institutions. For the most part, students appear to be able to complete the degree in the two-year time frame and those who graduate appear to be attractive candidates for doctoral programs at other universities.

Spanish:

The department began assessment of majors utilizing a variety of measures in 2002. Based on feedback, the departmental assessment committee modified the methods in 2005. Thus, data collection utilizing these new methods is ongoing. Assessment rubrics utilized are adapted from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines.

Africana Studies:

With a change in leadership of the director of this program, no assessment was done during the last academic year. Discussions will be taking place to implement assessment next year and determine how the data from assessment can drive program improvement.

Environmental Studies Program:

Ten student learning outcomes were originally identified for assessment purposes by the program. However, limited data have been collected and plans are in place to remedy this in the coming year. Assessment instruments also need to be developed for some of the outcomes during 2007-08.

Gender and Women's Studies:

Assessment has been in place for a number of years and has been a valuable resource with regard to development and improvement of the program and individual courses. Assessment has been used to coordinate and standardize student learning outcomes among faculty teaching specific courses. Data from assessments are reported to faculty annually.

Medieval Institute Program:

Reporting and assessment was to come from three faculty teaching core courses for the program. However, insufficient data was collected to assemble a coherent, current

report. The past interim director will take on the responsibility for oversight of assessment, to work on this through the coming year, 2007-08.

Biological Sciences:

In the department's original assessment plan, all programs (undergraduate and graduate) were proposed to be evaluated through a number of different assessment measures of specific outcomes. This ambitious and bold plan was realized to be somewhat unrealistic given the timeline proposed and a simpler approach, using course-embedded measures across all programs, was implemented. Results indicated for the most part that course outcomes were achieved. Individual faculty reported their findings to the assessment committee, which reports to the curriculum committee and the chair. Refinement of the assessment plan to engage all faculty in the process is planned.

Chemistry:

The department has an American Chemical Society (ACS) approved program at the undergraduate level. Accreditation by this national body ensures high standards and quality education in the discipline. Assessment data is collected and evaluated not only for the accredited program but for all programs within the department. The data collected for the past three years indicate that most outcomes evaluated at both the undergraduate and graduate level have been achieved. To improve certain outcomes, after discussion with faculty, the departmental undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees will suggest during the 2007-08 year ways to improve the critical thinking/problem solving ability of its students. These improvements will be incorporated into the accrediting documents submitted to ACS in 2008.

Geography:

The first full assessment of all programs began in 2006 and results have been reported back to faculty. Availability of faculty limited some planned data collection. The department's assessment committee is re-evaluating its plan and will be implementing changes in 2007-08 to reflect what is possible considering current staffing and offerings in the department.

Geosciences:

The department began the assessment process in 2006 with courses that satisfied the general education requirement. Although this approach was not in the original assessment plan, this new approach provided the opportunity to start at the foundation of the courses offered and evolve to higher-level major courses. Continued data collection is planned so that a minimum of three semesters' worth of data can be used to drive subsequent action.

Mathematics:

An assessment plan in the department was fully developed in the past year and submitted to the University Assessment Steering Committee. This plan draws from and expands upon already ongoing assessment strategies utilized by NCATE for review and approval of the secondary education teaching major in mathematics, including the

utilization of the annual Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC). Assessment data collection as described in the plan will be implemented this academic year.

Physics:

The department has implemented its assessment plan by addressing a number of specific outcomes that apply to either the LEC physics major or secondary education physics major. Further data collection is needed to gather sufficient numbers to evaluate. As a result of the recent NCATE review, however, curriculum revisions to both the SED major and minor in physics were made to increase core physics content.

Psychology:

The department has now completed assessment of its undergraduate major over a three-year span and has recently phased in the implementation in its graduate programs. At the undergraduate level, a variety of outcomes have been evaluated and measures indicate success. The doctoral program in Clinical Psychology recently underwent a review and site visit by the American Psychological Association. Assessment activities were included in this review and it was noted that data from such activities positively inform and guide program revisions. Other graduate programs as indicated in their plan are in the beginning stages of assessment and data collection. Data were entered into TracDat for reporting to the college and all data will be presented to the faculty this fall. Revisions to the assessment plan or actions as a result of data will also be discussed.

Statistics:

Assessment data within the department is focused on the graduate level due to low enrollment numbers in the undergraduate major. As a result of feedback generated through the assessment data, the department is considering new course offerings to better serve student needs.

Anthropology:

The faculty implemented the use of assessment with students obtaining the B.A. degree by addressing a number of specific outcomes. Feedback from the assessment is provided to the chair and the departmental curriculum committee. In all outcomes measured, with the exception of one, no perceived weaknesses were found although small sample sizes in some cases were used to generate conclusions. A weakness was identified with regard to the understanding of ethical practice in conducting anthropological research. As a result, the department has identified the need for greater discussion and strengthening of ethical issues where applicable. The department will also gather more data through senior surveys during 2007-08.

Economics:

Assessment of the undergraduate and graduate programs has been completed over the last three years and will be reviewed collectively by the faculty during the 2007-08 academic year. To date, the department has utilized the assessment data to create a second writing-intensive class for undergraduates to expand the range of options available to them. This change has proceeded through the WMU faculty governance process. Discussions will begin on adjustments to capstone course assignments to

improve upon critical thinking abilities. In outcomes measured for the graduate degrees, no perceived weaknesses were found. However, some data was not collected during the Graduate Program Review process.

History:

Assessment of the undergraduate and graduate programs has been completed over the last three years. All undergraduate majors utilize the same assessment approach, including the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) needed to maintain NCATE accreditation, as do all graduate programs. The assessment committee has reviewed the collective data and will recommend modifications to undergraduate assessment questions. Additional discussion will take place in fall 2007 regarding revisions to undergraduate curriculum to ensure it better addresses expected outcomes. These curriculum changes will be processed through the WMU faculty governance process.

Political Science:

The department utilizes an assessment plan that addresses a number of outcomes applicable to all programs as well as those that are major-specific. The department assessment committee tabulates the results and reports back to faculty. Data were entered into TracDat for reporting to the college. Baseline data is still being collected and a full review of the assessment plan is scheduled for 2008. Curriculum changes to date as a result of the assessment data have included the creation of a number of different 4000 level courses to accommodate the numbers and interests of majors.

School of Public Affairs and Administration:

This program has undergone a number of changes, some of which were driven by the Graduate Program Review and also by a change in directorship of the program. Assessment of the MPA program was planned to begin in fall 2006. However, due to necessary curriculum revisions, the new program was not launched until fall 2007. Therefore, there is no assessment data to report, although the outcomes are established and the plan to implement is in place. This program also is externally accredited and data will be used in the accreditation process. The doctoral program was suspended as a result of the Graduate Program Review. Curriculum changes driven by this review are being submitted to the curriculum committee. When assessment data is collected, there is a mechanism in place for review by faculty to improve programs.

Sociology:

The department has assessed a number of outcomes regarding its undergraduate program. Mechanics of assessment administration have been addressed to ensure higher participation of faculty in the assessment process. Collection of assessment data for the graduate programs is ongoing to build a database sufficient in size to protect confidentiality. Data reported to the college were entered into TracDat and will be distributed to respective departmental area committees for discussion this fall.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The College of Arts and Sciences encompasses programs and majors that prepare individuals to enter a variety of professions and scholarly arenas, as well as supports programming and majors offered across campus. This diversity and breadth of offerings positions us as a keystone within the University setting. This position, however, also presents the college with unique challenges to not only understand and meet the needs of our constituents but also the needs and expectations of the University community. These challenges become greater to meet, in particular, in times of limited resources.

To understand and evaluate the programming needs of not only our constituents but also the University community, the College of Arts and Sciences embraces the opportunity to work with departments/units to foster a culture of assessment. Assessment planning and implementation requires a great deal of faculty and staff time and effort and we applaud the work of our colleagues throughout this process. The use of assessment data can have a substantial impact on improving the programs and majors offered within the college and across the University, and are linked to our core values of enhancing student success and enhancing teaching excellence.

We are pleased to report that as of this academic year, all departments within the College of Arts and Sciences have University-approved assessment plans and that each has collected at least one year's worth of assessment data. Limited resources as well as administrative changes impacted the ability of some departments/units to participate fully in assessment data collection this year. As noted above, each of the departments/units is moving forward to full implementation of assessment plans, and many have already utilized the data for program improvement. Additionally within the college last year, a pilot study was done by the Advising Office to assess the effectiveness of advising in response to results from the National Survey on Student Engagement.

In the year 2007-08, the College of Arts and Sciences will take (or continue) the following measures to foster the culture of assessment across the departments/units:

- The College Assessment Committee will continue to provide a venue for departments and programs to evaluate their assessment plans and share ideas on implementation and enhancement of those plans. The committee will be charged this year to assemble a best practices/lessons learned document for distribution.
- The College of Arts and Sciences dean and associate deans will be meeting with departments/units during 2007-08 to discuss the importance of assessment in compact planning, not only with regard to justifying curriculum improvements and changes but staffing/hiring requests and recommendations.
- The College of Arts and Sciences will initiate a Dean's Award to recognize faculty contributions toward assessment.

- The College of Arts and Sciences, through its Advising Office, will continue collegewide assessments. In addition to gauging effectiveness of advising, a four-year rotation plan will be implemented to assess the effectiveness of orientation programs, as well as experiences of freshman and transfer students within the college. These data will be invaluable in helping the college understand and make adjustments to offer the best student experience at WMU, and in turn serve as an effective retention tool.
- As part of the position description for one of our associate deans, should we be able to replace the position now vacant, we will assign an associate dean to work regularly with department chairs and directors in order to monitor the assessment plans in our college as well as to provide guidance and feedback for revisions of assessment plans.