

**Annual Report on the Measurement of Student Learning Outcomes
For Ongoing Program Improvement
College of Arts and Sciences**

**Memorandum from Dr. Thomas Kent, Dean
to**

Dr. Timothy Greene, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

The Dean's memorandum addresses the three (a-c) questions in bold provided in the report template:

- a. For each department/unit and using the evidence provided by the departments/units and other information available to the dean, evaluate the extent and effectiveness of each unit in using student learning outcomes results for:**

- 1. Informing planning at the department level**
- 2. Revising goals for programs**
- 3. Articulating or aligning curriculum with new or established partnerships (e.g., K-12, community colleges)**
- 4. Changing policies for admission or for transfer into programs**
- 5. Preparing self-studies for specialized program accreditation**
- 6. Other uses not listed above**

The extent and effectiveness of each unit in using student learning outcomes is described below for each department/program in the College of Arts and Sciences. The numbers in the text after the department name refers to the numbers listed above. For example if a number one is used, the answer refers to how student learning outcomes are used for informing planning; if a 2 is used, the answer refers to how student learning outcomes are used for revising goals, etc. If a number is not listed, then there is no use of student learning outcome for that information. For example, very few of our programs undergo self-studies for program accreditation thus number 5 is rarely addressed below.

Africana Studies:

No assessment impact report was entered into TracDat and no chairs report was received.

Anthropology:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Anthropology has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by streamlining its undergraduate offerings and revised its minor to ensure student success. To provide an opportunity for students to explore doing anthropology in the community including the understanding of ethical practice, a new course, "Anthropology in

the Community” was created. Additionally through student feedback, the department identified a programmatic need for enhanced student learning working space. The college, through compact planning allocation, provided resources for space enhancement.

Biological Sciences:

No assessment impact report was entered into TracDat, however a chair’s report was received. Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Biological Sciences has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

2. To begin to revise program goals by identifying the key concepts that we consider important for undergraduate majors in the biological sciences. This list of concepts will be used to design assessment tools for the program and be used as a basis for any program modification.

Chemistry:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Chemistry has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by working on incorporating improvements in content and method of content delivery at the freshman chemistry level including incorporation of clicker technology. To assist with improvements in laboratories, faculty have continued the authorship/coauthorship of grants to help revise the freshman chemistry lab instruction.

Communication:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the School of Communication has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by beginning to discuss ways to address the oral performance gap between freshman level and capstone experience. Review of the undergraduate and graduate programs are ongoing. Due to identified technological needs for the teaching of several COM courses, the college supported through the compact planning process the upgrade of 4 video editing stations.

Comparative Religion:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Comparative Religion has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by continuing discussion regarding redesign of the curriculum for both the major and the minor.

Economics:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Economics has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by beginning to put a greater emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills in the capstone course as the criterion to perform in the adequate or better level in the overall content and econometric methods categories has not been met.

English:

The Department of English spent the 08-09 academic year developing a new assessment and strategic planning initiative as they found that their past assessment activities were not aligned with current best practices and were not used in an informing way. A departmental Committee for Assessment and Strategic Planning (CASP) has been formed to oversee the process. Although this new plan will not begin until fall 09, continued collection of data in some areas has allowed the department to use outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by guiding the Graduate Committee to revise the doctoral qualifying exam structure.

Environmental Studies:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, Environmental Studies has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by beginning to address this year an area of concern to faculty and that is to enhance the student's quantitative problem solving skills. Additionally through student feedback, the department identified a programmatic need for a student community space. The college, through compact planning allocation, provided resources for the space enhancement.

Foreign Languages:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Foreign Languages has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by working to strengthen the department's link to other units and disciplines on campus. A full review of last year's results is planned for fall. To address student need in the College of Education, curriculum revisions were initiated to obtain education minors in Arabic, Chinese and Japanese.
3. Articulate new partnerships with area K-12 districts in response to changes in the foreign language high school graduation requirements for the graduating class of 2016. This will be an ongoing discussion for the coming years.

Gender and Women's Studies:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, Gender and Women's Studies has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing classroom success for both instructor and student. Recent preparation of a teaching manual and scheduled instructor training session is aimed at providing a meaningful instructor development experience. Revised internship instructions should help to provide a better experience for the student. Additionally through student feedback, the department identified a programmatic need for a student community space. The college, through compact planning allocation, provided resources for the space enhancement.
2. Evaluate assessment outcomes and as a result program goals were revised and curricular changes were initiated to redesign the major from a coordinate major into a standalone offering as well as to include more rigorous academic work. Through evaluation of assessment outcomes, Through compact planning the college provided resources to help promote the new major and the program in general as well as to provide a community meeting space for students and instructors.

Geography:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Geography has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing a need for students in the urban and regional planning concentration. During the past academic year, the department initiated the curriculum changes to change the concentration into a major.

Geosciences:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Geosciences has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing findings from assessment outcomes on a regular basis in faculty meetings. As a result of these discussions, it was determined that improved technology was needed in small conference/seminar rooms to facilitate graduate instruction. Through the compact planning process, resources were made available to Geosciences to begin to improve seminar room technology.
2. Evaluate assessment outcomes and revise undergraduate and graduate program goals with an a goal to continue assessment to improve the programs.

History:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of History has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing findings from assessment outcomes on a regular basis in faculty meetings. The 08-09 findings will be reviewed this fall. This continued review is important in understanding the impact of the revision of the entire curriculum that was initiated after curriculum

review this past year. Additionally to capitalize on the national reputation in public history, the department proposed the establishment of the H-lab, a state of the art training and research facility for use in training students to work with digital primary sources and produce digital media projects. Through the compact planning process, resources were made available to History to establish this facility.

Mallinson Institute for Science Education:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Mallinson Institute for Science Education has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing findings from assessment outcomes on a regular basis and by doing so candidacy procedures for the doctoral program were revised and discussions regarding delivery of the MA program are underway. Additionally curricular changes to revise course titles and descriptions for the undergraduate science courses for the K-8 certification students were initiated to better reflect content.

Mathematics:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Mathematics has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by addressing findings from assessment outcomes on a regular basis with the faculty. Evaluation of assessment data has found that there is a strong alignment of curriculum and instruction with state standards for secondary education students and continued discussion will focus on building strengths. Another major finding from the assessment data drew attention to a lower passing rate in recent years on the preliminary examinations of graduate students. Continued discussion may result in course content changes to better prepare students. Additionally through student feedback, the department identified a programmatic need for improvements in a common student community space. The college, through compact planning allocation, provided resources for the space enhancement.

Medieval Institute:

An assessment impact report was entered into TracDat however no chairs report was received. The number of students on which assessment data is available is low and more data is needed to interpret findings. Through the compact planning process however, a need for enhanced technology for instructional delivery was identified and resources were provided for a screen and projector.

Philosophy:

The Department has begun to revise its departmental assessment plan and the outcomes it will be measuring. The current approved departmental assessment plan does not meet the need and changes beginning fall 09 include baseline and longitudinal assessment of majors and review of alumni satisfaction surveys for graduate students.

Physics:

The Department became familiar with TracDat and the entering of data. Given the low number of physics majors currently assessment data is difficult to determine. The exception being the secondary education physics major and while WMU produces a solid number of majors their performance on the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification is low. Ongoing data collection is needed to inform changes. Through the compact planning process, a need was identified for equipment upgrades for two upper level teaching labs and resources were provided to improve instruction.

Political Science:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Political has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by continually reviewing assessment findings and implementing strategies over the past five years for student success. The department continues to work toward offering smaller class sizes for advanced majors and minors to allow for more classroom engagement. Pre-requisite changes were made through the curriculum process to allow earlier access for majors to a couple upper level courses thus helping to ensure timely degree completion. Additionally in recognition and promotion of student success in the major, the department initiated a student honor society.

Psychology:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Psychology has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by continually addressing findings from assessment outcomes on a regular basis with the faculty. In doing so, the faculty determined that in the original plan, many assessment outcomes were set in entry level courses where a combination of majors and general education students matriculate making evaluation of findings for majors somewhat difficult. Plans are in place to revise the assessment plan to more accurately reflect student learning of majors. Through the compact planning process a need for upgraded animal chambers in the teaching labs was determined and resources were granted to begin this upgrade. Assessment outcomes for the graduate programs were not measured this year due to accreditation visits.
2. Revise several program goals at the graduate level due to outcomes of accreditation visits by both the APA and ABA.
5. Prepare self-studies for specialized program accreditation visits by APA and ABA by using some assessment of student learning data, although both bodies concentrate on content of curriculum.

Sociology:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Sociology has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by continually reviewing assessment findings and implementing strategies for student success. Recent findings suggest a reduction in student performance in the criminal justice major which will be addressed this fall by faculty.

School of Public Affairs and Administration:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the School of Public Affairs and Administration has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by reviewing connectivity of student success to classroom instruction resulting in some course assignment changes, instructional development help and revision of syllabi and course design/content. Effectiveness of changes will be assessed in the coming year.
5. Prepare for completion of self-studies for NASPAA during 09-10 using assessment report.

Spanish:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Spanish has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by reviewing the previous year's results in the fall. Previous results have informed a change in how the assessment of oral competence takes place and digital recordings are now evaluated by one individual for consistency.
3. Possibly create or expand new partnerships with area K-12 teachers in response to changes in the high school foreign language graduation requirements for the graduating class of 2016.

Statistics:

Based on the evidence provided by the department and other information available to the dean, the Department of Statistics has effectively used assessment outcomes to:

1. Inform planning at the department level by reviewing the annually results in the fall. Previous results have indicated that communication skills in the discipline could be improved in both undergraduate and graduate students.

b. Evaluate the extent and effectiveness of college-level leadership and support for the use of learning outcomes results to improve student learning:

- **Since July 1, 2005, what documented commitment of resources (physical, fiscal, human, and technological) has the college made to advance a culture of learning? With what outcomes?**

Since 2005, the College of Arts and Sciences has committed a number of resources to support a culture of assessment and learning within the college. These resources include both personnel time and fiscal allocations. Examples of this commitment and outcomes (if available) are as follows:

- Each year through the college planning process the allocation of fiscal resources is granted to some departments to address issues identified as a result of assessment of student learning outcomes. Examples of initiatives supported include experiential opportunities within the major (e.g. Mock trial); enhanced technology for teaching and developing student skill sets (e.g. projectors, video editing equipment, etc); gathering spaces (infrastructure) for community building within a major, etc. Impact on students based on assessment is positive.
- Documented examples of impact of resource allocation on student learning will now also be required in future planning documents.
- Initiated in 2008, the college recognizes departments that have made substantial strides towards the use of assessment. To date four departments (Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and History) have been recognized with a cash prize.
- Since 2007, the college has supported a number of faculty and advisors to attend assessment workshops and meetings.
- In 2007-2008, under the leadership of the associate dean, the college assessment committee was reactivated and assessment best practices for the college were compiled and shared with departments.
- The college assessment committee website was developed in 2008.
- Individualize meetings with department chairs and key assessment personnel were initiated by the associate dean in 2007-2008 to discuss assessment plans and the use of TRACDAT.
- The college sponsored assessment Panels on Assessment, Training, Help and Support (PATHS) sessions for departmental chairs in 2008 to help them and their departments more effectively design assessment rubrics.

▪ **For 2008-09, were resources allocated to academic units based in part at least on the results of student learning outcomes?**

In 2008-2009, resources were allocated through the college compact planning process to address issues identified as a result of assessment of student learning outcomes. The specific resources allocated were identified for each department/unit in answers to questions under part a.

▪ **Does the college academic advising unit have a documented plan to regularly assess (a) delivery of services and (b) student learning outcomes in the context of academic advising? If so, (a) when was the most recent assessment of each, and (c) what improvements in academic advising have occurred as a result of the assessment of student learning outcomes?**

The College of Arts and Sciences Academic Advising Office has taken a leadership role with regard to assessment and advising. The colleges advising staff worked collectively to create a vision, mission and goal document with a plan to assess learning outcomes. The College serves as the lead organizer of a committee of assessment for University Advising that will assist the University as a whole to meet its mission/vision.

A documented plan for CAS advising is entered into TracDat and since 2007 it has regularly assessed in some way the advising operation in the college including (a.) delivery of services and (b.) student learning of such services such as understanding of general education and graduation requirements. Improvements (c.) in academic advising that have occurred as a result of assessment of student learning outcomes include varying modes of information delivery such as use of podcasts. For example, data suggested that the graduation auditing process was confusing and with the use of technology to produce a video, students can now watch at their leisure the details of the process. Also, the scheduling of appointments with advisors by students is now easier with AppointmentQuest, a 24/7 online appointment scheduler that is very popular with students. Other enhanced modes of communication include a Facebook group to provide college specific educational posts and an advising Twitter account to get students information quickly.

- **To what extent have the dean and the associate dean charged with responsibility for assessment of student learning demonstrated their understanding of the importance of assessment to student learning?**

The dean understands clearly the importance of assessment to student learning and has demonstrated his understanding through the following activities:

- I. Employing a department's or unit's assessment of the potential for student learning in the allocation of resources through the college planning process
- II. Making *student success* a core value in the college where student success is directly related to assessments of student learning
- III. Incorporating changes as described below in the college's planning process to reflect the importance of documenting that enhancements to student learning actually have occurred in departments and units that receive resources from the college

The associate dean charged with responsibility for assessment clearly also understands the importance of assessment to student learning and has demonstrated her understanding through the following activities:

- I. Initiating the college award for assessment to recognize the strides departments have made in the use of assessment.
- II. Reactivating the college assessment committee.
- III. Disseminating information and best practices with departments.

- IV. Promoting the use of assessment in departments and programs in measuring student outcomes.
- V. Promoting the use of assessment in measuring outcomes for college related activities.
- VI. Regularly attending assessment meetings and gatherings on campus and at professional meetings.

a. What are the 2009-10 college goals for the use of learning outcomes results to improve student learning?

Our goals include the following:

- Change our planning process to include learning outcomes in decisions regarding resource allocation
- Require from departments and units documented examples of improvements in student learning that occur from funding received from the college
- To align with the curriculum change process, require documented examples of anticipated student learning when new programs or changes in programs are proposed to the college