

## Assessment Luncheon Summary

Prepared by Neal Voelz and Holly Evers  
University Assessment Office

### Summary of Creating a Culture of Assessment Survey

We had 59 surveys returned from the assessment luncheon held on 18 January 2006. The survey questions are shown below. Participants were asked to respond to each question on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), with a 0 = "don't know." Each question had a separate response for the college/unit and university levels. Our goal is not to over-analyze the results from the luncheon, but to simply present the results and a few interpretations. If you wish to have the raw data from the survey please contact Neal Voelz (njvoelz@stcloudstate.edu).

A few people left blanks and we assumed these were "don't know" responses. The "don't know" results are shown at the end of each question and are presented in the distribution of responses figures (pages 4 and 5). It's clear that many luncheon attendees were not sure (or aware) of what is happening at the university level as evidenced by the much higher "don't know" responses. This is a result that will be closely examined by the University Assessment Committee.

### Survey Questions

Numbers in parentheses refer to percent "don't know" responses at the college/unit and university levels, respectively.

1. Interest in and awareness of assessment is increasing ("don't know" = 3%, 17% for college/unit and university levels, respectively).
2. A common language with definition for assessment terms has been developed and is generally understood (7, 24).
3. Assessment has been linked to unit/college/university missions and strategic plans (8, 36).
4. Student learning outcomes have been identified for programs (5, 46).
5. Students are aware of the assessment program and can comment on how well or poorly they are achieving learning goals (12, 47).
6. Priorities are established and explained using assessment data (12, 46).
7. Operational decisions are driven in part by assessment data (12, 46).
8. Assessment has been built into job descriptions (13, 54).
9. Periodically, there are workshops and other training opportunities on assessment (5, 20).
10. There are adequate resources (personnel, budget, reference or web materials) on assessment (7, 27).

11. My unit has a data base or other system to gather, store and report assessment data (5, 58).
12. Top level administrators regularly communicate about the importance of assessment (8, 22).
13. Assessment is discussed at departmental meetings and retreats (3, 58).
14. The importance of assessment is communicated at all levels of the campus (19, 27).
15. Participation and leadership in assessment is recognized and rewarded (8, 29).

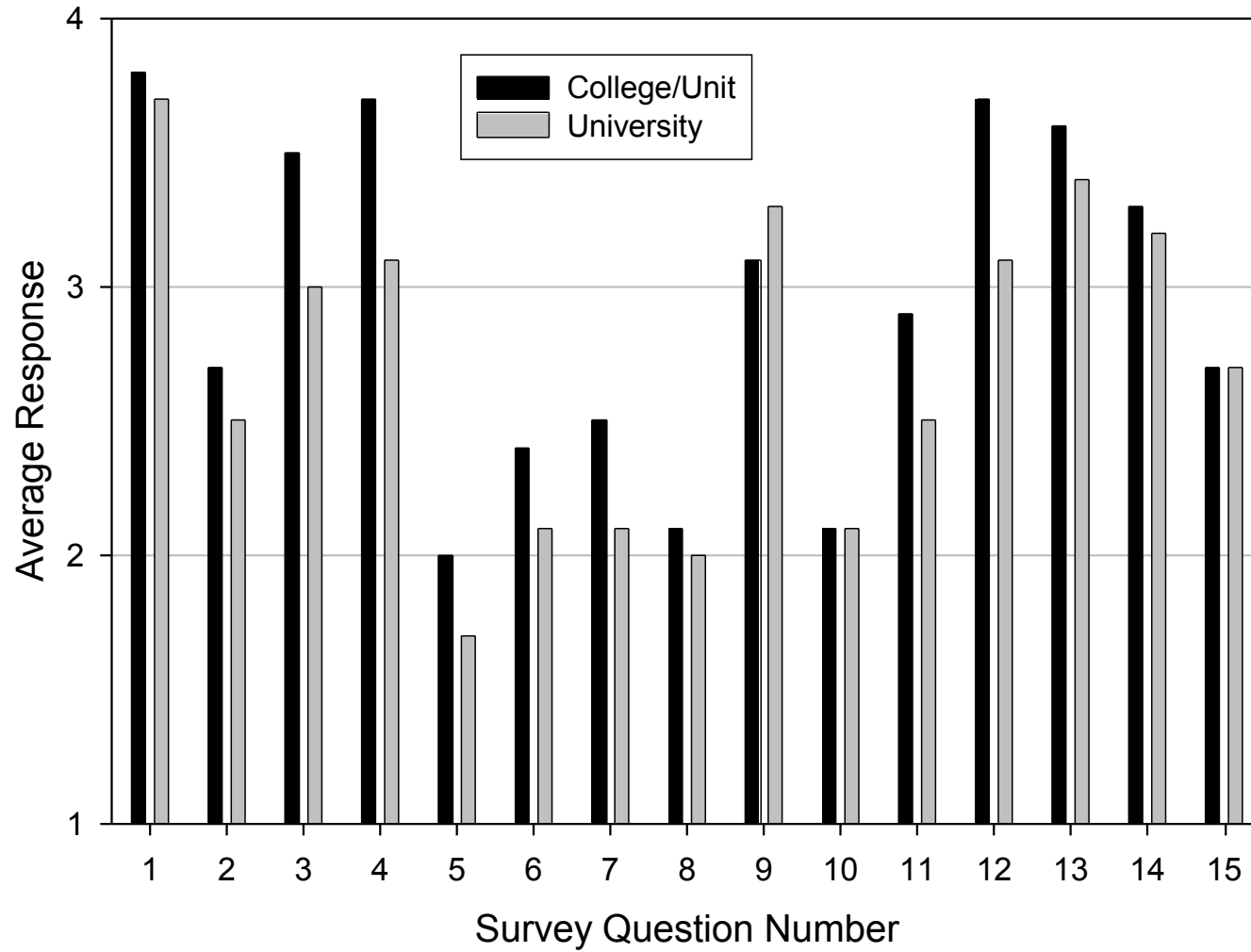
The figure on the following page (page 3) shows the average survey question response at the college/unit and university levels. “Don’t know” responses (i.e., 0) were not included in the average response graph. In general, increased interest and awareness of, and communication about assessment is perceived to be high. In addition, relatively high scores are seen for identification of student learning outcomes at the program level and linkage of these outcomes to college/university missions and the strategic plan.

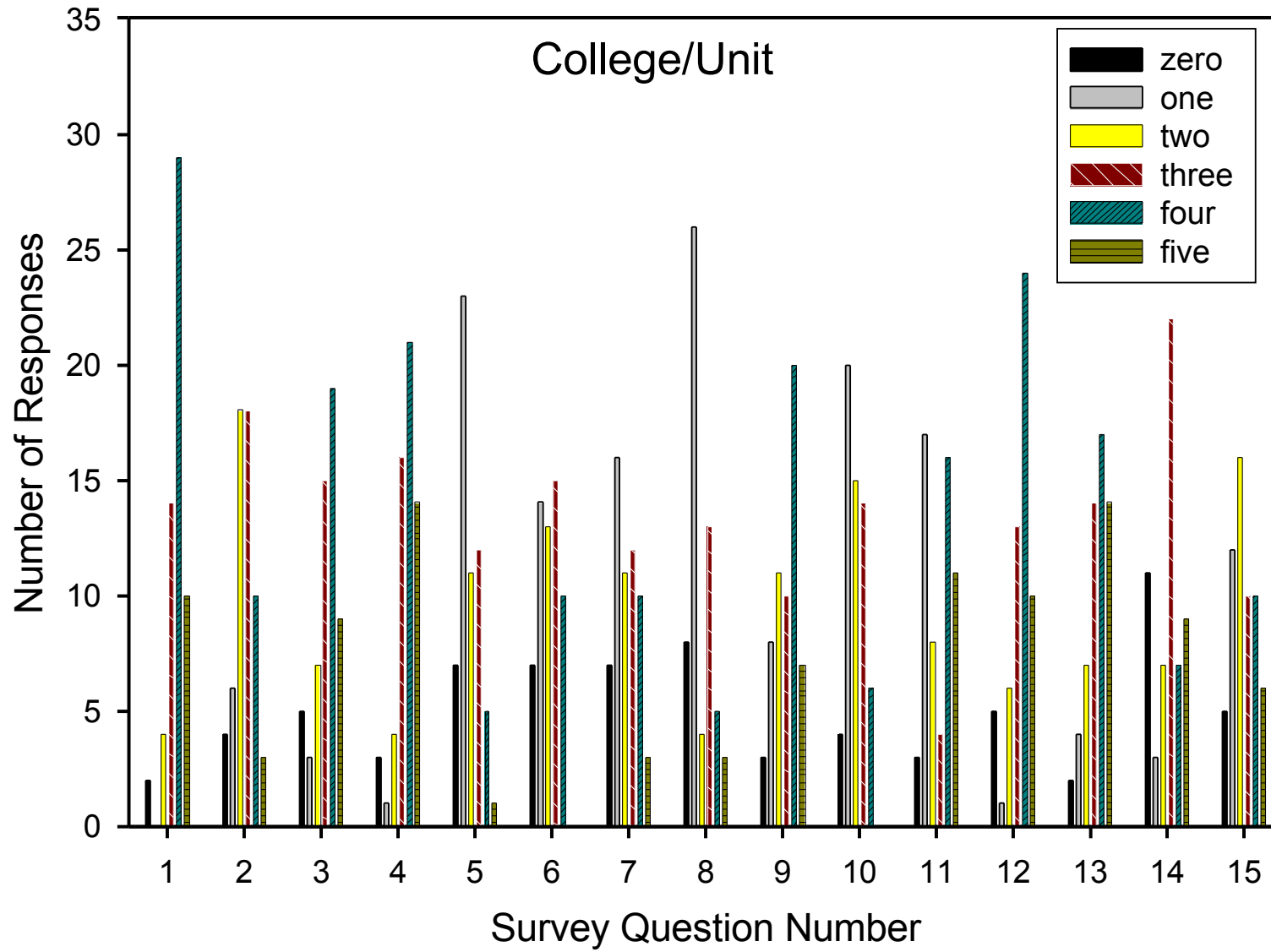
Four main areas exhibited the lowest scores at both levels:

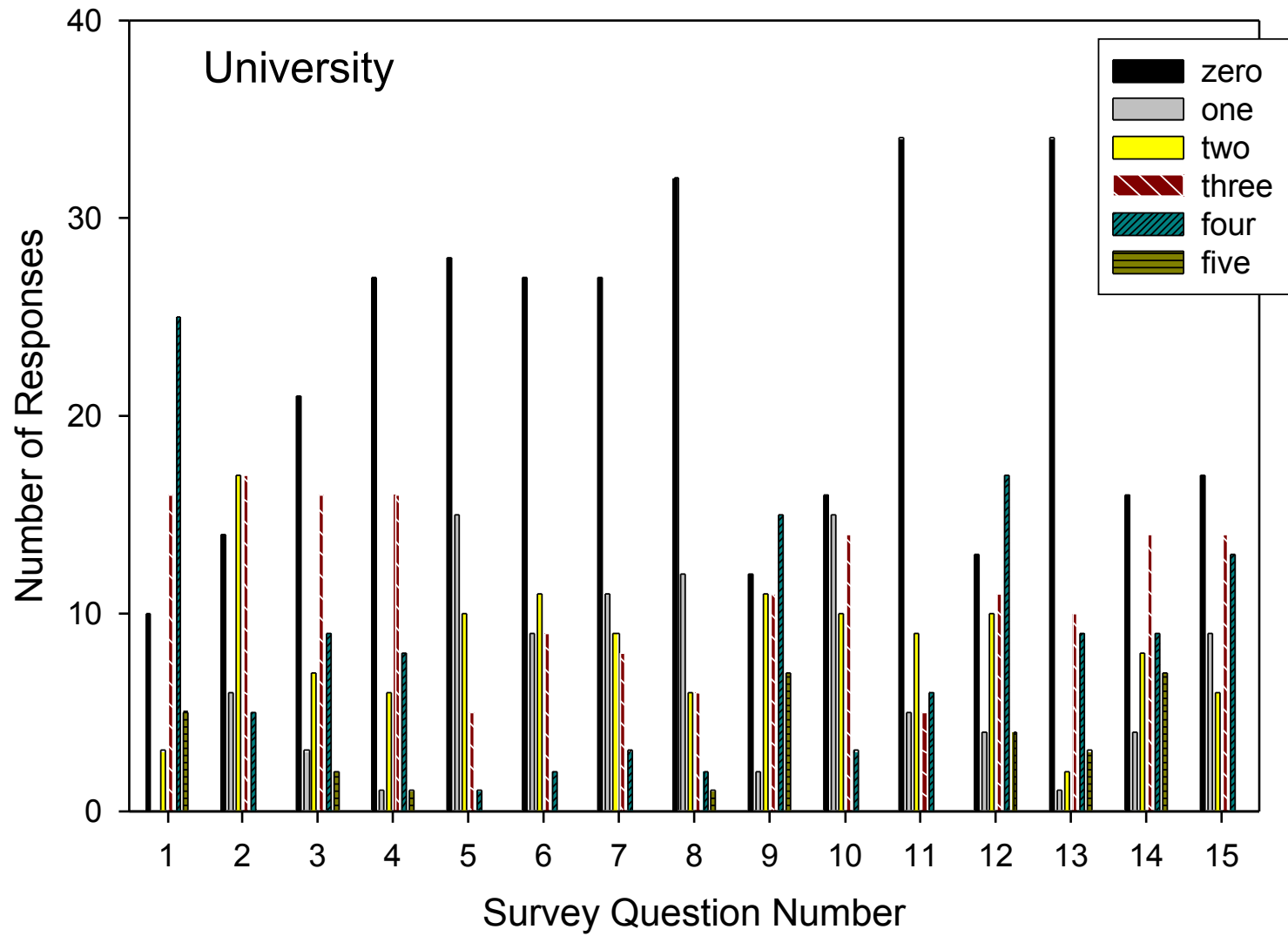
1. Student awareness of assessment.
2. Making decisions based on assessment data.
3. Including assessment in faculty job descriptions.
4. Having adequate resources to conduct assessment.

Figures on pages 4 and 5 indicate the total number of individual responses for each question (zero = don’t know, one = poor, etc.).

## Creating a Culture of Assessment Survey Results 18 January 2006







### Results from the Table Discussions

The combined comments from all tables for the five discussion questions are shown below. We chose not to analyze the comments from the table discussions, although many comments relate to the results from the survey (e.g., need for more resources to conduct assessment).

1) What are the benefits to you, your department/unit, and your students of doing a good job on assessment?

- Clarity of purpose
- Clarify new directions you need to grow
- Access for students and programs
- Students learn more - more effective at what we do
- Listening and paying attention to what students are saying
- Refines observations to create good questions
- Cost effectiveness - making decisions based on data
- We get reaccredited. If we don't get accredited, our students don't get jobs
- We can show outside we have quality
- Focus on being prepared
- Conferences full of assessment workshops, opportunity to present
- Gives data to make better decisions, apply for grants use in other ways
- Establish credible reasons for resource requests
- Reassess resources in place and need
- Benefits students as they learn more if feedback loop working
- Brings students into conversation - made more active learners as aware of course goals
- Makes students realize we are interested in their learning
- Community feeling
- Having clear goals to strive for... enhances coherence between courses within departments.
- agreed-upon set of departmental learning outcomes (which are necessary for effective assessment) means that upper-level instructors can count on knowledge and skills from lower-level courses.
- being able to use data to inform decisions about course and program changes.
- able to demonstrate what students have learned. This is necessary for most accredited programs now.
- Forces instructors to set more explicit goals; students know what to expect (rubrics); more effective focus on "performances of understanding". In the latter is David Perkin's phrase denoting that certain knowledge must be demonstrated through a performance, whether writing an essay or playing an instrument
- may provide useful or compelling data for stakeholders (accrediting agencies, Legislature, employers and professional organizations)

- Timely intervention, based on assessment data
- Monitoring and adjustment of the instruction and department goals based on assessment data
- Good assessment data can be used as a model of students' wide range of assessment strategies and tools. Eventually the students will build an assessment routine into their job setting to make comprehensive plan
- Instructors can also measure their performance level and make adjustments.
- It could shape curriculum development to benefit students and their employers
- Data can be used constructively to encourage retention
- It could help students plan and graduate
- It could ease the burden on departments during accreditation/review
- It could aid in decision making on class size, delivery techniques, enforcement of prerequisites, etc.
- It can aid faculty in making appropriate decisions on course revisions
- Thorough process of monitoring and adjusting with goals and objectives in instruction, department goals
- Modeling assessment strategies
- When discussing mission, goals, vision - always learn from discussion.
- It ultimately leads to improved student outcomes
- Constantly improving teaching and delivery of instructions
- Benchmarks and transition points identify where students are compared to standards; to advance in the program
- Competencies – indirect and direct portfolios provide multiple methods of assessment
- As a result of assessment, developing and trying tools that meet your department needs.
- When comparing data - discover things that were unknown, try to see where dept. can improve
- Need to find ways to identify the quality of our programs through data - gives data for making our case. use real data
- Prepare students for occupations - ask advisory boards and outside employers to give input to program. highly competitive disciplines require high standard.
- Provide an in-house method to identify what can be improved - internal process. Becomes meaningful
- Should not be an external process of measurement and interpretation of data. Need quality control of data
- Peer review
- Reliable data - knowing thy self - speak with authority
- Understanding class and program effectiveness
- Promotional effect - you can promote and express strong suits (to potential students, faculty and univ. admin.)
- Recruitment
- Internal loop in dept important
- Enables us to improve student learning

- Improves teacher preparation
- Content and coherence gap/loops are closed programmatically.
- Will we use it to “shrink” our curriculum? Electives.
- Thinking about assessment (outcomes, tools...) has helped us improve our teaching
- Helps focus class assignments - beneficial to professor and students
- Clear expectations for students
- Data can drive decision making
- Mission and goals come alive, faculty begin to “own” the work
- On an aggregate level - clarifies expectations of learning
- Eliminates unnecessary courses – lacking program goals - reinforces program goals
- Identify gaps in teaching and learning
- Verify alignment to professional standards
- Attempt to address the needs of our student customers - the university is a business
- Feedback from students on faculty effectiveness
- How well students meet learning goals of course and where need to make changes
- Does the curriculum make sense based on what is going on in each course
- Challenges assumptions about what students know (prior knowledge)
- Does course make sense in terms of university mission
- Better align curriculum (eliminate Overlap)
- Whether parts of department fit together (different programs synergy)
- Accreditation - better quality programs
- Makes my issue our issue - better communication among dept members
- If use information to improve, then students benefit
- Even if we don't use info - self-reflection good
- Strengths and weaknesses are found
- Keep external myopic decision makers off our backs
- Helps prioritize using limited resources
- Helps to make curricular changes - make curriculum lean and mean

## 2) How can the University/College/Unit create a culture of assessment?

- Inclusiveness
- Having an active committee all the time
- Assessment coordinator in all department with reassigned time
- Show value of it. We're allocating resources because of data, inspire others to get involved
- Start conversation with faculty and continue it no matter what reception is.
- Questions involving change take continuous action, no graduation. Always need some office of institutional research with current data and connect assessment coordinators to center

- Make research center data accessible
- Regular college and university meetings of assessment personnel
- Receive praise from outside
- At forefront of other institutions
- Assessment workshops fill up, other schools want to get up to speed.
- Become leaders
- assessment needs to be rewarded and evaluated in professional development plans and tenure/promotion decisions.
- we discussed that SCSU needs to create a comprehensive culture of assessment, meaning that there needs to be acceptance of flexibility and a wide variety of types of assessment. In particular, acknowledged the need for qualitative approaches to assessment.
- Assessment needs to be largely driven by faculty... bottom up...programs and departments need to develop their own assessment programs to be the primary owners of the data.
- Building assessment strategies throughout document
- Constant ongoing training throughout the year.
- Devote some portion of department meeting time to learn, discuss and training in the use of assessment
- Individual on-going progress monitoring as well as assessment for college level
- Do what you are doing
  - Great website, luncheons, grants
  - Put some resources into creating technology to support the effort
  - Reward assessment efforts
  - Continue having curriculum committees - demand assessment on course proposals
  - Make sure faculty are aware of benefits to be reaped through data-based decision making
  - Communicate, clarify, celebrate the benefits e.g. retention, etc.
  - Continue web and email communications
- Reinforce and support efforts
- more \$ (money)
- embedding assessment into the job descriptions and RPT (promotion and tenure)
- use assessment data for decision making at all levels
- making it “the way we do things around here”
- create an assessment cycle that is on-going and that is staggered.
- Meetings like this are great to get people from all different depts.
- Place assessment into article 22 and 25
  - Criterion one - assessment activities
  - Criterion two - any scholarship that comes from assessment
- Assessment is more than just service to the dept. (Boyer model). Process is important. To do it well is time intensive
- Should all faculty who do assessment get reassigned time or is it a norm of all faculty. Any research project gets time allotted for assessment

- Curriculum work needs to be merged with assessment
- All new programs need to have a component of assessment
- Assessment sometimes falls on one person - chair. So some incentives need to be given to accomplish the work
- Assessment data is never punitive
- Weekly lunches
- Communication
- Sharing info about what is being done (i.e., with career services)
- Produce a long term commitment - talk to job candidates about assessment
- Not a fad but a modus operandi that legislators and the governor's office are demanding
- Be more pro active in communicating need for assessment to those "outside the choir"- faculty communicate more to colleagues
- Need to know how to do assessment in discipline
- Sabbaticals to reconnect to discipline? Connect to assessment? needs to be meaningful and accurate data- not just making us look good.
- Identity SLO
- Persuade faculty – not evaluating faculty
- Faculty shouldn't get in the way of students' education
- All students are not going to succeed – set standard and move it up (not down)
- Maybe a general college build assessment into the faculty - recognize programs that integrate and build on the assessment - interest/need of marketplace
- Using data from follow-up studies is powerful to creating the culture of assessment (assessment had meaning)
- Incentives - financial
- Focus on improving programs with the assessment process
- Department assessment coordinator - 3 credits reassigned
- Opportunities to share instruments - faculty forum day
- Workshop time for faculty to work on assessment at the department level
- Assessment days on campus
- Assessment cycle takes time (3-5 years)
- What are the benefits of such a culture?
- Unfunded mandates – lack support and recognition
- Punish teachers and schools such as NCCB in K-12 education
- Align student services such as financial aid with expectations of learning, i.e., releasing monies in time to purchase texts.
- Availability of student services such as the "Write Place"- hiring enough tutors to meet student demand
- Students more involved; increase awareness of assessment in some areas (not education)
- Data should drive the budget - multiple measures (our entire table was unaware of how assessment data are being used to drive budget)
- Explain how data are going to be used to reduce the fear factor (above two points should de-politicize the campus)

- Clear definition of what we mean by assessment
- Resources for data collection
- Workshops!
- Mandatory assessment workshop - bring your data
- Never stop talking about it - especially when accred. visit goes away
- Do more (something) with assessment info
  - Follow through
  - Frustration when good info, etc. isn't used
- Keep up the collection of data
- Reward assessment at several levels
- Rewards - seeing that results happen, resources (release time, \$)
- Integrate throughout, always see assessment in everything we do at all levels – dept. should talk about it regularly - Deans communicate with chair's, etc.
- Support for depts. - retreats, having speakers come in, newsletters
- Let dept. develop methods, don't impose

3) What are the primary obstacles to doing assessment and how might we overcome them?

- the way the university “does” assessment changes over time - we should standardize on a model - develop a framework/foundation of our assessment methods
- some depts. are resistant to change
- clarity of vision and relationships within the university on assessment
- sharing data between SLO and academics and expanding assessment into SLO areas
- not enough time
- mental energy required
- senior faculty sometimes block initiatives
- Faculty resistance
- No culture of assessment
- Has to be valued with reassigned time
- Central support, resources, help formulate questions
- Assessment focus accessible to all
- Common language
- Educate assessment coordinators
- lack of funding and time. Especially in the beginning, assessment takes time and effort.
- dearth of incentives
- some faculty may never respond, never do assessment (unfair to those who do)
- Money
- The time and energy at instructor level - reduced # of students per class (35-40 is too many) - search for training opportunities, take classes.

- Vague goals and criteria - training mentoring and obtain models
- Lack of awareness, clarity as to what is assessment
- Lack of faculty reassigned time to make such efforts
- Lack of resources (time, computers, clerical staff)
- Vague goals/objectives
- Faculty apathy
- Faculty do not value assessment
- Faculty do not know enough about it – “they are already grading papers”
- Faculty overwork
- Faculty get feedback from students and say that is enough
- Human nature to be conservative (wary) about evaluating oneself.
  - Distrust that data will be used against them
  - By nature it involves outsiders
- Some aspects of student outcomes are difficult to measure
- Difficulty of reliability and validity of measurements
- Some disciplines fall into areas where multiple measures are needed
- Balancing academic rigor at SCSU is not the same as a place like Harvard
- Faculty very individualistic in course evaluations
- Defining critical assessable skills/goals/objectives
- Financial and time
- Where to put what is collected- i.e., student portfolios-DVDs – digital needs more storage capacity - have student keep the portfolio
- Samples
- Subsections of skills - don't have to assess all students on all skills
- Some faculty don't want to do it
- Accreditation helps
- Need for dept/college leadership
- Faculty time
- Inconsistent use of good assessment across campus - need for professional development
- Need for systematic schedule of implementation that of incremental - not as intimidating
- Myths about assessment (misconception)
- Need for a model that lives on
- Need to be part of the RPT process
- Qualitative versus quantitative
- Identifying what's meaningful in the field to be assessed
- Expecting a student “experience” certain learning, i.e., theater
- Some skills sets, the criterion level varies
- Compromise ideal means to measure, nothing taken away - more work added
- Data system is lacking
- Fear factor about how data will be used (misused)
- Training - lack of
- Lack of synergy within dept if only are few are doing it

- Wanting too much data - can't measure everything - use should drive collection
- Willingness to know and do something with information
- Visible assess. plan - or at least not communicated
- Fear of change
- Clear distinction between assessment and evaluation
- Keep assessment as transparent as possible
- Distribute basic info on what assessment is and isn't
- Don't let one or a few people do all of the work - broad support
- Early summer workshops – make a few model departments that can then spread the word, etc. – tie it in with presentations and conferences
- Always include assessment in workshop days
- View it as a long-term investments - now faculty less resistant

4) What kinds of resources do you think you need to support assessment?

- Release time for assessment coordinator in department
- Workshops on campus within a college
- An actual assessment office, coordinator and keep it, support staff
- Campus-wide data collection point, accessible for storing and getting data
- Website
- Common language with definition for assessment terms
- Continuous assessment efforts, supported and financed to facilitate regular university and program accreditation without stress of crisis mode
- Maintain data collection to be prepared
- Connect to strategic plan
- Time and money!
- need college level full-time assessment coordinators, as other institutions have done (e.g., Wichita State)
- regularly offer assessment workshops
- Time and money
- Mentoring
- Trained professional who can consult with individuals and provide help based on their needs
- “Multiple Jim Pestas - clone him!!!”
- More time, technology, awareness
- Time, training, mentoring
- Time - release time
- \$\$ (Money)
- local/dept expertise - shared outcome and effort from everyone
- realistic timeframes
- electronic submission required from faculty – accountability with definitive definition on what should be included
- we need assessment dept and IR office and staff
- need to have data available

- Higher percentage of budget allotted to assessment
- Proposal for assessment grants. Evaluated by peers. Reassigned time.
- University commitment to full time University assessment. Need solid university/college/department infrastructure.
- E-portfolios – efolios, more storage
- Standardized method of record keeping married to student
  - 2 part student record
  - integrated (unlike elumen)
  - e.g., nursing and help with acceptance into program
- ways to evaluate - not just on grades and numbers
- support at college level - leadership
  - reassigned time
  - assessment committee (out of hide, time and \$)
- support staff
- increase univ. research office - connect to dept assessment directors and assessments
- tools – major field assessment tests
  - funding - course fee? Amer Chem Society exams budget? Student pay for license certification
- budget
- Faculty time
- Recognition (excellence in assessment - individuals/departments)
- Sophisticated website on assessment with examples
- Money for assessment conferences
- Assessment days for the campus
- Money for grants to departments to work on assessment
- Assistance for faculty (assessment consultant)
- New faculty support (workshops over time) – CETL - hands on
- Did not address other than concern about funding for assessment expectations
- Need a central resource for faculty to go to develop assessments, i.e., a clearing house
- How do we learn how to develop good assessments?
- Need data analysis assistance for faculty
- Support - clerical support and time for faculty to do work
- Data system or software - centralized system
- Membership in professional organization that support assessment so their resources are available to us
- Expertise available on campus that is college specific
- How about resources for nonacademic areas
- Retreats to educate
- Better reward systems, recognition
- Include assessment as a part of teaching component. Show evidence that learning objectives are being met
- Always include assessment in workshop days, etc.

- Build assessment into all new faculty orientations, etc.

5) How should the University/College/Unit deal with the data that are collected?

- A professional research collection office in contact with all offices who need data, two-way communication (what do you have, what do you need) - staffing?
- If we see numbers change, how do we respond
- Collection and dissemination and analysis
- What does the data show us?
- Gives us all a broader perspective to have the data
- Data can show what we do, positive, negative
- Data can show need for resources
- Website that general public can understand - potential students, parents, legislature
- Must be ongoing not just when accreditation comes up
- this is a tricky issue that needs to be dealt with in a cautious manner
- unclear who "owns" data.
- IRB should have a position on University wide data
- assessment data itself should not be used in any evaluation/promotion/tenure decisions (but only the process)
- need to be careful about faculty fear that assessment results may be used against them at the same time that we need to be able to collect, analyze, and to disseminate assessment information at all levels
- Share, discuss, compare, analyze and reflect upon it with parties involved to be able to implement. Monitor and adjust class, program, department goals and objectives
- Use it for decision making on curriculum prerequisites (class sizes, delivery technology)
- Use it for accreditation
- e-lumen as a model
- make sure its accurate
- there are too many restrictions on access to data - need an IR office that is adequately staffed
- depts. would be required to complete annual assessment data reports
- demonstrate sustained interest in the people at the University
- avoid "Big Brother"
- avoid "just a fad"
- align with other accreditation efforts and external accountability efforts
- taking what's general and unconscious and making it specific and conscious.
- Be careful how "data" are defined. Need more than just numbers.
- Evaluate the data we have already.
- Not individual faculty - collective data
- Identify areas that need to improve, more resources

- Curriculum changes are made based on data
- Use data to drive the budget
- Outside Valhalla - can see examples of what is working
- Celebrate quality
- Assessment data reflecting quality
- Press releases identifying quality accomplishments
- Peer review of data
- responsibly, ethically, swiftly
- how does budget follow what we learn in assessment - interpretation will remain political
- strengthen areas
- provide a format for recognition of assessment
- data must be analyzed, reported, publicized
- multiple ways to do assessment - allow for this
- report on SLOs identified and realized
- department made x number of changes based on the data - then know we're successful
- Make decisions based on data (hiring)
- Enhanced website for office of institutional research - national studies
- Develop indicators of success - department level, college and institutional
- Need an investment in technology to collect the data
- Accreditation efforts (NCA/HLC) must live on.
- Need system of dissemination of data across campus – institutional, college, department, program
- We need to demonstrate to the campus community how data can be used effectively
- Need good response rates
- Need a standardized administering of assessments to be able to compare across universities
- Use data in a transparent manner
- Triangulate the data
- Keep it primarily in the dept. – let depts. save reports