

## Assessment Progress Report, Fall 2000

Submitted by:

Brenda Wentworth

Director of Assessment

St. Cloud State University

### Overview

During the past few years at SCSU assessment efforts have been focused on implementing program assessment using direct measures of student learning. The Faculty Director of Assessment position has been increased to full-time. This new appointment made in 1998 includes a fixed term replacement in the department from which the Assessment Director is tenured. SCSU has a collective bargaining governance structure and the Office of Academic Affairs chose to support assessment by reassigning a full-time faculty member to devote 100% of his or her duties to campus-wide assessment. This will assure that assessment is faculty led, faculty owned, and faculty generated.

The Director has offered campus-wide assessment workshops to faculty, including "Guidelines on Writing a Program Assessment Plan" and "Writing Assessable Program Goals". These workshops will be followed by a workshop presented during the 2000-2001 academic year on "Means of Assessment," which will suggest methods of assessing student learning outcomes.

In addition, the Assessment Office has co-sponsored with the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence workshops and events that combine faculty development with assessment. For example, last spring's Faculty Workshop Day included a keynote address by Mary Ellen Weimer (author of *Improving College Teaching*, *Teaching Tools*, co-author of *Teaching on Solid Ground*, and editor of *The Teaching Professor*, a monthly newsletter on college teaching), as well as separate workshops conducted by her on teaching and assessment. A Faculty Forum workshop presented by the Assessment Director and faculty member, Chris Gordon, on "Using Course Evaluations to Improve Student Learning" suggested ways that faculty could get information about what students were learning in their classes as well as document teaching effectiveness.

The Colleges of Business and Education have formed college assessment committees to organize and lead their program assessments. The COB assessment plan and The COE assessment plan is on their respective websites. Types of assessment activities that are being used to assess the COE's plan are also located at their website.

These two professional colleges have more common goals college-wide than the more diverse programs in the Colleges of Science and Engineering, Social Sciences, and Fine Arts and Humanities. Both professional colleges have plans, implementation strategies, and agreed assessment activities to assess student learning at the college and program levels. In the other three colleges, assessment activities are not focused at the college

level, but at the program level. Departments are at different stages of program assessment implementation.

### Institutional Culture

SCSU values student learning and the mission statement of the institution reflects that value. It is stated, however, in terms of processes (providing opportunities, fostering, preparing, etc.) and not in terms of student learning outcomes. Many departmental assessment plans also state their assessment goals in terms of processes rather than student learning outcomes. The Faculty Director of Assessment has been invited to attend the Strategic Planning Committee meetings. The intent is to assist the SPC to focus more on student learning in the mission and purpose statements for the university and to be sure assessment is included as a part of strategic management. The workshops presented by the Director of Assessment are to assist faculty members in learning how assessment can support their teaching. Assessment is a component of good teaching, not an addition to it.

Over half of the programs wrote their plans with student learning outcomes as the focus of the plans. The Director of Assessment is working with departments who wrote objectives based on processes to focus on writing student learning outcomes. As program leaders learn more about assessment and its purposes, they are striving to do authentic and meaningful assessment activities.

### Shared Responsibility

#### General Education

The General Education program at SCSU consists of 13 courses. Five courses are grouped as a Core and are required for all students, English 191 (Introduction to Rhetorical and Analytical Writing), Speech 192 (Introduction to Speech Communication), Mathematics or Statistics 193 (Mathematical or Statistical Thinking), Philosophy 194 (Critical Reasoning), and several departments in the College of Social Sciences (such as History, Economics, Sociology, etc.) offer 195 (Democratic Citizenship). The remaining eight courses are taken in three areas. These distribution areas are Humanities and Fine Arts (two to three courses), Natural Sciences (two to three courses—one of which must be a laboratory course), and Social and Behavioral Sciences (two to three courses). SCSU also has a General Education requirement of courses designated as MGM (Multicultural/Gender/Minority). Within the distribution areas, students must take three courses designated MGM. All of the distribution areas offer a variety of MGM courses. Within the MGM requirement, students must take one course designated Racial Issues. The General Education program tries to provide students with a balance of courses that may complement their major programs.

The General Education Committee has developed measurable outcomes for the Core program. Assessing learning outcomes from the Core experience will lead to more coherence in the General Education program.

Students will integrate principles, themes, and skills from the different Core areas.

Students will identify and analyze problems in various contexts and will design solutions.

Students will learn to learn by employing various methods to obtain, classify, analyze, synthesize, and apply knowledge.

Students will communicate their learning through various methods.

Students will recognize the value of learning for personal growth and discovery.

In addition, the General Education Committee is working on student learning outcomes based on the five criteria of the General Education program. Core learning outcomes are linked to the General Education learning outcomes and all are linked to the university's mission.

Draft of General Education learning outcomes:

Students will show they are competent at a bachelor's degree level in university academic skills.

Students will explore subjects outside their majors and minors and will relate those subjects to traditional disciplines as well as their majors and minors.

Students will use inquiry and critical judgment to make decisions.

Students will examine human values.

Students will appreciate the lives of people from cultures and situations other than their own.

The General Education Committee is also discussing dissemination of learning outcomes to all campus constituencies after they have gone through an approval process. The General Education Committee continues to work on possible measurements for those outcomes. An Assessment Newsletter will shortly be published and sent to all campus constituencies that identify the learning outcomes and suggest how they might be measured.

The diversity curricula at SCSU (MGM) are undergoing a review in which student learning outcomes are being identified. These learning outcomes are being linked to the General Education learning outcomes and the university's mission. We anticipate completing the work and disseminating the outcomes through an Assessment Newsletter during the 2000-2001 academic year.

#### Programs

Over half of the programs at SCSU have identified measurable student learning outcomes. Many of these outcomes are currently being measured with the help of grants from the Assessment Steering Committee. (See Mini-Grant Recipients for a list of grant recipients and a brief description of their projects.) Grants are offered each fall and spring semester for faculty members who wish to assess outcomes in their programs. (See Mini-Grant Proposal and Executive Summary for copies of the request for proposals for both reassigned time to develop instruments or additional money to help defray departmental and individual costs in preparing, administering, and analyzing instruments and their data. On this web page is also a copy of the Executive Summary required from each grant recipient.) It is the intent of the Executive Summary to promote ongoing assessment activities. Assessment should not end with the completion of the grant project.

The Faculty Association, led by the Faculty Senate, is requesting annual reports on assessment activities and results from programs (See Reporting and Using Assessment Results) and from the Director of Assessment. Faculty members recognize the importance of sharing assessment ideas and working across disciplines to encourage assessment activities. The Director of Assessment is working closely with the Faculty Senate to get their input and strengthen faculty commitment to assessment on campus.

The Assessment Steering Committee is working to encourage more direct measures at the program level. The committee uses the grant monies allocated in the assessment budget to support activities in programs (including the General Education program) that directly measure the stated student learning outcomes. The committee is also working on a more detailed timeline to institute a "culture of assessment" on the SCSU campus.

As the University Curriculum Committee reviews course and program proposals, their expectation of clear learning objectives is being altered. The forms currently request "course objectives." The committee wants to see course objectives from the point of view of what students will learn and they want those objectives directly tied to the content of the course in the "course outline." This will enable subsequent assessment activities to be more readily apparent to the faculty in the programs/classes.

In addition, the Assessment Office continues to work directly with the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence to provide faculty development opportunities that enhance both teaching and learning. The Director of Assessment currently serves on the Advisory Board for the Center. Our offices are adjacent and we continually communicate with each other regarding activities and workshops.

## Institutional Support

An annual budget is approved by the CAO and includes salaries for a full-time director, a part-time secretary, a graduate assistant and a work/study student. The budget also includes approximately \$30,000 per year for assessment mini-grants to encourage faculty to develop instruments and activities to assess their programs. The Assessment Office moved into the new James W. Miller Learning Resources Center in September. The new offices and resource room are beautiful and welcoming to faculty, students and administrators. The university is working on supplying more technical support through the Office of Institutional Research. The Assessment Director is currently working with that office to seek out software and support for campus-wide electronic portfolios and to work towards providing support for on-line assessment instruments developed by faculty at SCSU.

Faculty perceive that no reward structure currently exists for those who engage in assessment. Because of our collective bargaining agreement, there can be no monetary incentive for such efforts. Faculty members continue to believe that tenure and promotion are based on publications and that other efforts receive less weight. The administration has been unsuccessful in convincing faculty that assessment efforts are valued in personnel decisions; however, administrators in the Office of Academic Affairs believe they can cite specific examples of positive tenure and promotion decisions based on faculty members' engagements in assessment activities. Assessment was not presented this year by the administration to faculty as a priority at SCSU, though it has been in previous years. The recent message has been that strategic planning is the priority. Although the Director of Assessment participated on the Academic Distinction subcommittee of the Strategic Planning Committee, assessment has been addressed only minimally in the unit, division, and university plans. The Director of Assessment is currently working with the SPC to address these concerns.

The university assessment plan needs more details of implementation inserted. The Assessment Steering Committee will be dedicated to that task this year. Implementation is still inconsistent across campus, but more and more faculty are becoming involved in ongoing assessment activities with support from the Assessment Office.

## Efficacy of Assessment

Although work has progressed on assessment for several years, it has not been fully integrated into the institutional culture and organizational structure. As indicated earlier, the Faculty Association is supporting efforts to improve widespread participation in assessment activities. Assessment plans based upon student learning outcomes are in place in over half of the programs. Assessment is happening within some programs, results of assessment efforts are shared with departmental colleagues, program changes are made; but the most visible results are program changes recommended in the curriculum process. Such changes are occurring, for example, in the College of Fine Arts and Humanities, Department of Communication Disorders:

"We have used the assessment results to understand what aspects of our program are working well and to make changes in our undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

#### Departmental strengths

Our graduate survey results indicate that student advising is strength, so we have not changed our methods of advising.

The 100% pass rate of our graduates on the National Exam in Speech Pathology and Audiology (NESPA) suggests we don't need to change much in the content of the courses offered.

Our pass rate of 100% on the NESPA is much higher than comparable graduate programs (national passing rate at Master's (Comprehensive) universities = 74%) (Source: Educational Testing Service).

#### Curriculum changes

We added CDIS 639, Dysphagia, after the results of our last re-accreditation site visit in 1992.

We added CDIS 675, Consultation, after the graduate survey results.

CDIS 415/515, Special Topics, are taught every summer as a result of our graduate survey asking if they are prepared for the increasingly diverse client populations (e.g. Infant-Toddler Intervention).

Based on student feedback about decreased clinical supervision during the summer, we increased the number of clinical supervisors available in our departmental clinic. Feedback from students and supervisors this summer has been very positive after this change.

On our graduate survey, employers rate "in-service preparation" between 4 and 4 1/2 on a 5-point scale. In CDIS 642, Audiological Evaluation and Management, CDIS 635, Aphasia, and CDIS 457, Clinical Program Organization, students are now required to be able to outline the characteristics of a "good" in-service, and/or conduct in-services in class and critique in-services given by other students.

Graduate employee survey results are used to recruit possible internship sites for CDIS 650, Medical Internship.

We moved the Speech and Hearing Science classes (CDIS 324 and 325) to the undergraduate level.

We moved CDIS 426/526, Neuroanatomy, to the undergraduate level".

Another example from the College of Fine Arts and Humanities is described below from the English Department:

"Program learning objectives to be assessed:

Ability to perform as a reader and writer to analyze, synthesize, and interpret texts through sensitivity to vocabulary and language, tone, imagery, point of view, and socio-historical context.

Ability to frame an effective written response, argument, or exposition that is appropriate for a particular purpose, audience, situation, and authorial role.

Familiarity with a broad range of literature in English in terms of its integrating traditions and its diversity.

Ability to recognize and work with technique and form of a work in relation to its genre, and to see works within a genre tradition.

Critical perspective/ability to respond with understanding to works that embody behaviors, values, and perspectives that are unfamiliar and familiar to the student as reader and writer.

Awareness of the disciplinary frameworks, vocabulary, and theoretical and critical issues in English studies.

Changes currently in progress in the English Department as a result of assessment:

All course syllabi will list the six departmental goals.

All courses will be assessed on the basis of some of the six goals.

An assessment cycle is being established.

Surveys, questionnaires, portfolio guidelines, and focus group questions are established for yearly assessments.

Data is available for an external review.

An ad hoc committee is examining the BA emphasis in terms of student suggestions."

An example from the College of Social Sciences comes from the Social Work Department:

"Competencies and sub-competencies:

1. To utilize in practice the values and ethics of the social work profession.
  - 1.1. To be able to discuss and analyze the fit between ones own values and the values of the profession.
  - 1.2. To be able to evaluate the values underlying social programs, policies, practice and research.
  - 1.3. To know and be able to apply the NASW Code of Ethics to value dilemmas inherent in social work practice.
  
2. To incorporate into practice an ecological strength-based model of human development at all levels (individual, family, group and community).
  - 2.1. To understand an ecological perspective and be able to apply it to assessment of individuals, families, groups and communities.
  - 2.2. To use a strength-based orientation to practice at all levels.
  
3. To use the stages of social work practice (engagement, data collection, assessment, intervention, evaluation and termination) at all practice levels (individual, family, group and community).
  - 3.1 To be able to identify each practice stage and demonstrate skill in each practice stage at various levels of practice.
  - 3.2 To be able to evaluate one's practice at each stage in work with clients at the individual, family, group and community level.

3.3 To link consumers with formal and informal helping systems.

4. To demonstrate knowledge and sensitivity and the ability to work effectively with diverse people. Diversity is meant to include but not be limited to age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and social class.

4.1 To understand ones own diversity and social position.

4.2 To understand ones own learning about diversity and areas of needed growth.

4.3 To demonstrate an understanding of oppression and the historical struggles of oppressed groups and their work towards social justice.

4.4 To pursue experiences and resources to actively engage in ongoing learning about diversity.

5. To understand the barriers to social, economic and political justice in families, organizations and communities.

5.1 To demonstrate knowledge of barriers to social and economic Justice.

5.2 To be able to analyze the ways in which social service systems empower and disempower clients.

5.3 To understand the link between individual problems and social inequality.

5.4 To be able to analyze ways of working with others strengths to overcome oppression and build non-oppressive structures.

5.5 To advocate for and with consumers to reduce injustice.

6. To effectively participate in mutual aid systems that promote group and organizational development.

6.1. To promote, facilitate and be part of mutual aid systems.

6.2. To function effectively within the structure of social service organizations.

6.3. To use supervision to enhance self-knowledge and professional practice strengths.

6.4. To work effectively with organizations towards large systems change.

7. To understand and influence social welfare policy.

7.1 To understand the history of social welfare systems.

7.2 To have knowledge of selected current social policy issues.

7.3 To understand how policy is made and implemented.

7.4 To have some knowledge of how to influence policy at various levels, agency, community, state, national and international).

8. To use research to improve policy and practice.

8.1 To demonstrate ability to evaluate professional journal articles.

8.2 To design and conduct practice research especially research of one's own practice.

8.3 To design and conduct program evaluation research.

8.4 To design and conduct policy research.

9. To engage in ongoing professional growth and education.

9.1 To join with others in organization to promote social justice.

9.2 To assess ones own needs for professional growth and development.

9.3 To maintain ongoing familiarity with professional literature.

9.4 To develop and utilize creativity in practice.

9.5 To enhance collaboration with colleagues.

The social work department assesses its program in the following ways:

An alumni survey is done every three years.

A graduating senior exit survey is done every semester.

A survey is completed by Field Instructors in which they assess the preparation students have received prior to becoming interns.

A competency survey is conducted where, at the end of every semester, students rate their growth in knowledge on each of the nine departmental competencies.

Actions taken as a result of assessment:

Graduating seniors in exit surveys have made a number of suggestions for the program. For example, they requested that current interns come and talk to students about their internship experience to better prepare people for internship. This suggestion has been built into the SW 443 Pre-Internship class. Students also asked for better preparation for the job market and for their future careers. A series of workshops for graduating seniors has now been added to the program. These workshops cover topics such as building work relationships, crisis management, and team building. In order to better prepare students for the social services work environment, the program also has developed a relationship with a local county whereby students can go and become acquainted with the Social Services Information System data base, prior to graduation. Portfolio assignments are in the process of being clarified and streamlined as a result of the exit surveys.

Changes are being made in the focus of some of the diversity content in the Portfolio sequence as a result of the Field Instructor surveys. The "awareness focus" will be shifted so that students become more skilled at working in situations with which they are unfamiliar or about which they have never read.

To date, the competency surveys have been used to assess whether all necessary content is being covered in the curriculum. For example, it was found a couple of years ago that some specific family practice content was not being covered adequately. It was thereafter incorporated into Practice I and Practice II."

The College of Business represents an example of an entire college working together on assessment plans and activities, sharing the data, and using it for program improvement. An assessment team comprised of faculty representatives from all departments (Accounting; Business Computer Information Systems; Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate; Management; and Marketing and General Business) has been active in the COB

since the fall of 1993. As part of its national re-accreditation self-study for the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the team produced a comprehensive Assessment Committee Strategic Plan that calls for cyclical collection of data from all stakeholders. The team's plan, data collection and use of data were instrumental in the college earning a favorable decision from AACSB. The COB has furnished the following examples of its use of assessment data by three of its departments and one of its programs:

Accounting Department (ACCT):

Feedback from alumni surveys and the department's advisory board has resulted in the following changes in the past two years:

Centralized advising for new majors;

More flexibility offered in the program by adding two accounting information systems courses and allowing majors an AIS program option that includes three BCIS department information systems courses as electives.

Business Computer Information Systems (BCIS):

This department has made the following changes as a result of meetings between department representatives and its Computer Advisory Council, which is comprised of department alumni and employers of its graduates:

Changes in the languages taught and teaching approaches in programming courses;

Increased "hands-on" approaches to teaching telecommunications and other classes;

Use of business experts in IT areas to assist teaching, especially in decision support systems course;

Added an electronic commerce course;

Integrated object-oriented methodologies across the department curriculum;

Added Oracle software to database course.

Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE):

Senior and alumni surveys suggested more emphasis in this department on technology and it responded with the following reactions:

Changed textbooks to those that highlight technology and offer internet links when appropriate, and more faculty show students how to use the web as a research tool;

Explored a technology emphasis in its program, but set aside those plans until the overloaded BCIS department can handle additional students;

Due to feedback from industry focus groups, FIRE has also added a new property and liability insurance course as a requirement for real estate majors emphasizing property management.

College of Business changes as a result of assessment:

Reacting to the service rated lowest by senior students in a comprehensive, benchmarked exit survey, the college substantially revamped its pre-business advising program. A faculty member served for all of 1997-98 as a temporary director with authority to evaluate needs and reorganize the office. The following changes have been made as a result of his and student recommendations:

Installation of new technologies used in administrative and advising functions.

Introduction of new tutor hiring and training methods.

Hiring a full-time director and full time lead advisor.

Remodeling of office space for more student-friendly access to services.

Students now report that the pre-business advising program has become a leading center for business and general education advising on campus.

Another example comes from the College of Science and Engineering, Electrical Engineering Department:

Objectives, outcomes, and assessment tools are found at the Department of Electrical Engineering website:

Closing the Loop

Developed educational objectives and outcomes with surveys to assess.

Conducting surveys: incoming course survey (fall 2000), outgoing course survey (spring 2000), senior exit survey (spring 2000), and EE curriculum student survey (spring 2000), and alumni survey (summer 2000), and employer survey (summer 2000).

Analyzing surveys: All Day Workshops (4/26/00, 8/28/00, 9/1/00), and meetings every Wednesday, 3:00pm-5pm.

Based on the surveys, analysis, and assessments, an EE curriculum change proposal was developed and approved by UCC and CCC (see the proposal on the website). All EE course syllabi have been examined and re-developed. (See the syllabi on the website.)

### Results of Assessments (Actions)

#### EE Curriculum Changes:

In the spring semester of 2000, a senior survey was conducted for assessing current courses in the electrical engineering curricula. A few changes were proposed as the results of the assessments:

Increase diversity of non-EE elective courses, CSCI 301, PHYS 329, and PHYS 333 are added to the list of the non-EE electives. (Selection of non-EE electives was very limited.)

ENGR 447 replaced PHYS 442 for the senior elective because students needed optical design. Some EE students are taking optical design as a minor from the Physics Department.

Replace STAT 353 by STAT 417 for improved course content in probability and random processes.

Replace CSCI 260/261 with CSCI 201 because EE students learn the same content in EE 102. Students need CSCI 201 because EE 261 doesn't cover enough content of C++ and CSCI provides extensive content coverage for C++.

#### Other changes in the EE program:

Improved ethical issues and cultural diversity content is spread throughout EE courses. Engineering ethics and cultural diversity issues will be introduced in various EE courses. The component will be added to the senior design courses by discussing particular issues and inviting outside speakers.

EE course syllabi are changed. All course syllabi will have the same format. Objectives and outcomes are included on each syllabus. Hands-on experience in the labs and lab content will be described on syllabi. The percentage of class time on each content topic will appear on the syllabi. Design content will be specified. Each instructor will indicate assessment methods for the course. (See the website for syllabi.)

## Conclusions

While assessment efforts at St. Cloud State are not consistent, programs in all colleges are moving forward to reach beyond implementation of assessment plans to actual usage of data for program improvement and enhancement of student learning. The culture on campus is making progress towards a culture of assessment, evidenced by Faculty Senate leadership, adoption by faculty of student learning outcomes for the Core and General Education, and the increased amount of consulting the Assessment Director does with departments. In the fall semester of 2000, more meetings have been scheduled with departments than in the entire 1999-2000 academic year. Faculty are taking assessment seriously and taking control of how it needs to be done.

Significant and lasting change takes time. Faculty members are taking ownership and leadership in assessment. Administration is supporting assessment through grants, a full-time director, and seeking ways to validate assessment activities in personnel and programmatic decisions. Cultural changes are hard to see unless one is inside the culture. Some of those changes are documented in the report above. St. Cloud State University is making progress towards a culture of assessment.

## MA Program in TEFL

The experimental TEFL MA program in Costa Rica will not be continued into a second cohort. At this time, St. Cloud State is working with the individual students in the first and only cohort to help them complete the program and receive MA degrees. The majority of the students have arranged to take course work in Costa Rica and this course work was then transferred to SCSU under the rules and regulations of the Graduate Office. We also offered one more course in the summer of 1998 so that the students would have enough courses available to them to complete their program. Individual students may also choose to complete the program in residence at SCSU. It is expected that the first graduates will complete their degrees in December 2000 with more in May 2001.