Assessment Conversations

LEAPing into the Future of Liberal Education Assessment

by Joe Melcher, Liberal Education Assessment Director

Background: This term, SCSU rolled out its new general education program, now called the Liberal Education Program (LEP). It has ten broad “Goal Areas” (see http://bulletin.stcloudstate.edu/ugb/gened.asp for details). Students must take 1 or 2 courses in each area for a minimum of 40 credits. In addition to being much simpler to understand and to fulfill, it is also compatible with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (as mandated by the Legislature and MnSCU).

In order for a course to have been accepted into the LEP, the originating department certified to the Liberal Education Committee that it would meet a set of 4-6 student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the Goal Area(s) it satisfies. For instance, a Natural Sciences SLO is to "formulate research questions and testable hypotheses, analyze and interpret data, draw inferences and conclusions, and identify further questions for investigation."

The Liberal Education Committee developed the SLOs with widespread faculty input and college representation on the committee. When it was nearly done with this work, MnSCU objected to the ways in which SCSU outcomes differed from the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. A compromise was worked out in which SCSU agreed to keep the MnSCU Goal Area names and objective, but to also list (and assess) our “objectives” and SLOs (see above website).

Assessment: Now that we have a functioning LEP, we need to carry out the assessment plan that the Liberal Education Committee developed (under the leadership of then-chair Judy Litterst) and that Faculty Senate approved. It is based on “LEAPs”, Liberal Education Assessment Panels—one for each Goal Area. Each LEAP will have 3-5 faculty members; LEAP chairs will comprise the Liberal Education Assessment Committee, which will provide overall guidance and coordination.

The basic idea of the assessment plan is that each LEAP will coordinate and guide assessment in its Goal Area. The exact form and nature of this process is likely to vary by LEAP; LEAPs and the faculty teaching in the Goal Area should cooperatively work out assessment methods and means of reporting, etc. However, the bottom line is that instructors will need to assess one to four SLOs per year and to share the results with their LEAP (or LEAPs—because many courses satisfy two Goal Areas). (Cont’d page 3)

$30,000 SUPPORTS ASSESSMENT GRANTS IN 2009-10

By Chris Inkster, LR&TS Coordinator of Assessment

The University Assessment program was pleased to award almost $30,000 to fund 15 assessment grants last year. In addition to the funding from the University Assessment Office, Undergraduate Studies funded $20,000 for the third category (see below). Twenty-one faculty from five colleges were recipients of the grants, which were limited to $2,000 per application.

Applicants submitted grants for one of three purposes:

1. Implementation of a program's assessment plan
2. Dissemination and use of assessment findings for program improvement
3. Improving student learning and success in high-failure 100- and 200-level courses

Grants to implement a program's assessment plan included:

(Cont’d page 2)
Assessment Grants
(Cont’d from page 1)

William Cook and Matthew Julius – COSE – $2,000
Major Field Test for 2010 Biological Sciences Graduates

Jamie Heiman and Catherine Fox – COFAH – $2,000
Assessment of English Department Graduate Program in Rhetoric and Writing

Shawn Jarvis and Isolde Mueller – COFAH – $1,618
Placement Testing for Foreign Languages

Jason Lindsey – COSS – $2,000
Assessing the Political Science Program's Introduction Course on campus and online

Peter Van Mullem – COE – $1,982
Development of the Graduate Sport Management Assessment Plan

Kyle Ward – COSS – $2,000
Initiating an Assessment Plan for Social Studies Education and Social Science Program

Grants to improve student learning and success in high-failure classes (funded by Undergraduate Studies) included:

Dale Buske, Sue Haller, Sandra Johnson, and Bishnu Naraine – COSE – $7,200 (three separate grants, each using different methodologies)
Using Undergraduate Learning Assistants to Redesign Math 193

Carol Gaumnitz and Bruce Gaumnitz – HCOB – $2,000

Homework Affect on Student Performance in ACCT 291
Sonja Goerdt, Sandra Johnson, and Bishnu Naraine – COSE – $2,000
Assessing and Improving Math 193

Christopher Kvaal – COSE – $1,450
Increasing the Success of Students in Biology 151

Laura Sather – COSE – $2,000
Statistical Thinking – STAT 193

Maureen Tubbiola and Michelle Wagner – COSE – $1,980
Sustaining the Biology Tutoring Center

Most of the grants used funding to provide extra duty days for faculty to do some of the work to plan, implement, and analyze the assessment projects. Other grants used funding to purchase national tests for achievement or placement, to pay student workers and graduate assistants for work on the projects, and to fund needed materials for the assessment projects.

Using ULAs (Undergraduate Learning Assistants) was a theme of the grants for high failure courses. Assessment and evaluation data from the projects showed an improved degree of student success from using ULAs to help students learn skills within basic math classes.

Several of the grant awardees presented information about their grant-related activities at a session during Convocation Week; others will present during January workshops.

Assessment grants for 2010-11 will focus on developing LEAP (Liberal Education Assessment Plan) projects. The application and process will be available on the assessment website soon.

ADVANCING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT THROUGH DISCUSSION (A.P.A.D.)

Would you like to start a conversation about assessment in your department? Let us help you by subsidizing the purchase of books to feed the conversation.

Visit our website for additional details.
Recently, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) has:

• Developed a SharePoint site. SCSU faculty and staff who seek institutional data reports should go there first.
• Revised its website, for which people external to SCSU are the primary audience.

Did you know that all SharePoint sites at SCSU are accessible through this easy-to-remember website: mysccu.stcloudstate.edu? (Note: “http” and “www” are not necessary.) From there, click on “Institutional Research” to get to the OIR SharePoint site. The OIR SharePoint site will contain all reports that are on the OIR website, and more!

SCSU faculty and staff can access most reports of interest to them: Under “Reports and Analyses,” click on “Institutional Reports.”

“Institutional Reports” includes two primary categories of reports:

1. Institution-wide assessment reports.
2. Standard accountability reports.

Standard accountability reports include enrollment profiles, retention and graduation rates, Common Data Sets, and SCSU Fact Books. From Institution-wide assessment reports, you can access reports on various assessment studies at the institution-wide level of analysis. There are sets of reports on the NSSE, Graduating Senior Survey, SOC Success, the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), the Graduate Studies Graduation Survey, and Involvement in Student Organizations. Also within that section is “Other Reports,” a set of single reports of miscellaneous assessment studies.

Thanks to Josh Hjelmstad (Information Technology Services), Karin Duncan (Instructional Technologies & Infrastructure Services), and David Sikes (Strategy, Planning, and Effectiveness) for their efficient and effective work on these projects.

Happy hunting!
IN THE KNOW

Assessment Peer Consultants

Here to help

Don’t know where to begin? Have questions? Need help? Let our assessment peer consultants come to your aid. They are available free of charge to assist programs, departments and units with any aspect of assessment of student learning.

People you know

Our consultants are people you know and work with every day:

Wendy Bjorklund
Shumona Dasgupta
Monica Devers
Chaturi Edrisinha
Lisa Foss
Melanie Guentzel
Michelle Hammes
Tom Hergert
Chris Inkster
Sandra Johnson
Frances Kayona
Jan Kircher
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Thomas Krueger
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Hiral Shah
Joyce Simones
Marcelyn Smale
Chukwunyere Ugochukwu
Stuart Umberger
David Warne
Brenda Wentworth
Gary Whitford
Carolyn Williams
Maria Womack
Jill Zasadny
Sandrine Zerbib

Visit our website for the full list of trained consultants!

Calendar

October 25-26, 2010
The 2010 Assessment Institute
Indianapolis IN

October 25-27, 2010
Library Assessment Conference
Baltimore, MD

November 15, 2010
College Assessment Reports Due

February 20-22, 2011
The 11th Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conference
College Station, TX

February 24-25, 2011
2011 NMHEAR Conference:
Assessment in a Time of Tight Budgets
Albuquerque, MN

March 3-5, 2011
AAC&U: General Education and Assessment 3.0- Next Level Practices
Chicago, IL