

Assessment Matters

A periodic publication of the Assessment of Student Learning Workgroup, Office of the Provost, Wayne State University, December, 2002

About "Assessment Matters"

This publication fulfills a recommendation of the Wayne State University Assessment Team to periodically update the campus community on activities related to assessment of student learning. We thank Dr. Donna Green and the Office for Teaching & Learning for providing a way to distribute this publication. Please look for future updates in the OTL Newsletter and at: <http://www.wayne.edu/provost/ateam/>.

Assessment of student learning at Wayne State is conducted by the schools, colleges and departments and is coordinated through the Office of the Provost. The Assessment Team also recommended establishment of an ongoing assessment working group. Members of this group are Jack Kay, William Hill, Steve Salley, Lisa Rapport, Paul Beavers, Paul Donn, Karen Lee, Kathleen Beard and Henry Robinson.

Assessment—For Accountability or Increased Student Learning?

by Karen Lee, *WSU Assessment Working Group*

The call for increased accountability from institutions of higher education was first stirred by the release of a fiery document published by the Wingspread Group. *An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education (1993)* provocatively raised the issue of the need for colleges and universities to do a better job of ensuring that its graduates acquire the competence and skills needed to compete in our global and technological society. The need to nurture a smarter citizenry is imperative if we are to continue to hold our national position in the world of commerce, trade and national security. And, in spite of the Wingspread group's initial claim to refrain from finger pointing regarding the ever increasing number of graduates earning degrees while failing to achieve anything more than minimum level competence, the message is clear that the onus is on us to re-think the way we do business.

It has become increasingly evident that an important element in any process for systemic change is continuous and ongoing assessment. The utilization of effective assessment tools will demonstrate our desire to be accountable to the community we serve. Placing accountability factors before the need to insure increased student learning is comparable to "putting the chicken before the egg." Our primary concern and consequential use of assessment tools must be for the purpose of identifying strategies that will result in more students learning at higher levels. Failing to accomplish this basic yet fundamental goal is certain to result in the erosion of the intellectual and earning capacity of the citizens of this community as well as the decline of the reputation upon which this university has flourished.

It is in this spirit that a call for a review of the assessment practices currently being utilized by the various colleges and programs at Wayne State University be undertaken. A university-wide assessment team was appointed in May 2001 [see Membership listing on back] by Provost Charles R. Bantz and charged with the task of providing answers to the guiding question "*How can assessment practices at Wayne State University be used to promote a culture of success?*" The team sought to 1) examine the literature as well as the practices at other institutions in order to establish a national context for assessment for institutions of higher learning; 2) survey and review assessment practices of the schools and colleges at Wayne State University; 3) identify a method for linking assessment to the university's revised strategic plan; and 4) suggest ways by which assessment can be used to assure continuous improvement.

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A final report was submitted to Provost Bantz on April 10, 2002 for his review and evaluation. The report included four major recommendations: 1) establishment of an ongoing assessment working group; 2) improvement of data collection, analysis and information dissemination; 3) cultivation of assessment as an ongoing process essential to continuous improvement of the academic mission; and 4) the allocation of appropriate funding to support assessment procedures. The report can be found on the Provost's Web site: <http://www.wayne.edu/provost/ateam/>.

Initial steps toward the fulfillment of the identified recommendations are underway.

The Assessment Working Group is excited about meeting the challenge before us and confident that our mission to better use assessment practices to increase student learning will result in a more fulfilling educational experience for all members of the learning community.

Comments, questions and assessment ideas can be addressed to Jack Kay (577-2200) or Bill Hill (577-2200).

Wingspread Group on Higher Education (1993). An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education. Milwaukee: Johnson Foundation.

Membership of the Wayne State University Assessment Team

Thirty-one representatives participated on the University Assessment Team. The following members contributed to the final report, *Advancing Student Success at Wayne State University through Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes*: Donna Alexander, Kathleen Beard, Paul Beavers, Robert Berman, Cassandra Bowers, Jose Cuello, Paul Donn, Marie Draper Dykes, Maria Ferreira, Donna Green, Lezlie Hart Stivale, Nikka Kensel, Stuart Henry, Bill Hill, Linda Hulbert, Jack Kay (chair), Cheryl Kollin, Marianne Krupka, Larry Miller, Susan Neste, Marilyn Oermann, Lisa Rapport, Ruth Ray, Henry Robinson, Trilochan Singh, Maureen Smythe, Don Spinelli, Steve Salley, John Vander Weg, Kaye Wallace, Tom Wilhelm.

Coming in February
Student Academic Success Summit
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday, February 21, 2003
David Adamany Undergraduate Library

Real Practices for the Real World

Keynote Speaker

9:30 - 10:45 a.m.

Professor Richard J. Light, *Harvard University, Education*

Author of *Making the Most of College*

Registration*

8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

— Viewing of Exhibits/Posters —

Sessions & Town Forum

11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

*Registration for this event includes complementary continental breakfast and lunch

For more information see: <http://sdcl.wayne.edu/uac/summit.html>

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