MEMO Subject line: Weighing the Baby – course assessment part 1
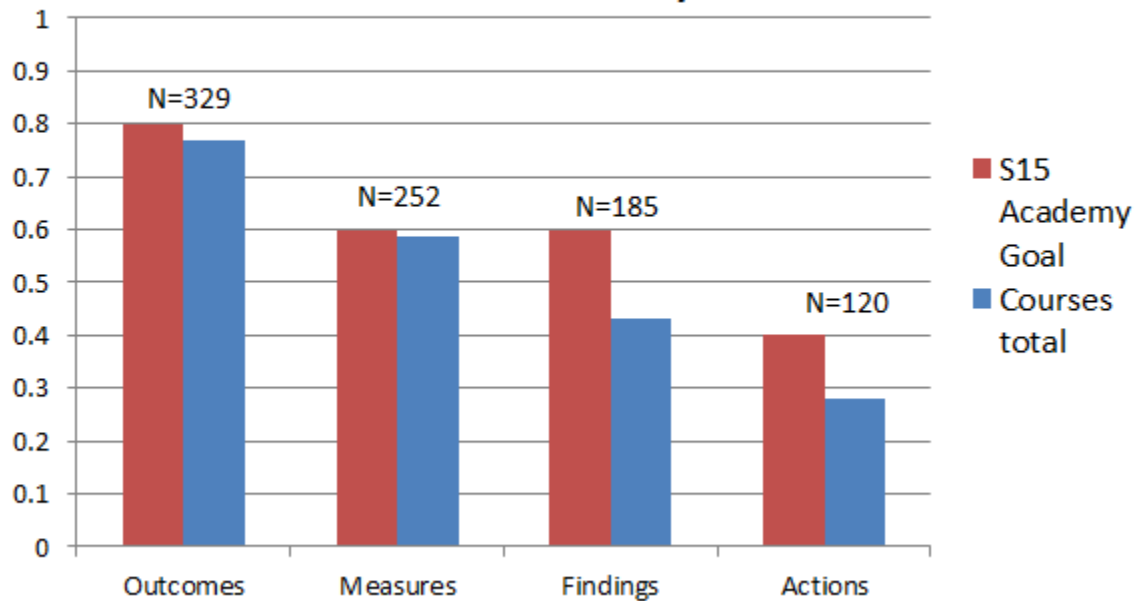
"You don't get a baby to grow by weighing it"

We all value student learning, and set high expectations for the learning that occurs through the activities and experiences that take place in our courses. Just as weighing the baby doesn't make it grow, assessing a course doesn't make it better. Yet, without some assessment, we lack the information needed to guide and sustain improvement, or the knowledge that the baby needs more or less food. As faculty, collectively and individually, we need to use "the information gained from assessment to improve student learning," and this is an explicit requirement of HLC Criterion 4.B as well.

There are great examples of courses in every school where assessment of student learning is being used effectively to impact student learning and achievement. However, if you, or your school, have course assessment findings that have not been submitted for the spring 2014, fall 2014 or spring 2015, please do so before the start of classes in the fall 2015.
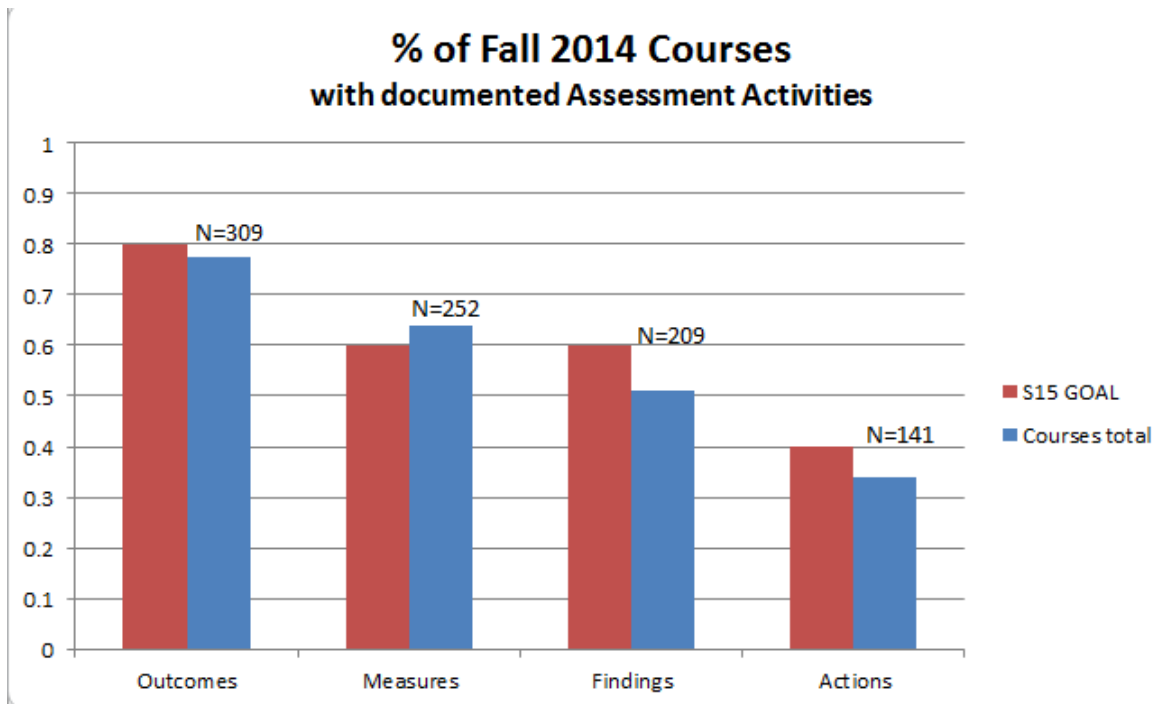
The university has set some benchmarks for migration of assessment data into our database. The university addressed an HLC concern raised in the 2011 site visit, which we resolved in our 2013 monitoring report, by adopting Tracdat. The benchmarks were established through our participation in the HLC Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. We set an institutional goal to have migrated course assessment learning outcomes for 80% of courses into Tracdat by spring semester 2015. We furthermore set a goal to have documented findings for 60% of courses, and actions for 40% of courses by that same time.

The good news, at this point, is that we have many faculty members who have entered data or submitted course-level reports and we are close in many areas to reaching our goals. The charts below compare the extent of course assessment for courses taught in the spring 2014 or the fall 2014 (blue) to the spring 2015 goals (red) for each category.

% of Spring 2014 Courses
with documented assessment activity as of March 2015

N=329
N=252
N=185
N=120

Legend:
- S15 Academy Goal
- Courses total

X-axis: Outcomes, Measures, Findings, Actions

% of Fall 2014 Courses
with documented Assessment Activities

N=309
N=252
N=209
N=141

Legend:
- S15 GOAL
- Courses total

X-axis: Outcomes, Measures, Findings, Actions

The Academy goals have been increasing over time, and will increase again for 2015-2016.

			outcome	measure	finding	action
COURSE		Spring 2013	60	20	20	10
HLC Academy Timlin	Spring 2014		70	40	40	20
		Spring 2015	80	60	60	40
		Spring 2016	90	80	80	60

To reiterate, if you or your school have course-level assessment data that needs to be documented please contact one of the members of The Assessment Committee. Information can be entered directly into Tracdat, or submitted using a template of your own design, or using a form like the Assessment Activity Log to prepare a course assessment report. Reports can be stored on an accessible network drive, emailed to tracdat@lssu.edu or sent by campus mail to D. Myton Admin206.

http://policy.ncahlc.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/AssessmentActivityLog.docx

MEMO Subject line: Weighing the Baby – course assessment part 2

"You don't get a baby to grow by weighing it"

We value student growth, learning and achievement, but occasionally we need to assess that growth. We use Tracdat not as a tool to do assessment, but as a resource to hold evidence gathered from our assessment activities. The results from course assessment need to be accessible across the university since courses are used by multiple programs, and to fulfill multiple missions (to satisfy general education, and as required or elective courses in programs).

There are four aspects that are common to all assessment activities:
        a) defining clear goals for student learning and achievement
        b) having meaningful and effective ways to measure achievement of those goals
        c) collecting information on the attainment of the goals
        d) using the information collected to improve student learning and the effectiveness of
        our assessments
After step d) we step aside briefly to document the assessment in Tracdat.

In part 1 of this series, we discussed our university progress in course-level assessment. We have many areas where good progress is being realized, and celebrate that achievement. If you, or your school, have questions or course assessment data that you need help with please contact one of the members of The Assessment Committee.

The next figure identifies the percentage of courses by subject area which have documented assessment findings and actions in Tracdat. For example, there were 6 Accounting (ACTG) courses taught in the spring semester 2014 over 80% of these have course learning outcomes and findings documented in Tracdat, and this exceeds our target of 60% for course findings. However, just over 30% of those courses have defined actions for the use of that assessment data to improve student learning, and that falls below our target of 40% for actions. These targets are set for the spring 2015. The percentages will increase again in 2016.

Documented Course-level Assessment - courses taught F14
as of March 18, 2015
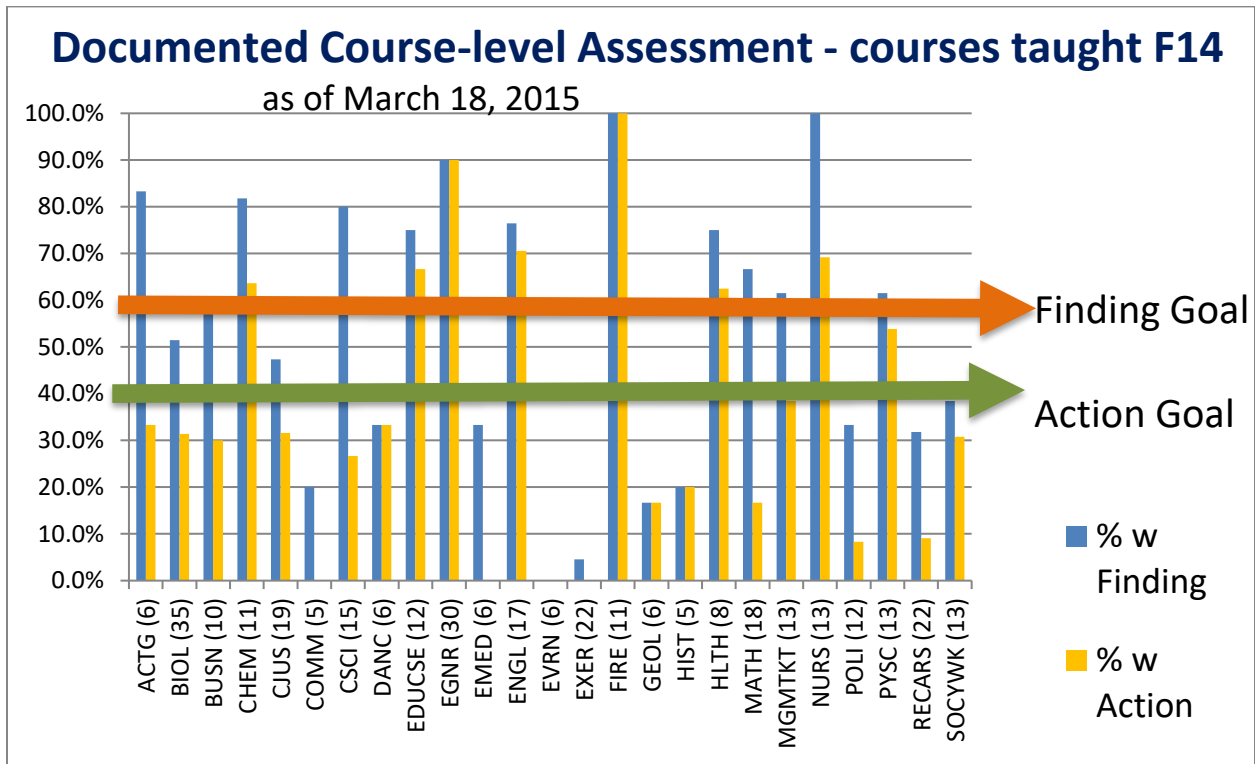
The 2011 HLC review team noted that "it is critical that LSSU continue to collect the identified assessment data in order to have robust baseline data which will then be used to judge future results. Once this have been achieved, it will be possible to use the results to drive programmatic improvements to general education and academic programs" (p.15). Criterion 4.B. requires that "the institution have clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for the assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals, [that] the institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims…[that it] uses the information gained form assessment to improve student learning… [and that] processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members."

To reiterate, if you or your school have course-level assessment data that needs to be documented please contact one of the members of The Assessment Committee. Information can be entered directly into Tracdat, or submitted using a template of your own design, or using a form like the Assessment Activity Log to prepare a course assessment report. Reports can be stored on an accessible network drive, emailed to tracdat@lssu.edu or sent by campus mail to D. Myton Admin206.