Lake Superior State University, MI

Project: From the Ground Up: Assessment of Student Learning

Version 8.0- Project

Q:	**What have been your accomplishments while in the Academy? Consider the range of these accomplishments, from the very specific (e.g., development of a rubric) to the more general (e.g., outcomes-based curriculum approval processes).**
A:	Lake Superior State University has benefited through our participation in the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning due to heightened institutional awareness of the value and importance of assessment *for* student learning as evidenced by increased participation, greater consistency, and greater engagement, in our institutional assessment activities. Assessment for student learning is increasingly understood as a higher good, moving us as an institution from a focus on compliance, or even continuous quality improvement for its own sake, to a commitment to put Student Learning First (the theme of our fall 2015 university convocation event). The LSSU Academy Project was developed in a time of intensive institutional focus on assessment that converged around the October 2011 comprehensive evaluation visit, and development of the self-study, leading to the reaffirmation of our accreditation with the HLC. At the time of our application for admission to the Academy, the university had just completed a comprehensive site visit which led the HLC review team to note in the assurance section report that: *"the team was unable to discern any demonstrable evidence regarding either the assembling, or the integration, of constituent assessment activities that were taking place on campus into an institutional database, or any locally preferred equivalent. Nor was the team shown evidence that whatever data that were either available to, or acquirable by, the institution were being analyzed to inform the planning and execution of academic, administrative, and support programs, and other activities that are important to LSSU's future."* (*http://www.lssu.edu/hlc/documents/Assurance_LSSU_112811a.pdf* p.14) As a result, the university was responsible for a monitoring report that included the establishment of a "university assessment plan outlining a clear process for collecting, disseminating and implementing assessment results." During the previous year the university had engaged in a comprehensive and immersive discussion related to our mission, vision and organizational model. Central to this discussion was a transition to a shared governance model that involved all members of the university community. The Assessment Committee, formed in the fall 2011 comprised of faculty, administrators, support staff and students, led a review of assessment database tools leading to the selection of Tracdat as our institutional database in the spring 2012. The Assessment Committee then assumed responsibility for the development and implementation of a multifaceted University Assessment Plan (UAP) which addressed academic and administrative assessment and introduced a common vocabulary and structure to the documentation of assessment findings and actions. The UAP, through our assessment database, systematically set out to formalize the assessment of course and program student learning outcomes, accreditation requirements from external agencies, general education outcomes,

assessment of the institutional strategic plan and the operational objectives of administrative and student support units. LSSU's participation in the Academy was not a requirement arising from the re-accreditation process, nor was the Academy used in lieu of monitoring. Rather, the university sought out the Academy as an opportunity to bring heightened institutional focus, and the support of the Academy community, to bear on the issues and challenges of strengthening our nascent culture of assessment and focus on student learning.

The LSSU Academy Project focused on promoting an institutional culture of assessment centered on student learning. The objective was to provide training and tools to assist faculty in the implementation of course and program assessment processes, as these processes are integral to institutional improvement and effectiveness. To reach this outcome we intended to utilize technology in the form of a university-wide system for collecting, disseminating, and implementing assessment results. We planned to build faculty participation through a staged faculty and staff development process with a dual focus. We planned to provide faculty training and feedback on developing and refining learning outcomes at both the course and program level. At the same time, we planned to work on shifting the ad-hoc and disparate assessment activities, then underway across the university, to a centralized location for the collection, aggregation, and dissemination of assessment data. As faculty and staff worked to formalize their existing assessment activities into the now-established university framework (outcomes – measures with targets – results – action planning), we believed that our institutional understanding and use of assessment data would become more refined and more robust. The explicit focus in Year 1 and 2 was planned to be on the refinement of course-level assessment, and in the latter two years we intended to expand to encompass program-level assessment. It was understood that assessment data alone would not be the end goal, but would become a tool for effective decision making and ultimately be used to improve student learning.

Through this project we intended to build a culture of assessment-based decision making that positively impacts student learning. We planned to standardize and systematize the collection of assessment data from across the university using assessment software (in our case in Tracdat). Building from the smallest component (and the one most relevant to the individual faculty member) we intended to begin our efforts by focusing on course-level assessment and then expand into program-level assessment. We hoped to develop a pattern for institutionalizing assessment which would be faculty and student focused, positioned in the context of meaningful change (relevant to both the faculty member's own instructional and research framework), and which would lead to improved student learning. To determine the success of this project we planned to use faculty surveys to determine satisfaction with the assessment system. We also proposed to obtain measures of project impact through the use of training records, audits of course and program activity, as well as attendance at meetings and conferences.

Link : 2011 HLC Review Team Report
http://www.lssu.edu/hlc/documents/Assurance_LSSU_112811a.pdf

Q:	Looking back, reflect on the evolution of your Academy project. What factors does your team feel most influenced how the project developed and changed?
A:	The central factors which influenced our project centered on the basic understanding of student learning assessment practices, that what is needed is neither social-science research-grade statistically significant findings nor perfunctory reporting of the average student grades as measures of student learning. These two extreme perspectives were recurring in our discussions as the process of entering current findings led to a re-evaluation of established student learning outcomes in courses and programs.

There were no substantial changes to the Project goals, scope of work or design. Simply stated, our goal from the outset was to build an institutional database to document both our assessment findings and our use of assessment to impact student learning. We began this work from the perspective,

reiterated in the site visit report, that "the disconnect with assessment has been the lack of university alignment, not with the gathering of assessment data" (*2015 HLC Review Team Report* p.13). The assessment database structure provided a commonality to all assessment practices requiring clear statements of the learning outcomes, the measures and activities by which those outcomes will be assessed, the assessment findings (either directly tied to the outcome, or findings related to the defined measures and activities), and actions based on those findings. These four components are the foundational elements of assessment, and they comprise the content of the standard assessment database four-column report.

As it turned out, in the beginning there was not a robust and pervasive understanding of the four components of assessment in many areas of the university. In the process of training on how to use the assessment database we found it necessary to cycle back to review the foundational concepts of measureable outcomes, meaningful measures, and actionable data as findings that can lead to impactful actions related to student learning. While there were forms of assessment occurring, the challenges went beyond the simple documentation process, but involved deeper challenges related to the role and value of assessment, the fundamental relationship of assessment to a focus on student learning, the necessity for all units to align their goals and activities to the mission, and the focus on evaluating their effectiveness in reaching those goals. Over time the university has shifted in its understanding of the preeminence of student learning as an institutional priority, much as accrediting bodies have made the shift from a review of institutional inputs (books, credentials, and square footage) to the outputs (student learning, employability, the public good and contributions to knowledge).

During the 2014-2015 academic year there was a substantive and beneficial change in the composition of the Academy Team. At the end of the spring semester 2014 the Academy Team recommended to the Provost that the Academy Project be formally integrated into the portfolio of the shared governance Assessment Committee. To provide some context for this recommendation, it may be helpful to review that in the fall 2011 the university established The Assessment Committee as a shared governance strategic committee with representation from academic administration, faculty, administrative professionals (AP), educational support personnel (ESP) and students. With our entry into the Academy for Student Learning in the spring 2012, a separate team comprised of four faculty members, each representing one of the four colleges, a dean and the associate provost were appointed to attend the Academy training in the summer of 2012. Through the past two to three years, the Academy project, and the work of The Assessment Committee have overlapped both in terms of their charge and to some extent their membership. During this same time frame, the Assessment Committee also petitioned the Shared Governance Oversight Committee to have the committee membership reformulated to include one representative from each of the twelve academic schools. The recommendation to merge the Academy Team into the Assessment Committee was intended to expand the understanding and support for the Academy goals, and to streamline committee processes.

Link : 2011 HLC Review Team Report
http://www.lssu.edu/hlc/documents/Assurance_LSSU_112811a.pdf

Q:	**How has institutional capacity for assessing student learning changed over your time in the Academy?**
A:	Participation in the HLC Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning has been the catalyst for significant change at the university, much of which has become a part of the institutional fabric. The Academy_project_website) was started as a way to document our Academy updates and resource files for periodic reports. The website quickly became the go-to place for the reports, analysis and public visibility related to all course and program assessment, as well as a model for the parallel website on general education assessment

- The university Curriculum Committee incorporated new content requirements for all course and program proposals that directly address documentation of assessment, through Tracdat reports, and explicit discussion of outcome assessment that led to the proposed action. The tone and focus of curriculum committee has changed significantly to the point that all members are fluent in the language of assessment, and expect documentation of assessment as the basis for curriculum change. This commitment is evidenced through the new course proposal form.

- A formal process of program review has been initiated using an institutional template that requires a narrative on program assessment. Early submissions using this new template tended to focus solely on course-level outcomes, an important element but not equivalent to program outcomes. Feedback from the Deans was used to shift the assessment focus beyond courses to the program-specific outcomes. The university now publicly reports progress on the Program Review website information including the periodic reports, feedback and Tracdat-based assessment reports arising from this process.Through the program review process, schools have been able to review and modify their program level outcomes, some of which had focused on inputs, or conditions the program would provide to students, rather than on the skills, abilities and knowledge the graduate would possess.

- Through a Title III grant project, the university has established a new Faculty Center for Teaching, supported through a Title III grant, which has become the centerpiece in our ongoing faculty development program. The Faculty Center facilitated the fall 2015 Development Day programming which prominently focused on student learning and its assessment. The Faculty Center has initiated a spring assessment event to encourage faculty to enter their assessment data before leaving for summer, and will provide assistance in navigating the assessment software.

- The Assessment Committee provides training and support resources on the assessment software through their website. Professional Development training and resource development has changed focus over time, become more streamlined, decreased face-to-face training in favor of providing asynchronous just-in-time resources, and focused on a narrow set of very short video training modules.

- The General Education Committee restructured the reporting format for the Outcome Task Committees to specifically address assessment findings related to the general education curriculum. These Task Committee reports, posted to the General Education Website present an integrated view of student learning from multiple perspectives: course assessment, ETS test results, and surveys of graduating seniors.

- Assessment outside academics has also been positively impacted by focus and attention associated with the Academy Project. Each organization unit represented on the organizational chart was provided a module to document their assessment, using the same basal template as used for academic affairs. Units documented activity related to internal goals and activity related specifically to the strategic plan. The shared governance Strategic Planning and Budget Committee has used Tracdat reports for institutional assessment, accountability and action. Professional development opportunities have been provided to area directors and managers through the university's Leadership Luncheon Series, including training on developing assessment measures related to unit goals.

The institution established at the outset of the Academy Project that our key metric would measure the documentation of course and program assessment evidence into our institutional database (Tracdat). To this end we set ambitious benchmarks which increased through the course of the Project. Goals were set for the number of courses/programs with outcomes, measures, findings and actions. The Project goals were set for the spring of each Project year. However, in actual practice the spring assessment results are not tabulated and entered in some cases until the pre-class fall professional development days. The net effect is that the status of assessment findings in mid-April, the time of this report, would be expected to fall between the Project goals set for spring 2015 and spring 2016. The Table below provides percentage values for each of the key metrics for Courses and Programs (course/program).

Percentage	Outcomes	Measures	Findings	Actions
	Courses - Programs	Courses - Programs	Courses - Programs	Courses - Programs

Spring 2015 Goal	80- 80	60 - 40	60 - 40	40 - 10
April 2016 Actual	92- 100	74 - 100	66 - 43	55 - 33
Spring 2016 Goal	90- 90	80 - 60	80 - 60	60 - 40

The support and promotion of assessment, focused on student learning, has been exceedingly clear in the communications from our new president, and the impact is obvious. Immediately prior to the resumption of classes in 2015 the president distributed a relevant assessment article Does Assessment Make Colleges Better? Who Knows? from the Chronicle of Higher Education to all faculty and staff, with a cover memo describing his own perspectives as a faculty member and administrator. Many faculty members, and even some staff, participated in a protracted electronic dialog about assessment practices, costs and the value to the individual faculty member and the institution. This represents the elevated level of institutional awareness and engagement in assessment, and while there is not unanimity or agreement on all aspects of assessment, the Academy Project has had a central role in bringing assessment to the forefront. While extrinsic motivation, i.e. pressure from the HLC, is not the best or most effective motivator of change it cannot be ignored as a significant factor. On a positive note the campus dialog on assessment has largely moved forward to focus appropriately on assessment *for* learning. Examples of institutional commitment to assessment of learning include the following:

- Frequent mention of assessment in the Provost's monthly newsletter.
- Communications from the assessment committee posted to the Institutuional Assessment website under the heading: Assessment Matters
- The Assessment Committee's actions, as evidenced through meeting minutes and reports, the ongoing updates to the assessment plan, and regular surveys used to gather and report on issues and concerns related to assessment.
- Funding for the Targeted Assessment Projects program directs dedicated funds available to support schools in the development, implementation and advancement of assessment activities on campus.
- Continued support of the assessment database, Tracdat, to provide continuity in approach, and effective reporting capability leading to institutional action. Read-only access to examples of courses, programs and school assessment is available using the username: "**Academy**" and the password "**guest**".
- Continued commitment through funding of travel to HLC conferences for faculty and administrators involved in assessment, support for assessment special projects, ongoing training on the assessment system software and its upgrades, and underwriting specialized accreditation cost.
- Increased size of The Assessment Committee to include a representative from each academic school to broaden institutional awareness, participation, and engagement in assessment discussions.

Link : Provost Newsletters
http://www.lssu.edu/provost/
Link : Chronicle: Does Assessment Make Colleges Better
http://chronicle.com/article/Does-Assessment-Make-Colleges/232371/
Link : General Education Assessment website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/generaleducation.php
Link : Assessment: Training resources
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/trainingworkshops.php
Link : 2015 Development Day
http://www.lssu.edu/provost/documents/ProfessionalDevelopmentDaySchedule2015.pdf
Link : Faculty Center for Teaching
http://www.lssu.edu/fct/

Link : Program Review website
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/SLOAP3.php
Link : Academy Project Website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php
Link : General Education Assessment website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/generaleducation.php
Link : Curriculum: New Course Proposal
http://www.lssu.edu/provost/documents/FormB_New_Course_Proposal_S15.docx
Link : Institutional Assessment website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/
Link : Assessment Committee website
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/index.php
Link : Assessment Mini-grant program
https://sites.google.com/a/lssu.edu/sg-assessment-committee/tap-mini-grant
Link : Tracdat - assessment homepage
http://lssu.tracdat.com

Q:	What evidence do you have that your Academy work is improving student learning?
A:	The Academy Project has catalyzed a campus dialog on the assessment of student learning, more specifically assessment *for* student learning. Through the assessment software, Tracdat, we have institutionalized a language and framework of assessment common to academics, student affairs, strategic planning, and all other areas of campus. This framework, based on the four fundamental building blocks of outcomes-measures-findings-actions, provides a consistent understanding and expectation for our assessment activities. Within the common format there is flexibility for using a different vocabulary within specific units, tailored to the needs of outside accreditors, specific disciplines or professional preferences. The Academy Project has elevated campus discussions on the role of formative and summative assessment, evaluation and assessment, direct and indirect measures, and qualitative and quantitative tools.

Assessment *for* student learning has had a direct impact on our students, including these examples:

- Students in the Fisheries and Wildlife program need to be ready for work in the Department of Natural Resources, including development of a solid knowledge of Michigan game fish, their identification and scientific names. In assessing student's success in fish identification, and through direct conversations with student, the faculty found that students had spent a disproportionate amount of time memorizing the spelling of the fish names, needed to be successful on the exam, to the detriment of their ability to recognize the fish themselves. The faculty, realizing that Latin spelling was not an essential skill for field work, changed the course exam to include a word bank of Latin names for the students to pull from once they identified the fish. To recap, students in BIOL310 were required to learn to identify fishes and correctly spell their scientific names in 2014 for full credit on ID quizzes and lab exams, whereas students in 2015 were provided a word bank of scientific names to draw from. Student scores on ID quizzes increased from an average of 7.9 (out of 10) in 2014 to 8.5 in 2015, and scores on lab exams increased from 64.2 (out of 100) in 2014 to 76.4 in 2015. Of course these were different students in different years (two lab sections in both years), but it appears that students better learned how to ID fishes when they didn't have to dedicate as much of their time to learning how to spell scientific names.

- After years of assessing creative writing courses, English faculty met at the program level to discuss the bigger picture and reached a conclusion: creative writing students needed to spend more time in the capstone course and in courses that emphasized professional skills development. The Literature - Creative Writing degree was too heavily literature intensive,

especially given that creative writing students also studied literature in the context of creative writing classes, in addition to traditional literature courses. The Program needed to do a better job balancing the needs of its students to be able to read and critically analyze literary texts with the need to have time to view literature from a writer's perspective and to create original works of literary merit. It also had to make room for high impact learning opportunities for creative writing students and make sure that it was fulfilling the university's mission to "launch students on paths to rewarding careers and productive, satisfying lives." These assessment findings became the rationale for changes to the B.A. Literature - Creative Writing program that were submitted to Curriculum Committee in January 2015. Pointing to evidence in Tracdat reports, the creative writing faculty was able to get approval for a reduction in total literature credits, increase in creative writing and professional writing credits, and a doubling of the time creative writing students will spend on their capstone projects. The new curriculum will now enable the program to guide students toward writing career "pathways." The changed curriculum takes effect Fall 2015 and is expected to result in a significantly improved achievement of course and program learning outcomes.

- The Chemistry Department here at Lake Superior State University offers multiple degrees approved by the American Chemical Society (ACS). The majority of faculty teaching courses (General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Analytical Chemistry and Physical Chemistry) offered by the department utilize an ACS exam as an assessment instrument for student learning. On numerous occasions, results from these examinations have been used to identify chemical concepts that students as a majority have struggled with. These concepts are then covered in additional detail the following course offering and targeted for discussion in our Structured Learning Assistance workshops. On a larger scale, program assessment in the chemistry department has recognized a need for coursework specific to forensic chemistry earlier in the forensic chemistry program. Currently, the only course specific to the field of forensics is CHEM 445 (Forensic Chemistry), which is taken by students in their junior or senior years (offered every other year). The addition of NSCI 110 (Investigations in Chemistry and Forensics) to the program will address this need and provide students with earlier exposure to a number of fundamental forensic chemistry concepts.

The Lukenda School of Business administers the ETS Major Field Test in Business every semester to its senior students enrolled in BUSN466 – Business Policy. ETS annually publishes a comparative data guide that allows institutions to compare their students' results with those of test takers across the nation. The LSB has collected and analyzed MFT data every semester since fall 2010 primarily to assess the common professional component of its programs. The School's goal is that its students' mean percent correct will equal or exceed the national mean in each assessment indicator area.

MFT results indicated that LSB students were weak in the Quantitative Business Analysis area. When a management instructor retired in 2012, the LSB hired a replacement with a strong quantitative background. The School also added MGMT371 – Operations and Business Analytics as a required course for all business students. The LSSU mean score in the Quanitative Business Analysis area has equaled or exceeded the national mean for the last six semesters.

LSB students have also scored below the national mean in the Information Systems area in recent periods. Thus, the School added MGMT280 – Introduction to Management Information Systems as a required course for all business students during the fall 2013 semester. The LSSU mean score in the Information Systems area has steadily increased since then and exceeded the national mean in the most recent semester.

The LSSU Academy Project has promoted an institutional culture of assessment centered on student learning. We have committed to transparency in every aspect of our project, documenting each step on our Academy Website). We provided training and implemented course and program assessment in every school and college. We have broad participation in the documentation of assessment activities through our university-wide assessment system. We brought varied and disparate assessment activities together in Tracdat as a centralized location for the collection, aggregation, and

dissemination of assessment data. We have promoted a culture of assessment based decision making that positively impacted student learning as described above. We have monitored at every step the progressive increase in assessment activity, and attitudinal changes through a survey on Course Assessment conducted early in the project, and a subsequent faculty survey of assessment perceptions.

Reports generated from Tracdat tabulate by unit, course or goal each of the following: the outcomes, measures, findings, and actions. A uniform format for the documentation allows for consistent reports – useful for all members of the university community. Evidence is documented in the system and extractable directly by all users of the system through Tracdat reports as evidenced below and on our institutional website:

- Program Review includes the review of course and program assessment as documented in Tracdat. At the time of each program review cycle, a point-in-time report was generated for all courses related to the program, and for the program outcomes directly. These are tabulated on our Program Review website
- Course-level assessment is the foundational element of all academic assessment. Assessment for courses associated with an academic program are presented with the program review data described above, however the status of assessment for all courses is also captured and presented on the assessment home page: Tracdat-based four-column Course Assessment Reports, documented as of April 2016, are listed below:
  - The Courses Arts & Humanities
  - The Courses Biological Sciences
  - The Courses Business
  - The Courses Communication
  - The Courses Criminal Justice
  - The Courses Education
  - The Courses Emergency Medical Services
  - The Courses Engineering & Technology
  - The Courses English
  - The Courses Fire Science
  - The Courses Language Studies
  - The Courses Liberal Studies
  - The Courses Mathematics Computer Science
  - The Courses Nursing
  - The Courses Physical Science
  - The Courses Interdisciplinary
  - The Courses Recreation Studies Exercise Science
  - The Courses Social Science

We acknowledge that, in spite of the tremendous gains since the inception of the Academy Project, our assessment initiatives continue to identify areas for improvement. We intend to continue to address various weaknesses and obstacles in a systematic and straightforward manner. Ongoing challenges include engaging some faculty in the assessment culture, and responding to faculty concerns about cost, time, and use of data once collected (ignored or used in evaluation) etc. We recognize that assessment plan improvement is an iterative process requiring time and energy and that incremental changes are indicators of long-term gains. We plan to ensure sustainability by building up intact structures, using the process that works within the culture of our institution, and the resources available. Tracdat has had a recent update that substantially improved the user interface, yet requires a short learning curve for faculty members just learning the older interface. The assessment committee has been expanded and this year we hope to see the final new members added to represent all academic schools to fill the six new vacancies. We believe that the next logical step is to ramp up the focus on co-curricular and student support assessment. The Assessment Committee needs to continue to grapple with its role in the assessment process as a supporter and advocate of assessment, providing feedback without crossing into evaluation. Other initiatives for the future include:

- Continue progress toward assessment for all taught courses and all programs
- Move the program review process beyond BA/BS programs to associates, certificates and minors
- Increase Assessment Committee role in program review with feedback, focus on program-level outcomes and expand beyond academic programs to co-curricular and student support programs.
- Provide support and feedback to the General Education committee

The university has institutionalized assessment as a valued process, important beyond the upcoming re-accreditation visit cycle. Sustaining the momentum in course and program assessment will be more difficult in one respect once the Assurance Argument is finalized, yet we believe we have developed an infrastructure for the ongoing documentation of assessment data and its integral connection to decision making. We are confident that our current focus will be sustained.

In conclusion, we affirm the importance of assessment *for* student learning, and assessment for the benefit of institutional effectiveness. The Academy Project has helped strengthen the culture of assessment at the university and provided an additional impetus to develop our consistent database of assessment findings and actions. We have a terrific faculty and staff who "put Students First", who value student learning, and who want to make a difference in the lives of their students. Our school motto, visible on the historic East Gate, states "Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve." Assessment is critical to determining if our students have truly learned what we set out as our instructional and social goals, and if they are truly ready to serve as fully qualified and well prepared graduates.

Link : Academy Project Website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php

Link : Survey spring 2012
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/CourseAssessmentReportSpring2012.pdf

Link : Survey spring 2015
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/Assessment-perceptions-faculty2.pdf

Link : Program Review website
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/SLOAP3.php

Link : Institutional Assessment website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/

Link : Arts & Humanities Course Assessment Report
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/Arts_HumanitiesAssessment-CourseFourColumn2016-04.pdf

Link : Biological Sciences Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/BiologyAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Business Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/BusinessAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Communication Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/CommunicationAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Criminal Justice Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/CriminalJusticeAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Education Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/EducationAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : EMS Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/EMSAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Engineering Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/EngineeringAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : English Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/EnglishAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Fire Science Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/FireScienceAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Link : Language Studies Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/LanguageStudiesAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Liberal Studies Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/LiberalStudiesAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Mathematics Computer Science Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/MathCSAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Nursing Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/NursingAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Physical Science Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/PhysicalAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Recreation Exercise Science Course Assessment Reports
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/RecreationExerciseAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf
Link : Social Science Course Assessment Report
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/SocialScienceAssessment-CourseFourColumn.pdf

Version 8.0- Update

Q:	**Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.**
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 7.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since February 2015.**
A:	N/A. No update was submitted as of September 30, 2015. —K. Davis

Q:	**What were your goals for the past six months—since February 2015? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?**
A:	N/A. No update was submitted as of September 30, 2015. —K. Davis

Q:	**How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting in February 2015?**
A:	N/A. No update was submitted as of September 30, 2015. —K. Davis

Q:	What are your plans and goals for the next six months—up until January 2016? What challenges do you anticipate
A:	N/A. No update was submitted as of September 30, 2015.

—K. Davis |

Version 7.0- Update

Q:	Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 7.0- Response

Q:	Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).
A:	N/A. Response was not given due to lack of update submission as of September 30, 2015.

—K. Davis |

Q:	What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?
A:	N/A. Response was not given due to lack of update submission as of September 30, 2015.

—K. Davis |

Q:	What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?
A:	N/A. Response was not given due to lack of update submission as of September 30, 2015.

—K. Davis |

Q:	What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?
A:	N/A. Response was not given due to lack of update submission as of September 30, 2015.

—K. Davis

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	N/A. Response was not given due to lack of update submission as of September 30, 2015. —K. Davis

Scholar(s):	Gloria Rogers
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 6.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since August 2014.**
A:	The university continues to make incremental progress in the goals identified in the Academy Project, there have been no changes to the Project goals, scope of work or design. The university community continues a dialog surrounding new Bylaws for the Shared Governance process. Once approved by the President all shared governance chartered committees (including Assessment Committee) will report to the Shared Governance Oversight Committee. Currently the Assessment Committee reports to the Provost/VPAA. The Academy Team made a recommendation that they be incorporated into the Assessment Committee, and this will be addressed after the approval of the Bylaws.

Q:	**What were your goals for the past six months—since August 2014? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?**
A:	There is a natural lag between the closing of an academic semester and the work of faculty to close-out course assessment. As is known, our project is to formalize the documentation of assessment activities in our institutional database. Underlying this goal is the documentation of findings, which incorporates a review of the measures and outcomes for courses and programs. Our project goals were to have developed/documented the SLOs at a level of 80%/80% for courses/programs by the Spring 2015; to document measures and findings at a level of 60%/40% for courses/programs, and actions at 40%/10% for courses/programs. As in the early fall report we are on track for program assessment, but lagging in course assessment behind the goals. We have provided additional detail in our Supplemental Report to V.6.0, and links to the source files which are all posted to our assessment page in the section for the Version 6.0 report.

Link : http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php

http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php
Link : http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/v6_Academy-Report-Feb2015.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/v6_Academy-Report-Feb2015.pdf

Q:	How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting in August 2014?
A:	The reviewer feedback is regularly reviewed and used to guide our dialogs and activities. We have provided an expanded and annotated response to the V.5 reviewer comments in the file below "Response to Reviewer Feedback". As in the previous cycle we continue to provide detailed and specific feedback to Schools regarding their specific progress in course and program assessment. Through a series of direct letters to School Chairs the committee provided information about courses in their area, and a comparative report on their program assessment. The committee made resources and support available to the school chairs, and we met with schools as requested. An aggregate report was developed and distributed to school chairs and the deans in November.

Link : http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/ChartsandGraphsNov14-2014.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/ChartsandGraphsNov14-2014.pdf
Link : http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/v6_Response-to-Reviewer-Feedback.pdf
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/v6_Response-to-Reviewer-Feedback.pdf

Q:	What are your plans and goals for the next six months—up until July/August 2015? What challenges do you anticipate?
A:	As mentioned in the Reviewer Comments from Version 5.0 we also believe that the institution must make substantial progress in several key areas leading up to the next HLC visit. Gloria has observed that our process has been organic, building upward from direct faculty engagement in assessment of the activities most closely aligned with their daily role. However, we believe that there also needs to be a stronger commitment from the top-down to compliment and strength the bottom-up process we now have. Our goals for the next six months will focus on gaining the institutional commitment needed to bring these two processes together.

Version 6.0- Update

Q:	Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 6.0- Response

Q:	Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).
A:	**Primary Mentor:**

Sandra M. Harris

sandra.harris@waldenu.edu

334-220-4466

HLC Senior Scholar:

Gloria Rogers

grogers@hlcommission.org

812-240-9770

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

One strength noted in this update is the change in the reporting structure to were the Assessment Committee reports to the Shared Governance Oversight Committee. It is good the that the Assessment Committee would have communication and contact with other governance committees around the campus. That contact could be a way of fostering a culture of assessment through the various governing committees.

Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

I concur with Sandra. In addition to other things we have mentioned in previous postings, I also think the reporting process is commendable and a strength of this project. Being able to have comparative data about the implementation of the processes is very helpful and can encourage participation. It demonstrates the level of integration of the processes in each program and provides opportunities for the committee to provide support to those programs who are lagging.

Q:	**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

What remains unclear is how the change of reporting will affect efforts to improve student learning. How does the change of reporting affect the overall charge of the Assessment Committee?

Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

I don't have the same clarity about the status of the Assessment Committee. The reports says, "Once approved by the President all shared governance chartered committees (including Assessment Committee) will report to the Shared Governance Oversight Committee. Currently the Assessment Committee reports to the Provost/VPAA. The Academy Team made a recommendation that they be incorporated into the Assessment Committee, and this will be addressed after the approval of the Bylaws." Does this mean that the Academy Team will be incorporated into the Assessment Committee? Is the plan to morph the Academy Team into the Assessment Committee after the time in the Academy?

I reviewed your charts with great interest. I thought they were very helpful to see the scope of the work that is being done. I thought it was interesting that all programs report have assessment data

and outcomes but few have significant findings or actions. Why do you think that is? Is this an opportunity for professional development?

As indicated in your response to the last posting, institutional commitment and support is important for the success of your project. A project of this magnitude needs resources that can only be provided if it is an institutional priority. How will you seek out that support? What do you think "institutional support and commitment" will look like?

Q:	**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**
	The major points of consideration were identified in the previous feedback the was provided. I do not have any additional points to add at this time.
	Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):
	You indicate that your goals for the next six months will focus on gaining the institutional commitment needed. Although this is important (as noted previously) it is also important to move forward with a strategies to close the loop on your assessment processes. This may include professional development, coaching, or other activities to move your processes from data collection to actions that are data-driven.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	There are no new recommendations. I hope to see you at the Higher Learning Commission Annual Conference.

Scholar(s):	Gloria Rogers
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 5.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since January 2014.**
A:	The university continues to make progress toward reaching the goals identified in the Academy Project, there have been no changes to the Project goals, scope of work or design.
	One area of discussion, and recommended change, was in the composition of the Academy Team. At

the end of the spring semester 2014 the Academy Team recommended to the Provost that the Academy Project be formally integrated into The Assessment Committee. To provide some context for this recommendation, it may be helpful to review that in the fall 2011 the university established The Assessment Committee as a shared governance strategic committee with representation from academic administration, faculty, administrative professionals (AP), educational support personnel (ESP) and students. With our entry into the Academy for Student Learning in the spring 2012, a separate team comprised of four faculty each representing a college, a dean and the associate provost were appointed to attend the Academy training in the summer of 2102. Through the past two-three years, the Academy project, and the work of The Assessment Committee have overlapped both in terms of their charge and to some extent their membership. The recommendation to merge the Academy Team into the Assessment Committee is intended to expand the understanding and support for the Academy goals, and to streamline committee processes. Minutes of the Academy Team and The Assessment Committee are posted to their respective web pages, along the periodic reports from The Assessment Committee to the Shared Governance Oversight committee.

Link : Assessment Committee Minutes
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/documents.php
Link : Academy Project Website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php

Q:	What were your goals for the past six months—since January 2014? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?
A:	Our goals for the past six months included raising the percentage of courses and programs with documented assessment activities to the 70% level for development of outcomes, and the 40% level for the development of measures and reporting of findings. We did not meet all our course-level performance targets for the past six months, we did meet all the program-level targets. We provide a graphic and more detailed explanation in our Supplemental Narrative to Version 5 which details progress in each of the four stages of our assessment cycle (develop – measure – report – act). The reported targets represent the percentage of courses and programs which have documented activity within Tracdat, our institutional assessment archive, for each category. While the level of activity increased in every category of course-level assessment, e.g. from 54% of courses showing 'develop' activity to the current 60.5%, our target for this category had risen from 60% to 70% for the same time period. In course-level assessment we exceeded our target of 40% only in the category of measure (meaning to define assessment measures aligned to each of the course goals). As described in a previous report, we undertook a side-project to reduce a number of inactive courses which were being tracked within our assessment database. Deans were in some cases hesitant to submit the courses for deletion at this time, but they had not been taught for the previous two-three years and were not scheduled again for in the immediate future. Deans agreed that were these courses to be reactivated such action would be accompanied by the entry of the course assessment data at that time.

Program-level assessment continues ahead of our projected timeline in every category. Again, these percentages reflect the number of programs with documented activity in each category of our assessment cycle. Similar to the program review, the Deans identified academic programs from the original master-list which were no longer active and which could be removed from the assessment database. This database had been created several years ago by capturing a listing of all programs/degrees from the university catalog. In the intervening years some programs have been suspended, others deleted and through this process we were able to clean the database of inactive programs.

Not directly an Academy Project, but related to program assessment, the Deans were charged to move forward with program review for 25% of all active programs with reports submitted by the beginning of summer 2014. As of the date of this report only 14 programs, of an anticipated 25 have been submitted. The status of program assessment is tabulated on the SLOAP webpage, and the

program review template is posted under the name "PlanforProgramReviewV4a". The Deans have begun a formal review and feedback process on these program reviews and the supporting evidence documented in Tracdat.

Link : Tabulation of Course-level assessment
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2014-07-01Course-levelTracdatSummary.pdf
Link : Program Level Outcome Reporting (SLOAP)
http://www.lssu.edu/sharedgovernance/assessment/SLOAP3.php
Link : Program Review Criteria
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/PlanforProgramReviewV4a.pdf
Link : Tabulation of Program-level assessment
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2014-07-01Program-level-TracdatSummary.pdf
Link : Supplemental Narrative for Version 5.0
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/SupplementalNarrativetoVersion5.pdf
Link : Plan for Program Review
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/PlanforProgramReviewV4a.pdf

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Q:	How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting in January 2014?
A:	The reviewer feedback is regularly reviewed and used to guide our dialogs and activities. We have provided an expanded and annotated response to the V.4 reviewer comments in the file below "Response to Reviewer Feedback". In addition, this past cycle we looked at how we are providing feedback internally related to assessment processes. We undertook a systematic review of assessment practices and developed a report format to provide specific, critical and we hope constructive feedback to faculty, schools, deans, and administrators. These reports were prepared for the Provost for their review, approval and subsequent distribution. Each report began with a restatement of the relevant HLC criteria, the Assumed Practices or relevant elements of the Federal Compliance Report which impacted the specific area. The reports each next summarized the documents and resources which the committee reviewed and referenced in their report. Finally the report summarized their findings, observations and recommendations. Reports were generated specific to strategic planning, program review, general education, and course-specific reviews using a representative course from each of the 12 schools. The courses were selected based on their role as a general education course, the high frequency with which the course is taught, or the relatively high enrollment of students in the course. We have posted these reviews on our Academy Website, discussed them at the Provost Council and distributed them to the Schools through their respective deans.

Link : Academy Project Website
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php
Link : Response to Reviewer Feedback
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/V5_Response-to-Reviewer-Feedback.pdf

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Q:	What are your plans and goals for the next six months—up until January/February 2015? What challenges do you anticipate?
A:	As mentioned in the response to reviewer feedback document, the fall 2014 brings several significant changes to the university. These changes include a new president, new collective bargaining agreements for faculty and support staff, and a new state-wide transfer agreement which substantially impacts our general education framework. The president is keenly aware of the importance of the next HLC site visit which will occur in 2016 and of the work and responsibilities that this entails. The merger of the Academy Team with the Assessment Committee offers an opportunity to expand

the leadership scope of the project. The committee anticipates that the direct and critical feedback offered in the areas of strategic plan, general education, program review, and course-level feedback for each school individually, will raise sensitivity and focus for the assessment efforts in the coming year. Faculty are not particularly active in the summer session at our institution and much of the assessment work capturing and documenting the events of the previous year could reasonably be expected to be done this fall. It is therefore critical that administration affirm this, framed where necessary as an express obligation under the new contract. The initial 13 program reviews did not generally reflect the direct assessment of program-level outcomes relative to student learning, this is a deficiency which needs to be addressed through revisions/addendum to the program reviews even as schools begin the assessment of their next 25% of programs, and complete those which were not completed as scheduled.

We take some solace from the knowledge that our institution is not alone in the challenges of shifting our focus from inputs to the assessment of student outcomes. The development of the new Faculty Center for Teaching, funded through our recent $1.86M Title III grant, can play a key role in helping faculty make this transition. The new president has the opportunity to shift the focus for administrative support activities.   These changes take time and we are confident that over time such changes will not only strengthen student achievement of our outcomes, but strengthen the institution as well.

Link : LSSU Title III Project Website
http://www.lssu.edu/title3/

Version 5.0- Update

Q:	**Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.**
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 5.0- Response

Q:	**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**
A:	**Primary Mentor:**

Sandra M. Harris, PhD

sandra.harris@waldenu.edu

33-462-6117

HLC Senior Scholar:

Gloria Rogers, PhD

grogers@hlcommission

812-240-9770

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

The current project submission indicates that the college is has sustained its goal of developing a culture of assessment. The following areas are noted as major strengths:

1. Formalizing an assessment committee. The first step to creating and promoting a culture of assessment is establishing a specific governance body which fulfills the specific functions of assessment. Having a formalized committee should also contribute to the stability of the members of the group and thereby provide more continuity and consistency to the work that will be accomplished by the group.
2. The Institutional Assessment Website provides transparency regarding the university's assessment goals and activities.
3. The university continues to work toward achieving its communicated project goals. Although not all goals have been achieved, the university is tracking the progress it is making toward achieving those goals.
4. Developed report format for communicating assessment results. This report provides tangible results to stakeholders regarding the assessment activities at the university, as well as information about how students are performing relative to the stated learning outcomes.

Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

I concur with Sandra's comments. In addition, I would like to note the strong support from the senior administration for this effort. To sustain this effort will require resources and support beyond the scope of the Assessment Committee. It is also important to note that this has been designed to be an organic process. This will enable the process to grow from the course level to the institutional level. Although this is a strength in terms of faculty involvement and buy-in, there is a danger that the committee will have to continue to monitor the activity and guide it with best practice in mind.

Q:	**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

It is not clear what the university plans to do to facilitate achievement the goals that were not met. What assistance is being given, or offered, to the programs which have not met the goals? Do the programs have established and communicated deadlines for compliance? Should there be imposed deadlines for compliance? How can the assessment committee assist, guide, consult with those programs to help the programs move forward?

Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

I concur with Sandra's comments. A review of your web-based materials shows a comprehensive process and documentation. The program review rubric is thorough and should provide valuable information for the committee. You continue to be providing those who are participating with quality feedback. Your reports demonstrate a good sense of what needs to be done. Have you considered a system of assessment mentors to work with programs who are not participating? Has there been an attempt to find out why there is so much "foot dragging" with so many courses/programs? There might be something going on that you are unaware of. The organic process will only be very effective if everyone (well, as "everyone" as a college campus can get) participates.

Q:	**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

I encourage the assessment committee to consider the HLC Academic Program Review requirements for assessment outlined in Section 5 and consider how the information could be used to guide the formulation of a comprehensive assessment plan. Academic program reviews (APR) are valuable tools for assessing the overall quality of academic programs. While the APR is not directly related to the assessment of student learning, Section 5 of the evaluation criteria does focus on assessment. Consequently, data collected for the assessment of student learning outcomes does/can become part of the APR. When reviewing the document consider the following questions:

1. How does the section relate to university efforts as related to assessment?
2. Whether or not current assessment efforts fulfill the APR requirements for assessment?
3. Does the APR process reveal any gaps in the currently proposed assessment process?
4. How could the requirements be used go guide/structure/streamline assessment efforts?

Also, I encourage the assessment committee to begin looking at the HLC self-study requirements in preparation for the upcoming HLC review in 2016. There are also specific criteria as related to the assessment of study learning in the criteria. An examination of those requires might also identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in the university assessment plan.

Review by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

Sandra makes some good suggestions. With the HLC visit looming, it may be the leverage you need to get some of the programs and faculty to participate. I generally would not suggest using the HLC "hammer" but you are at a point when you cannot afford to be caught without significant progress on your program assessment processes. The program review process only tells you WHERE a program is. It is a tool that can be used to provide feedback but it is not a process that will help them to move forward without support to get them where they need to be (mentors?). The should think about becoming more aggressive in what is expected. You may consider more faculty/program development activities.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	**Reviewed by Sandra Harris (Primary Mentor):**

Continue to utilize the HLC Assessment Academy Resources.

Reviewed by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):

Below are two assessment websites that might be of some assistance while you are refining your processes.

Link : Internet Resources in Higher Education Outcomes Assessment
http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/archives/assmt/resource.htm
Link : ASSESS listserve
http://lsv.uky.edu/archives/assess.html

Scholar(s):	Gloria Rogers
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 4.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since July 2013.**
A:	There have not been any changes to the project scope or design in the past six months.

Q:	**What were your goals for the past six months—since July 2013? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?**

A:	We have prepared a series of four reports which summarize our progress toward our institutional assessment goals, goals which to some extent extend beyond the scope of our Academy Project, specifically the institutional assessment. These reports are linked from our institutional website and posted on our Academy Project page: http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php
	
	The four reports address the issues and insights offered by the HLC reviewers, they include:
	
	• 2013 Fall Course Assessment Summary
	    ◦ **Course Assessment Summary**
	  - http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2013FallCourseAssessmentSummary.pdf
	• 2013 Fall Program Assessment Summary
	    ◦ **Program Assessment Summary**
	  - http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2013FallProgramAssessmentSummary.pdf
	• 2013 Fall Institutional Summary
	    ◦ **Institutional Summary**
	  - http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2013InstitutionalSummary.pdf
	• 2013 Fall General Education Assessment Summary
	    ◦ **General Education Assessment Summary**
	  http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/2013FallGeneralEducationAssessmentSummary.pdf

Link : Academy Project Website http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php	

Q:	**How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting in July 2013?**
A:	We appreciated the sentiment of the reviewers as they sought a more integrated narrative that provides greater context for the tables and graphs which summarize our progress toward Academy goals. Our submission this cycle reflects a commitment to provide that, but also displays a distinct limitation of the Collaboration Network. Because the narrative boxes available for reporting Activity Detail can only contain text (and hyperlinks) it is difficult to assemble a data-driven response to the prompts which incorporates charts, tables, graphics, images, in fact anything other than text. For

this submission cycle we have divided our report into four domains of institutional assessment and which freely and effectively integrate the narrative with the data. These reports are presented in PDF format, but since only URL links can be appended in the link space below we have posted the reports to our Academy Project web site.

Other feedback: Sandra noted that some areas had been more effective in the initial entry phase of their assessment data. The common denominator for those units was having an academic secretary who participated with the faculty in the process. Areas where the secretaries were not receptive, or did not have the time needed, were slower to enter data into the system as the responsibilities fell to school chairs or assessment coordinators.

Q:	**What are your plans and goals for the next six months—up until July/August 2014? What challenges do you anticipate?**
A:	The next six months will focus on supporting the work of the deans and committees: applying enough pressure to keep the institution moving forward, not enough pressure to start breaking things.

Version 4.0- Update

Q:	**Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.**
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 4.0- Response

Q:	**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**
A:	Gloria Rogers, HLC Senior Scholar
	gloriarogers1@gmail.com
	812-240-9770

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	Review by Gloria Rogers, HLC Senior Scholar:
	The project has several strength as it has progressed in the Academy:
	• Integration into the strategic planning process indicates a commitment from the upper-level

administration that is critical as the work moves from "project" to full integration into the life of the institution.

- Support of academic units in the implementation of TracDat as an archiving and reporting tool for the assessment of student learning as well as an institutional tool for monitoring strategic goals. Although this process is still in its infancy, it is meeting or exceeding expectations.
- Sytematic integration of the project with the program review process. Again, an indication of the building of a culture of assessment.
- Using TracDat as a way to monitor the progress of programs in their assessment efforts. This will enable the committee to identify programs that need assistance and also programs that can be used as exemplars moving forward.
- Provost's retreat in 2014 will focus on assessment. Again another signal that this is an activity that has the support of the senior academic officer.

Q: **What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**

A: **Review by Gloria Rogers, HLC Senior Scholar:**

It is not clear how students will be engaged in this process. It is easy to get so overwhelmed by the development of outcomes, assessment measures, documentation, faculty buy-in, and the development of institutional processes that it is forgotten that the focus is on student learning. The research is clear that students will learn best if the expectations for their learning is clear and they get timely feedback on their performance. How is the committee communication learning expectations to students and what are the plans to give them systematic feedback on their performance?

How is the ETS data related to general educations outcomes used to make improvements? How will the work that is being done on general education going to be incorporated (if at all) into this project?

How are programs that are making significant progress on documenting (via TracDat) their outcomes, assessment methods, results, and improvements going to be acknowledged for their efforts? One of the characteristics of a "culture" are the rites and rituals that become important to the community. Consider how this might be done in a way that celebrates their efforts while at the same time encourages others to do likewise. How are you going to engage these programs as mentors for others?

Have you begun to identify the kind of support that is/will be required to get other programs engaged at an acceptable level? It was mentioned that most of the programs making progress had "secretarial" support where the data was entered for the faculty by an administrative person. If this is an issue, then think about how you can support those programs that don't have the support required (whatever that means).

Q: **What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

A: **Review by Gloria Rogers, HLC Senior Scholar:**

It is clear that there is a good process to monitor the progress of those participating in the data collection process. It is important to remember that these data will need to be converted to information that can be used to inform programs of their progress in supporting student learning. Consider how reports will be generated that will convert the data into information that is meaningful and useful so that programs can "close the loop" on the assessment process. This is critical to the overall acceptance of this process. If faculty believe that all this work is just going into a "black

hole" where nothing meaningful comes out they will resist participation. It is not clear how the "mandate" to participate will play out in the long run if there is strong faculty resistance.
It is important to plan with the end in mind.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	**Review by Gloria Rogers (HLC Senior Scholar):** You are encouraged to take advantage of the HLC resources through the Assessment Academy, webinars, HLC Conference, etc. Look at the HLC Collaboration Portal for other institutions who are using TracDat and/or have similar projects that you might benchmark your progress.

Scholar(s):	Gloria Rogers
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 3.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since February 2013.**
A:	There have not been any changes to the project scope or design in the past 6 months.

Q:	**What were your goals for the past six months? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?**
A:	Our goal at the end of year 1 was for faculty to have moved 25% of course assessment activities into Tracdat. This will not have meant that these courses will have a full assessment cycle completed, but that the course outcomes and methods will have been entered, and that moving forward assessment data will build into that framework. The attachment "Course SLO Report Mar2013" documents the progress by unit (blue bars indicate the number of courses per unit, yellow bars the percent of courses which student learning outcomes entered into Tracdat. These documents are also posted on our Academy Webpage: http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php . The file "TheCourses Findings Actions Summary" extends this graph with a source table of information related to the number of outcome measures, findings and actions by unit. Program-level assessment continues, although not an explicit goal of the Academy project in year one. The attachment "College-Program Outcomes Summary" identifies the absolute number of outcomes by college, and the percentage of programs with outcome statements entered into Tracdat. Taken at face value we do appear to have made substantial progress, and indeed some areas have. Much of this early work involved the translation of earlier program documents into Tracdat, an activity some school secretaries accepted and completed early in the year.

Link : Academy Project Homepage
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php

Q:	How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting?
A:	The reviewer feedback has helped to remind us of the importance of fundamentals in assessment: engaging all stakeholders in the process and documenting our successes and struggles. It is also clear that we need to bring a sharper focus to issues such as institutional mission and its connection to student learning, and the clear development of institutional learning outcomes. As noted below a key dialog for the fall must include discussion of our general education curriculum. The attachment "LSSU v.3 Response to Reviewer Feedback" provides a detailed analysis and reflection regarding the reviewer feedback and the progress of the Academy Project.

Link : LSSU v.3 Response to Reviewer Feedback
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/Version3LSSUResponse.pdf

Q:	What are your plans and goals for the next six months? What challenges to you anticipate?
A:	We intend to continue to work with schools and individual faculty to build upon their course-level assessment plans, to review and refine program-level assessment plans. While the deans remain engaged in the high-level dialog about the importance of assessment, their commitment must be communicated back through the processes of faculty evaluation, approval of curriculum changes, and the use of assessment findings to inform and guide should be the foundation of all school activities. The general education curriculum is also an area of keen concern, although not an explicit component in this Academy Project it can't be ignored. In the attachments we provided a compilation of the ETS performance data, the "GenEd Assessment Schedule" with data related to the number of assessment methods/findings/actions by approved general education course, and "GenEd Outcome Summary" which is a Tracdat report aggregating assessment findings and actions by course and outcome type. The General Education committee had committed to the use of ETS data for a four-year period in order to collect longitudinal data on graduates. The spring 2013 was the first cohort where this type of analysis was possible. "ETS analysis" therefore does not represent pre-post testing of the same students, but with 100-1500 students tested in each category from 2009-2013, it does appear to carry some statistical significance. Based on these findings we see that the percentile ranking of our students as seniors is lower than that of the entering freshmen. A campus discussion is needed on the relationship of the general education outcomes, the findings from the ETS testing, and the connection (if any) between general education and what might be defined as institutional learning outcomes.

Version 3.0- Update

Q:	Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 3.0- Response

Q:	**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**
A:	Jim Sherohman
	jlsherohman@stcloudstate.edu
	(612) 259-8545
	Sandra Harris
	sandra.harris@waldenu.edu
	334-220-4466

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	From Sandra:
	A major strength is the degree to which LSSU is tacking and documenting its progress toward stipulated Assessment Academy goals. The LSSU goal was for faculty to have moved 25% of course assessment activities into Tracdat at the end of year 1. The supporting documents show that the university is actively moving toward achieving that goal. There are several programs (Fire Science, EMT, Nursing, Criminal Justice, Recreation Services Exercise Science).which have far exceeded the goal of having 25% of course assessment activities entered into Tracdat. Perhaps those programs may have suggestions or recommendations for others in terms of achieving the stipulated goals.
	From Jim:
	Once again the responses to reviewer feedback are quite detailed, and some very helpful documents are posted on the project website. I would prefer that a little more of this detail make its way into the update, but I am not complaining. The team is doing a good job so far documenting its progress.

Q:	**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**
A:	One comment from Sandra:
	At this point I am clear about the trajectory outlined by LSSU. The feedback given to the previous review was comprehensive and detailed. The feedback indicated that LSSU is taking or has taken into consideration the feedback given to reviewers. I encourage them to periodically reflect on the feedback given during Version 2.0 to ensure that the feedback is incorporated into their efforts as they move forward in the Assessment Academy.
	One question from Jim:
	You indicated that you would encourage faculty members who teach general education courses to enter these courses into TracDat first. Were you successful in this effort?

Q:	**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**
A:	Sandra offers a comment and suggestion for the LSSU website: "One of the goals of the university is to provide transparency of its assessment activities, and one method for doing that is the use of the LSSU Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning website. There were several graphs posted on the website....The graphs are fine as a visual representation, but I had a bit of trouble translating the graphs. For instance, on the Course SLO Report Mar2013 I am not sure if I interpret the graph correctly. For the Social Science entry on Line 1, I interpret that there is a total of 147 courses in the program. I further interpret that approximately 50% of the courses have student learning outcomes. I also interpret the graph to indicate that 25% of the courses with SLOs have entered the course assessment activities into Tracdat. Is this interpretation correct? It would be helpful if there were some sort of narrative to explain what the graphs are communicating. A short paragraph or so to walk a reader through one or two lines of the graphs or charts would go a long way in terms of facilitating the reader's understanding of what is being communicated in the visual representations. The explanations presented in the Activity detail would be a good place to start an explanation for the material presented on your website."
	Jim agrees with Sandra that the content of the graphs could be communicated more effectively through the addition of narratives. He also adds this comment on another topic: Undoubtedly, the ETS results are troubling to many faculty members. To what extent do locally collected general education assessment data help you to interpret the ETS results? Do you expect that the transition to TracDat, along with the associated faculty development activities, will make local data more usable? If so, perhaps this may help you to increase faculty engagement in assessment and in your project.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	Jim offers this suggestion for your consideration: You mention that the commitment of deans must be communicated back through the processes of faculty evaluation, approval of curriculum changes, and the use of assessment findings to inform and guide. Of course, these changes are more likely to happen to the extent that institutional policies encourage or mandate them. Changes have been made to curriculum review forms. Do you think that additional institutional supports are needed, and to the extent they are needed, what are the obstacles to putting them into place?

Scholar(s):	Jim Sherohman
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 2.0- Project

Q:	**Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope or design since August 2012.**

A: We are on-schedule for the implementation of our course-assessment activities. During the fall 2012 the course-level student learning outcomes for 145 courses were uploaded to Tracdat, representing 13.6% of all courses (detailed report was uploaded as 'Assessment Update 9jan13'. Our stated expectation to faculty was to transfer the assessment processes of 25% of all courses each academic year, thus we are on schedule for this pace.

The Academy Project is only a portion of the total integrative university focus on institutional assessment. The University Assessment Plan, submitted in partial fulfillment of an HLC requirement for a 1-year monitoring report, is posted to our institutional assessment web page which now also aggregates public reporting of general education assessment, and assessment of administrative divisions. We have moved up our expectation for the migration of program-level assessment planning into Tracdat, such that schools were asked to provide during 2012-2013 an implementation schedule for all AS/AA/BS/BA degree programs. This plan is contained with 'Master Assessment Program Degree listing 2012' as a link in the next question. In addition to the monitoring report, we have provided a brief narrative targeting our action in response to each of the HLC concerns noted in the Assurance Report. This narrative is provided as a linked document entitled: "2011 HLC Assurance Section Response".

Link : LSSU University Assessment Plan
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/B_Assessment-UniversityAssessmentPlan_2012_oct.pdf
Link : Institutional Assessment Home Page
http://lssu.edu/assessment
Link : 2013 Assessment Monitoring Report
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/A_Assessment-HLC2012MonitoringReport.pdf
Link : 2011 Assurance Section Analysis and Response
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/C_Assessment-AssuranceSectionAnalysisandResponse.pdf

Q:	**What were your goals for the past six months? Did you achieve them? Why or why not?**

A: Our goals were to implement the migration of assessment data into Tracdat, while concurrently providing targeted training and professional development opportunities supporting the assessment efforts of the schools and colleges. Training events were provided throughout the fall semester and a series of multimedia self-paced tutorials were also developed allowing faculty to access Academy training on assessment topics outside of the scheduled times. These are posted to the assessment web site, and the link is provided below. Academy team members participated in school and assessment team training events delivered to address the specific interests and needs of the academic schools/colleges.

We set a goal for 75% faculty participation in establishing assessment plans at the course level. Deans and School Chairs developed an assessment schedule to implement the Academy Plan, namely to have each faculty member migrate their course-level assessment processes into Tracdat. The schedule set as a minimum the entry of one course per faculty member per semester, with the active assessment of student learning outcomes for a minimum of two course outcomes each semester. We did not reach our target 75% by the 9th of January when the audit report was prepared, however we found that many faculty had assessment findings from the fall semester which had simply not yet been reported. We believe our year-end participation rates will better reflect our goal for 2012-2013.

Link : Faculty/Staff PD & Training
• http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/trainingworkshops.php
Link : Assessment Update 9jan13
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/Assessmentupdate9jan13.pdf

Link : Master Assessment Program Degree listing F2012
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/MASTERAssessmentProgramDegree-listing-F2012.pdf

Link : Courses not Required not Taught 201310
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/CoursesnotRequirednotTaught201310.pdf

Q:	**How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting?**
A:	Through our still nascent University Assessment Plan we have established an ongoing integrative approach to university-wide assessment. At the institutional level our goal is to move forward on academic, administrative and strategic plan assessment with substantial growth evident at our next HLC review. Our Academy project plan was initially focused on academic course-level assessment, growing over time to encompass programs. The feedback contained in the reviewer comments was helpful and constructive, pointing to some initiatives and activities already underway at the university level, although not necessarily reflected in the initial Academy Action Plan We have undertaken a careful, and we hope appropriately receptive, reading of the reviewer comments and provided a narrative response to each. This narrative is available through the link below. The Academy Team has found the process of review and reflection valuable, and it has helped to refine our vision for the next stages of the project.

Link : Version 2 Academy Reviewer Comments and Response
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/documents/AcademyReviewerCommentsVersion2a.pdf

Q:	**What are your plans and goals for the next six months? What challenges to you anticipate?**
A:	The focus for the spring semester 2013 will be on entering course-level findings from the fall semester, while transitioning a new set of courses onto the Tracdat platform. We believe a substantial challenge will be in maintaining energy and commitment as faculty see the gradual building of assessment responsibilities permeating through their courses and programs.

Version 2.0- Update

Q:	**Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.**
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 2.0- Response

Q:	**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**
A:	Sandra M. Harris sandra.harris@waldenu.edu

Jim Sherohman

jlsherohman@stcloudstate.edu

612-259-8545

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	Sandra Harris notes the following strengths:

1. *Implementation of Tracdat as part of the assessment process.* This tool could be quite valuable in terms of collecting data related to student learning outcomes. It will be interesting to see what the initial results look like. It will also be interesting to hear of lessons learned from the first implementation.

2. *Providing faculty training on the technology used in the assessment process.* It is crucial that faculty be provided training on the tools that will be used in the assessment process. This would go a long way in terms of promoting a culture of assessment.

3. *Other sources of training and information provided for faculty with regard to assessment.* The development of these materials indicates that the university is committed to provide a variety of training resources and material for faculty.

4. *Development of the various assessment related sites.* These websites can be used to provide transparency to the assessment processes at LSSU. The sites could also be used to report results from assessment efforts.

5. *Comprehensive plan for including all courses in the assessment reporting process.* LSSU has a tangible, measurable goal of including 25% of courses in Tracdat for each of the coming years.

Jim Sherohman agrees with the project strengths identified by Sandra. The website contains a lot of useful information, faculty and staff are provided substantial assistance, the professional development/training methods appear to be quite sophisticated, and the SGAC has developed rubrics to provide feedback to programs and academic support units on assessment practices. In addition, the team's detailed responses to reviewer feedback on the previous version of the project were quite helpful to the reviewers.

Q:	**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**
A:	Sandra asks these questions:

1. It is unclear how LSSU plans to link course-level and program-level data on student performance on learning outcomes to the university's mission/goals. Does the university have a set of learning outcomes? How does LSSU plan to measure those outcomes? How will LSSU determine the link between the university learning outcomes and the course-level and program-level learning outcomes?

2. It is not clear how LSSU plans to assess and report at the university level student performance on learning outcomes. The Assessment Plan Guide indicates the following:

Programs are NOT required to follow a prescribed format for the collection and storage of their

unique assessment data. Program assessment data, based on the PA-plan, should be maintained by the school for each program in any format which they choose, but it is strongly recommended to store data electronically on secure server, e.g. the O:/ drive or a Google website for each program.

Without some consistency across the university in terms of data collection and storage, how will LSSU determine of students in the various programs meet the learning outcomes for the program? How will LSSU demonstrate student performance on learning outcomes? How will LSSU aggregate and report data on student performance on learning outcomes?

Jim adds this question:

In your response to the reviews of the previous version, you mention that, in using TracDat, faculty members often experience "discrepant events" that lead to moments of self-realization and enlightenment. Do you see growing acceptance or embracement of TracDat by the faculty as a result? Have you asked faculty members to evaluate how useful TracDat has been to them or their programs? If so, have you noticed any trends in the data?

Q:	**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**
A:	Sandra notes that the overall Assessment Plan is off to a good start. As LSSU continues to develop this living document, here are some additional questions that should be considered and addressed: 1. How do you differentiate between outcomes and objectives? 2. What is the process for developing learning outcomes? 3. What is the process for approving learning outcomes? 4. What will be the plan for ongoing assessment beyond the initial data collection for your programs? 5. What are the guidelines for developing learning outcomes? The SMART approach is identified on the Assessment Plan Guide. It would be a good idea to include in the assessment plan. 6. Will there be allowances for specialized accreditation needs? 7. What will be the procedures for involving stakeholders both internal and external to the organization? 8. How will the data be reported? 9. How will results be communicated to faculty and other stakeholders? 10. How will data be used to make improvements or changes? 11. How will you assess learning outcomes relative to the university mission/goals? Jim agrees that these are important questions to consider at this stage of the project. Most likely, you already are considering some of them. Jim also adds this comment: You mention that have worked with schools, programs, and units to modify TracDat structures to suit the assessment needs of the unit. Have your efforts been uniformly successful, or have you noticed pockets of resistance? Have programs with specialized accreditation concluded that their assessment needs can best be handled through TracDat? If your efforts are going smoothly, congratulations! Other institutions may be interested in learning how you accomplished this. If there have been some rough spots, where have they been, why have they occurred, how did you respond, and how effective were these responses? In general, I encourage you keep track of what is working, what is not, and why.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	Sandra has no additional comments here. Jim offers this suggestion: You believe that it may be difficult to maintain the energy and commitment of the faculty due to the building of assessment responsibilities at the course and program levels. This will be easier to accomplish if faculty members see the work they are doing in assessment as benefiting themselves and their programs, not just as something they do for the institution. Your description of what you do at faculty development workshops and training events indicates that you are on the right track in this regard. Perhaps you have observed some success stories that you could use to energize the faculty. On a broader level, you may want to consider whether it would be feasible to make changes in the institutional reward system that would provide incentives for faculty members to allocate more of their scarce time to assessment work.

Scholar(s):	Jim Sherohman
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Version 1.0- Project

Q:	**Describe the project you developed at the Roundtable. Focus particularly on the general strategies you developed. (500 words)**
A:	The LSSU Academy Project will focus on promoting an institutional culture of assessment concentrated on student learning. The objective is to provide training and tools to assist faculty in the implementation of course and program assessment processes, as these processes are integral to institutional improvement and effectiveness. To reach this outcome we intend to utilize technology in the form of a university-wide system for collecting, disseminating, and implementing assessment results. We will build faculty participation through a staged faculty & staff development process with a dual focus. We will provide faculty training and feedback on developing and refining learning outcomes at both the course and program level. At the same time, we will work on shifting the ad-hoc and disparate assessment activities, now underway across the university, to a centralized location for the collection, aggregation, and dissemination of assessment data. As faculty and staff work to formalize their existing assessment activities into the now-established university framework (outcomes – measures – targets – results – action planning), we believe that our institutional understanding and use of assessment data will become more refined and more robust. The explicit focus in years one and two will be on the refinement of course-level assessment, in the latter two years we intend to expand to encompass program-level assessment. Assessment data itself is not the end goal, but the data will become a tool for effective decision making and ultimately improved student learning.

Q:	**What are the desired outcomes of this project? How will you know that you have achieved each of these outcomes?**
A:	Through this project we intend to build a culture of assessment based decision making that positively impacts student learning. We plan to standardize and systematize the collection of assessment data from across the university. Building from the smallest component (and the one most relevant to the individual faculty member) we will begin our efforts on course-level assessment and expand into program-level assessment. We hope to develop a pattern for institutionalizing assessment which is faculty and student focused, positioned in the context of meaningful change (relevant to both the faculty member's own instructional and research framework), and which leads to improved student learning. To determine the success of this project, surveys will be given to the faculty in order to determine their level of satisfaction with the assessment system. We will also obtain measures of use through training records, audits of course and program activity, as well as attendance at meetings and conferences.

Q:	**What serious challenges do you expect to encounter? How will you deal with them?**
A:	Assessment efforts at LSSU have had a couple of false starts over the years. These efforts seemed to begin well enough, but then faded as administration changes, financial pressures, and passing fads made their way through the university. Historical evidence of assessment related to student learning has not been consistently cataloged or archived. However, faculty have been willing to work towards assessment tasks; when those tasks were clearly defined and linked to improving their instructional practice and to strengthening student learning. We have identified several areas where barriers do exist. For example, there is an ongoing need for faculty professional development and training in translating the existing instructional activities already in use into measureable and reportable assessment data-points. Concerns have been raised about the proposed use of assessment data and its relationship to evaluation and program prioritization. In addition, some may have philosophical objections to what they perceive as quasi-industrial quality control. Finally, many of the program outcome statements submitted to this point reflect faculty driven inputs, rather than student-oriented outcomes. Faculty are very conscious of the time demands that assessment activities can require. Two subtly distinct time-related challenges have posed barriers to past attempts at implementation. First, inauguration of new assessment activities simply can be very time-consuming. The array of activities associated with refining outcomes developing and/or discovering measures (and subsequent elements of the process) can significantly affect faculty workloads. Second, day to day academic life is frequently marked by significant schedule fragmentation: frequent (and sometimes spontaneous) movements from one task to another make sustained attention to new and unfamiliar responsibilities difficult. In light of these challenges, it will be key to frame assessment in the context of activities that are relevant and directly beneficial to enhanced student learning and to the faculty member's own instructional practices.

Q:	**Describe the specific steps you will be taking in Year 1 to develop and implement the early stages of your project.**
A:	At the end of year-one we intend to have met with, and provided customized training to, every school/department in the development of their assessment systems. We intend to work with faculty at the school level to familiarize them with the software tools and structures, as well as assisting each faculty member in entering one course (outcomes and measures at a minimum) into the system. We will promote/encourage faculty members who teach general education courses to do these courses first, building on the general education assessment data sets already in existence. We will provide faculty with professional development opportunities (as needed) related to writing outcomes

statements that lead to actionable steps to improve student learning, and within the context of the year-one outcomes.

Version 1.0- Update

Q:	**Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.**
A:	This project is ready for review.

Version 1.0- Response

Q:	**Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).**
A:	Jim Sherohman
	(612) 259-8545
	jlsherohman@stcloudstate.edu

Q:	**What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?**
A:	Sandra Harris notes that technology is being used to facilitate the development of a university-wide system for collecting, disseminating, and implementing assessment results. Centralizing the data collection effort could improve the use of data collected around the university.
	Jim Sherohman adds that the materials used for the assessment training are very good, and the assessment website contains many useful resources.

Q:	**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**
A:	Sandra observes that it is not clear how you will link technology to student learning. It is also not clear how you will use information from the faculty satisfaction survey to assess student learning. The faculty survey provides a good method for assessing the effectiveness of your project. However, because the project is intended to positively impact student learning, the survey should also gather data on how the assessment process affects learning. To determine the success of your project, you also will "*obtain measures of use through training records, audits of course and program activity, as well as attendance at meetings and conferences.*" These efforts should also collect data on how the assessment process has impacted student learning.

Jim agrees with Susan that it is important to retain a focus on student learning throughout the project. He also asks the following questions:

1. Did you set the goal for participation in the data system at 80% to make sure it was attainable, or is this what you actually hope to achieve? Are the other desired results attainable if you only have 80% participation? Won't lack of participation by some individuals hamper decision-making at the program, school, and institution levels? What incentive do instructors have to participate in the data system?
2. You are starting with course-level assessment, then moving to program-level assessment. Does this indicate that you will be encouraging the use of course-embedded assessment at the program level, or is this implementation plan intended simply to familiarize faculty members with the data system before it is implemented at the program level?
3. Will program assessment efforts continue during the first two years of the project, or will they be placed on hold due to the emphasis on course-level assessment? Will the transition from a course-level to a program focus occur gradually or abruptly?
4. What level of participation in the assessment training have you had from faculty? What feedback are you receiving from those who attend the training and those who don't? Do those who don't attend have other opportunities for guidance and feedback from the Academy team?

Q:	**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**
A:	Sandra makes the following observations:

1. If faculty are provided the technology without having been trained in developing learning outcomes, they may become frustrated with having to learn both systems at the same time. In order to obtain usable data it is important to have clearly articulated learning outcomes that can be measured. Therefore it is imperative that faculty know how to write effective learning outcomes. Perhaps it would be more effective to first train faculty on how to develop measurable learning outcomes, then train them in using the technology to enter the learning outcomes into the system.
2. There should be some emphasis on how the university plans to assess student learning relative to the developed learning outcomes. This plan should be clearly articulated and communicated. It may be that this is the place where technology would be utilized and emphasized most heavily. But there still needs to be some discussion of how student learning will be measured and how the university will determine if learning is improved as a result of the assessment process.
3. Overall it appears that the university is moving in the right direction to improve its assessment processes. It appears that the focus is on using technology in the assessment process. While technology can enhance the data collection, analysis, and dissemination efforts, it cannot promulgate a culture of assessment. This could occur through developing a strong university level assessment council where individuals across the university work collaboratively to develop a university level assessment plan. Fostering this collaboration could go a long way in terms of gaining faculty buy in and acceptance of the process. In addition, there could be an emphasis on developing faculty skill in understanding assessment, the role of assessment, and developing effective learning outcomes that can be clearly and quantitatively measure.

Jim agrees with Sandra that developing a culture of assessment requires much more than an effective data system. He adds the following comment: You plan to "standardize and systematize the collection of assessment data from across the university," starting with course-level assessment and moving on to program-level assessment. Does this mean that course-level information will be entered

into TracDat first? How will you ensure that the course-level information entered into TracDat will be usable at the program level? Do most programs have well-defined learning outcomes and curriculum maps, such that program faculty know which program outcomes to include on their syllabi? How will findings from course-level assessment be aggregated at the program level? Learning to use TracDat and entering the information will take some time. If faculty members later find that they need to change what they are doing to facilitate aggregation of findings, they may become disillusioned with the process.

Q:	**What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?**
A:	Sandra suggests the following possibilities and resources:

1. Development of a university-wide assessment system is best accomplished when there is a clear process in place that guides the data collection efforts. It would be good to have a written, university-wide assessment plan that could be used to guide assessment activities at different levels in the university. Such a plan developed by a university-wide assessment council which includes representatives from the various stakeholders across the university would gather faculty participation and possibly garner support for the larger university-wide assessment effort.
2. When working to centralize the assessment effort, keep in mind the individual needs of particular colleges and schools, as there may be some unique assessment needs due to guidelines established by accrediting agencies. For instance, programs that seek specialized accrediting from agencies such as CACREP or NCATE may have assessment needs unique to their program affiliations. Therefore the university assessment plan would need to acknowledge and be flexible enough to accommodate those specialized assessment needs.
3. You may want to look at the Walden University Assessment Structure as a benchmark for establishing a solid basis in assessment.

Jim agrees that these are good suggestions, and he also adds this one:

What is the format for the training sessions? During the training do faculty members work on writing and revising the learning outcomes they are planning to use in their courses? How is feedback presented? What opportunities do faculty members have to follow up on the feedback? What incentive do they have to do so? Do findings from the baseline faculty survey suggest that faculty perceive the Academy project as addressing their needs, or do they see it as "a solution in search of a problem"? Do you find that you need to adopt different approaches with different groups of faculty. As you implement the project, you will find it helpful to collect information on what works and doesn't work, why it works or doesn't work, what adjustments you attempt in order to make things work better, and the effects of those adjustments. The faculty surveys are a good idea, but you also should monitor the process on an ongoing basis.

Scholar(s):	Jim Sherohman
Primary Mentor(s):	Sandra Harris

Context

Q:	Describe your plan for creating shared responsibility for assessing and improving student learning. (100 - 200 words)
A:	The Academy will help to focus our energy on developing assessment processes that are meaningful to all stakeholders and which will bring significant returns to the university as a whole. In order for our project to be successful, we will need support and participation from students, faculty, administration, trustees and the community at large. Individual faculty will enter and review their course assessment outcomes, as well as summarize their findings and identify action plans based on those findings. A centralized location for the collection of assessment data will promote reflective use of assessment data for decisions at the school, department and university levels. Several committees will work with the Academy team including the shared governance assessment committee, school-level assessment committees and the general education committee. The Academy team will provide mentoring, faculty development and training throughout the project.

Q:	What is the broader impact of your Academy work on the institution, faculty and staff, students, or other stakeholders? How will this work influence the culture of your organization, build institutional capacity, advance teaching and learning...etc.? (100 - 200 words)
A:	At the end of the project cycle we envision that institutional assessment will be as much a part of our culture as the issuing of final course grades (i.e., a natural and expected part of the institutional culture). We envision an organic, ground-up approach to assessment where faculty will find value in reviewing and reworking their course outcomes once they have a larger vision for how those outcomes support and reinforce other school/program/university outcomes. We envision faculty led curriculum reform to be based on the use of assessment data. By the end of the project, we envision the collection/analysis of specific and useful measures that lead to efficient assessment, meaningful action, and increased student learning. Specific to our use of technology to facilitate and coordinate assessment, we envision that by the end of the project over 80% of academic course and program assessment activities will have been fully migrated to the new software. By the end of the four years we intend to provide ample evidence that assessment data are available to, or acquirable by, the institution. More importantly, that these data are routinely analyzed to inform the planning and execution of academic, administrative, and support programs, as well as other activities that are important to the institution.

Q:	Optional: What else is important to know about your work on assessing and improving student learning? (100 - 200 words)
A:	N/A

Comments

1: The fall faculty professional development day activities included two sessions dedicated to dissemination of the Academy Plan, and one to the operational details of Tracdat, used to implement the plan.
David Myton, 2012-08-23

2: LSSU hosted Dr. Peggy Maki as our fall convocation speaker. Sessions held in the afternoon for faculty, the assessment and academy teams, and for administrative support groups were well received and beneficial. Two sessions held with university directors and division heads, as well as academic administrators, provided context for the assessment of student learning in both academics and support services.
David Myton, 2012-08-23

Tags:

- Assessment Practices