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.

LSSU Response:
The fall 2014 brings several key changes to the university community including a new president, new collective bargaining agreements for the faculty (http://www.lssu.edu/hr/documents/FacultyContract1417.pdf) and support-personnel, and a new state-wide transfer agreement which substantially impacts the general education. With the next HLC site-visit just two academic years away the new President is keenly aware of the importance of assessment activities and is committed to bringing the resources of the university and the influence of his office to support these activities.
The faculty agreement incorporated several new components which explicitly clarify the expectations for faculty engagement in assessment activities, and which clearly separate assessment from faculty evaluation. These are important changes to the institutional expectations. In addition the agreement defines required faculty work days outside the instructional semester for assessment activities, meetings, etc. The new Professional Activities Report in this agreement "emphasizes the design of educational material to ensure student learning and the assessment of that learning…required documentation within this category should provide sufficient evidence that all aspects of the faculty member's instructional and assessment activities result in significant student learning."

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

LSSU Response:

Well, not everything is totally clear for us either. We appreciate the importance of providing systematic feedback to students on their performance, and the Assessment Committee has worked to bring a high level of transparency to our work and our reporting. Our Academy webpage has provided public access to all our reports, analysis and updates.

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).

(http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php)

General Education Reform is not a fundamental part of this project, although we have openly described our analysis of course-level progress in the assessment of general education outcomes. At this point the university does not have Institutional Learning Outcomes defined beyond the requirements of the general education core. This distributional core is comprised of lower division courses, and as a block has been met through completion of the MACRAO – the former state-level transfer agreement. The legislature recently linked higher-education funding to participation in a new state-wide transfer agreement (the MTA) which requires 4-year institutions to accept a community college defined 30-credit hour block as a part of the student's bachelor degree requirements. Our institution has not yet determined how to implement this change. Clearly a part of the discussion needs to be a critical analysis of what the ETS data has shown us, whether it reflects a valid measure of what we value for all students.

We look forward to the point where we can celebrate the significant progress of units, and to encouraging them to be role models and mentors for others. The support of the administrative assistants in each college was effective in meeting the goals relative to data entry of the course and program outcomes. The next stages will require greater faculty engagement in the process of relating the assessment methods and results, and the subsequent refinement of outcomes and actions which come with 'closing the loop'.

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

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.

LSSU Response:

Providing feedback was mentioned both in this section and above, and the committee took that charge seriously in this last cycle. The committee wrote detailed critical reviews relative to strategic planning, program review, general education and once course from every School unit. These reports were submitted to the Provost for review and dissemination, and posted to the Academy Project webpage:
http://www.lssu.edu/assessment/academy_project_home.php

Again, we do look forward to the time when there will be acceptance of the process. It seems counterintuitive at times, but we are regularly faced with the task of helping faculty to simplify their assessment processes rather than make them more rigorous. The message that assessment is a natural and intentionally-useful-to-faculty process is sometimes overlooked.

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?

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.

LSSU Response:

We have found some opportunities to connect. Provost Walworth and Assoc. Provost Myton met with Sandra Harris at the HLC meeting this spring and enjoyed a productive discussion. Myton also met and enjoyed a brief dialog with Gloria at the Nuventive Conference.