Assessment Plan Update

Yes, we definitely can see the light at the end of the assessment plan tunnel. As of today, 63 of the 64 units in Academic Affairs have complete assessment plans in TracDat and the remaining unit lacks just one item. My thanks, once again, for your work on this project particularly in this time of increased teaching loads.

Completing the Assessment Cycle: Reminders and Important Notes

- **All results and actions to be taken must be entered into TracDat by June 1.** All of our TracDat reports will be added to our SACS document as evidence of compliance with institutional effectiveness requirements. The deadline for the final draft of the SACS assessment sections is June 20. Because both the liaison and the chair/program director have TracDat access, one model is for the liaison to enter the learning outcome information and the chair or director to enter the operational goal information. Whatever works is fine.

- **Results are entered separately for each assessment method for each outcome or goal.** If you have two assessment methods for an outcome, you will enter two separate sets of results. Introductory instructions are posted at [http://www2.unca.edu/aa/Assessment%20tasks%20remaining.pdf](http://www2.unca.edu/aa/Assessment%20tasks%20remaining.pdf). Detailed instructions are found on pp. 7-10 of the TracDat User Guide ([http://www2.unca.edu/aa/TracDat%20User%20Guide.pdf](http://www2.unca.edu/aa/TracDat%20User%20Guide.pdf)).

- **Results are about more than “Yes” or “No”.** Our goal is to use the results of our assessments to improve which means that completing the cycle is about more than just identifying which goals or outcomes were met. We need to use those results to think about how we can improve what we do, both for the benefit of our students, our faculty and our staff. This applies both to results on assessment of SLOs and results on assessment of our operational goals. A few things to remember when you enter your assessment results.

  o A statement of results should include the reference to the actual data collected. For example, if the criterion for success is 80% of students reaching some level of performance, indicate the actual percentage of students who reached that level.

  o In the above example, it also is useful to say something about the "other" students.

    - What percentage did not meet the criterion, and what actions might the department or program take to help those students improve?
    - What percentage of students exceeded the criterion, and what might we learn from the work of these students?
It’s also useful to think about what the results suggest for improving the assessment. For example, what if the criterion were earning a grade of 75% on an exam or project and most students earned grades of 80% or higher? Should the department consider raising the bar, or perhaps modifying the exam or project? Why or why not?

- **Lest you think these are just the ramblings of an over-worked Director of Assessment:** A colleague of mine recently posted the following comments on his blog about a talk at the SACS Commission on Colleges Small College Initiative:

  “Mike Johnson talked about CR 2.5 (Institutional Effectiveness) and pointed out the difference between assessment and evaluation. In my interpretation of his remarks, the former is gathering data and the latter is using it to draw conclusions for action. In my experience, this gap is where many IE cycles break down. Signs of this are "Actions for Improvement" that:

  - **Are missing altogether**
  - **Are too general or vague to be put into practice**
  - **Report that everything is fine, and no improvements are necessary**
  - **Suggest only improvements to the assessments**


**Meet our Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Jessica Dunsmore**

In February, Jessica Dunsmore, Ph.D., joined our staff as Director of Institutional Effectiveness and she already has proven to be an invaluable asset. (In fact, it was Jessica who gave me a heads-up on David’s posting about the Small College Initiative noted above.)

Jessica received her doctorate in Psychology from UT Knoxville in 2005 with a specialization in Industrial-Organizational Psychology. From 2006 to 2010 she served as Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Tennessee Wesleyan College, as well as serving as the college’s SACS liaison. In 2010 she became Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness, adding strategic planning and coordination of the college’s SACS reaffirmation to her portfolio. Jessica also has 5 years experience as a SACS evaluator with a specialization in evaluating compliance on institutional effectiveness standards.

At UNC Asheville Jessica’s primary role will be enhancing and directing our institutional effectiveness process. Jessica already is working with the administrative areas outside Academic Affairs to help focus and finalize their assessment plan work, and assisting us with refinement of drafts of our SACS compliance documents.

Jessica’s office is 201A Lipinsky Hall in the Center for Teaching and Learning suite. Make sure to stop in the next time you visit LH.

**Activities for Next Year**

Be on the lookout for new workshop opportunities in the fall as we begin our next assessment cycle. We’re planning opportunities to share what you’ve learned from our current assessment work, to help you sharpen the focus and alignment of student learning outcomes, and to streamline your assessment work by increasing its integration with ongoing course activities (i.e., course embedded assessment).