Assessment Update

1. A job well done

My thanks to all of you for the excellent work you did to wrap up our 2009-2011 assessment cycle. The data were entered into TracDat, the reports were run and revised as needed and everything is getting organized for reporting to SACS/COC.

2. Changes in assessment liaisons

The start of the new academic year means changes in some of our departments and programs—new department chairs, new program directors, new faculty…and possibly new assessment liaisons. My very strong preference is that chairs/program directors delegate this role to a faculty member in the department or program. Please let me know ASAP if your department or program is changing its assessment liaison. I would like to meet with each new liaison shortly after the start of the semester.

3. The new assessment cycle

The start of the new academic year also means the start of our next data collection cycle. Some of you will be making changes to your outcomes or plans based on your assessment results or feedback from your Dean, AP or the Provost (see Next Steps for more information). I am available to meet with liaisons, department chairs/program directors or assembled departments to help—please call or email me so we can find a convenient time.

Our goal again is to assess all outcomes and goals at least once every other year and to enter data for the outcomes/goals assessed as it is collected. Our annual data entry deadline is now June 30 so that the cycle is consistent with our fiscal year.

The Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Committee is eager to maintain the assessment momentum we have created. With required data entry every year Vice Chancellors, Deans, etc can run reports each year if they wish and some Vice Chancellor areas are moving to an annual reporting cycle. Academic Affairs likely will continue to run and evaluate reports on a biennial schedule.

Next Steps

1. Feedback on IE (assessment) reports

As noted in our Institutional Effectiveness Manual, each assessment unit should receive feedback from the appropriate supervisor (i.e., Dean, Assistant Provost, Associate Provost, Provost) in advance of the next assessment cycle. Our summer projects have put us a little behind but each of you will be receiving feedback by September 15.

The feedback will include a completed Institutional Effectiveness rubric (available at our new website, http://ierp.unca.edu/ie) designed to provide a quick check on the adequacy of assessment plans, assessment results, and action plans and a memorandum that highlights department/program accomplishments and suggest areas for improvement. Each department or program should schedule a
faculty/staff meeting to discuss both the results of the assessments and the supervisor feedback as soon as possible after September 15.

2. Memoranda of response

We also are asking each department and program to write a 1-2 page memorandum of response—a sort of “progress report”. We are particularly interested in learning about your discussion of the assessment results and action plans, the steps you have taken to use the data/enact your action plans, and the steps you will take to improve your assessment plans based on the feedback you received. The deadline for departments and programs to respond to supervisor feedback is November 1.

3. TracDat clean-up

One important “housekeeping” matter regarding TracDat: Units with student learning outcomes should carefully review how those outcomes are linked to our University Student Learning Outcomes. All units should likewise review how operational goals are linked to our Strategic Plan. Two general rules:

- It is rare that a unit learning outcome links to more than two of the University Student Learning Outcomes (see Assessing ILS (General Education) competencies for examples). Linkage requires clear evidence in the wording of both outcomes that they have the same focus.
- Operational goals do not link to University Student Learning Outcomes. Their focus is unit operations, not student learning. They link instead to Strategic Plan themes.

If you have questions about a possible linkage, let me know and we will figure it out together.

4. Taking action on assessment results

Most of you identified “action steps” when you entered your results, steps you plan to take to address what you learned from your assessment work. As you take the steps you planned, remember to enter follow-up information in TracDat. Just go to the result and click on “edit” next to the “action in progress” label. In the new window, scroll down to the action step and click “add follow-up”. A new box opens for you to record the update.

5. Simplifying the assessment workload

You may recall conversations with me last year about embedded assessment, using the work students already do to assess their progress on program learning outcomes. Many of you already do that by using senior projects, term papers or student presentations. I would like to see more of us move toward this model and would be happy to meet with you to brainstorm ideas.

Assessing ILS (General Education) competencies

As part of our commitment to simplifying the assessment workload we are taking a different approach to assessing ILS competencies. You may recall that SACS/COC requires that we identify and assess our general education competencies and that last year we piloted a set of competencies and an assessment process. While I greatly appreciate the willingness of LSIC and LSSC/HUM faculty to let us collect answers to core competency prompts last year, and the rubric development and rubric application work of my summer faculty group, the resulting data were very difficult to interpret. In addition, this approach was totally dissociated from the excellent assessment work already in progress for our various ILS components. Why not use that work as the basis of our core competency assessment?

The re-envisioned process began with going through the ILS mission statements in TracDat. Content analysis of those statements let me generate a list of six core competencies that appeared to
capture what we are doing across our ILS courses. Not surprisingly, the six link very neatly to our University Student Learning Outcomes (USLOs), specifically, outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 6.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency area</th>
<th>USLO</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication (oral, written, artistic)</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter/Multi-disciplinarity</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking (evaluate/integrate information)</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics/Values</td>
<td>3, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture and Differences</td>
<td>3, 6</td>
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For our SACS/COC compliance standard on general education, I worked with Jessica Dunsmore, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, to collect and collate the ILS assessment results and organize them according to our new list of competencies. The result: A streamlined process that uses existing assessment work to answer these larger institutional questions.

**Workshops in development for fall semester** (dates, times and locations TBA)

1. **TracDat Refresher**

   Jessica Dunsmore, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, has taken on the role of TracDat advisor so ably piloted last year by Barb Svenson. This workshop is designed both for new assessment liaisons and those who need a bit of a refresher course, and will include discussion of any changes resulting from our TracDat upgrade.

2. **Improving Our Assessment Work**

   A series of workshops focused on the key elements of an effective and well integrated assessment process: writing effective outcomes and goals, selecting appropriate assessment methods—including embedded assessments—and using the results of assessment to improve what we do.