Assessment Notes  
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An occasional newsletter from the Director of Academic Assessment

Assessment Update

1. First Annual Assessment Initiative Awards

You may recall that we launched our first Assessment Initiatives program this fall and it was a huge success. Departments and programs in Academic Affairs were invited to propose an initiative to improve their assessment work. Proposals were submitted in December and reviewed by Jessica Dunsmore, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and myself. Congratulations to the following departments and programs.

- **Classics Department**: An allocation of $1000 for an annual subscription to L'Annee Philologique
- **Drama Department**: Four stipends of $500 each to align SLOs/assessment with new curriculum
- **Education Department**: A $500 summer stipend to research assessment tools and $1500 to purchase the best one
- **Freshman colloquium program**: Thirty $50 stipends and $500 for a speaker on embedding assessment in LSICs
- **Topical Cluster program**: Five $400 stipends to study and adapt rubrics
- **Arts requirement**: Five $200 stipends for each of two assessment initiatives (Jan and May)
- **Information Literacy Intensive**: Ten $200 stipends for half-day May workshop on new ILI rubric
- **Diversity Intensive**: Three $250 stipends, two $175 stipends and nine $100 stipends for two assessment activities
- **Senior Colloquium program**: Three stipends of $650 for in-depth analysis of assessment work
- **Key Center**: A $2,000 allocation to hire a consultant to improve program per assessment results

*Remember: These initiatives are funded with dollars from the current fiscal year. Please complete the paperwork for all stipends and purchases as soon as possible. Jessica Dunsmore must sign all requests before they are forwarded to the Provost.*

2. Confirming Assessment Liaisons

With each new academic year come new committee assignments and often new departmental service requirements. If your department or program is changing its assessment liaison, please make sure to let me know. *Not sure if you updated me? Just email me the correct information.*

3. Supplementary TracDat user manual

Now that we have completed an assessment cycle, some departments and programs are making changes to their assessment plans. Because we want to keep the full history of our assessment work in TracDat, Jessica has written a supplementary TracDat user manual, *Editing Assessment Plans in TracDat*. The supplementary manual is available for download from the Institutional Effectiveness website ([http://ierp.unca.edu/ie](http://ierp.unca.edu/ie)).
4. **Entering your assessment data**

As we reach the end of the semester, please make sure to enter your assessment results from this year into TracDat. **This is particularly important if your department or program would like to volunteer to be in the first cohort of the revised Institutional Effectiveness process** (and you would like to receive a stipend to support your work—see the *IE update* section for more information).

**SACS Update**

1. **Institutional Effectiveness**

You already have heard the wonderful news about our SACS-COC reaffirmation. I wanted to take just a moment, though, to celebrate the success of our newly reconstituted Institutional Effectiveness process. From the launching of the University Student Learning Outcomes project in August 2009 through the appointment of assessment liaisons, the development of assessment plans, the collection and reporting of data, each of you has played a pivotal role in demonstrating our commitment to improving student learning on our campus. Our IE evaluator on the SACS-COC team really had only one question for us—Noting that we had assessment reports from every single unit, she wanted to know: How did you get everyone onboard with the program? (I guess she isn’t fortunate enough to work with people you.)

2. **Quality Enhancement Plan**

Our SACS-COC team was even more impressed with work we had done on our Quality Enhancement Plan, including the detailed plan for assessing the *Inquiry ARC* project over the next five years. That plan includes direct assessment of student work in each *Inquiry ARC* class, direct assessment of faculty materials for *Inquiry ARC* courses and indirect assessment of both participating and nonparticipating students using the California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory (CCTDI). The CCTDI looks at whether students understand what critical thinking is and value using critical thinking to solve complex problems. We will collect baseline data from new freshmen during summer orientation sessions in June, baseline data from seniors next year and comparative data each of the following years to track changes in our students. This is the first time UNC Asheville has pre-tested new students to study how they might be affected by a specific learning experience! We will keep you posted as data collection proceeds.

**IE Update**

1. **Our new Institutional Effectiveness Committee**

The Faculty Senate recently approved a document to recreate the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) as a standing university committee next fall ([http://www2.unca.edu/facultysenate/2011-12/sd2612s.htm](http://www2.unca.edu/facultysenate/2011-12/sd2612s.htm)). In the interim, a group of six faculty members—all current assessment liaisons—and the Associate Provost have joined the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the four area assessment directors to reflect on our assessment work and offer ideas for improving our IE process. Please join me in thanking Brian Hook, Cynthia Canejo, Kim Brown, Patrick Foo, Patrick Bahls and Rebecca Bruce for sharing their insights.

2. **Revisions to the Institutional Effectiveness (IE) process**

The major topic of discussion for the IEC this semester was how to improve our assessment process. Our goal was to produce a sustainable process that provides meaningful information about how to improve student learning and unit operations. A draft version of the final proposal is available on the IE website...
A revised IE Manual will be posted to incorporate these changes. Highlights include the following:

- Moving from a two year to a three year cycle in which units spend two years collecting data and a third year discussing the data, planning improvements based on the results and reporting these to their deans/directors/VCs and the IEC.
- Separating formative feedback on assessment plans from summative feedback on assessment results. Assessment directors will provide formative feedback on plans; deans/directors/VCs will provide summative feedback.
- Changing the documentation format from memo-and-response to notes taken at a department/program meeting with the dean/director/VC at which results and possible implementation plans are discussed.
- Staggering reporting so that roughly one third of all units report to their deans/directors/VCs and the IEC each year. Once you join a cohort (see below), your next reporting year will always be in three years.

This final point requires a staggered launch of the new IE process and we are looking for volunteers! Our goal is to have a representative group of departments/programs in each cohort and to have the first cohort report next year. Here is how it would work.

- **Cohort 1 will report on assessment in Spring 2013.** This involves the department/program meeting with their dean/director/VC to discuss the results of assessment data and submitting a report to the IEC. They will have only three semesters of assessment data to discuss (the two semesters in AY 2011-12 and Fall 2012). *Because they are reporting a year earlier than planned (under the “old” system), we are offering assessment liaisons $1,000 stipends to support the additional work required.*
- **Cohort 2 will report on assessment in Spring 2014.** These units are on a schedule similar to the one before—they will have over two years of data to discuss (AY 2011-12, AY 2012-13 and Fall 2013).
- **Cohort 3 will report on assessment in Spring 2015.** These units are getting extra time in this first iteration of our staggered system. They will have over three years of data to discuss (AY 2011-12, AY 2012-13, AY 2013-14 and Fall 2014).

We need to each department/program to decide which cohort it wants to join by August 2012. Please contact Annis Lytle (255-7206, amlytle@unca.edu) to sign on. *Units that do not join a cohort by the end of August will be assigned to one.*

**In the Works**

1. **Avoiding Assessment Stress**

Believe it or not, assessment is everywhere at UNC Asheville right now and the IEC discussed strategies for avoiding unnecessary conflicts and duplication of effort. First, we ask that anyone doing a survey that addresses issues involving another unit touch base with that unit before launching the survey. If you plan to survey faculty and/or students about advising, for example, please talk to the folks in Advising and Learning Support before you launch your survey. They may even have the data you need already!

Which led us to another good idea: A survey repository that includes information about all university-administered surveys cross-referenced by content areas. Our goal is to hire a student worker this
summer to assist us with creating a database that lets you quickly identify which university surveys—HERI, NSSE, sophomore, graduating senior—might have items that address relevant issues. After all, no one wants to be endlessly surveyed on pretty much the same topics. More on this as it develops.

2. **Spring 2012 Workshops**

Jessica will be offering two half-day workshops on TracDat, each carrying a $200 stipend.

- **Introduction to TracDat**—May 14 and 21, 8:30-12:00
  This session will walk a user through the basics of using TracDat including setting up outcomes, adding an assessment method, entering results, running reports and managing documents. The session is appropriate for anyone new to TracDat and anyone using TracDat without having prior training. It should also be helpful for anyone who is uncertain of their TracDat abilities or can’t remember how to use TracDat

- **Updating Assessment Plans in TracDat**—May 14 and 21, 1:30-5:00
  This session will cover more advanced topics in TracDat including relating documents, sharing documents, updating assessment plans, entering a second cycle of results, using the calendar, and creating assignments. This session is appropriate for anyone who is comfortable using TracDat or who has completed the *Introduction to TracDat* workshop (e.g. We will not be stopping to tell you where to log-in). You can attend both sessions in the same day if you choose.

Lisa will be offering two half-day workshops on academic assessment, each carrying a $200 stipend.

- **Developing (and Improving) Assessment Rubrics**—May 15 and 16, 8:30-12:00
  This workshop is designed for faculty who will be evaluating student work as part of their department’s assessment plan. We will discuss how to build a simple and effective rubric from the ground up attention to selecting and defining the dimensions to be evaluated, selecting a scale and defining the properties of work representing different points along the evaluative dimension. Bring a copy of the relevant student learning outcome and a description of the student work to be evaluated for the team-work part of the session.

- **Using Embedded Assessment for Department SLOs**—May 15 and 16, 1:00-4:30
  This workshop is designed to help faculty use existing student work as part of the departmental assessment of student learning. Our focus will be on designing—or redesigning—student assignments so that they align with department outcomes and are easy to evaluate during the grading process. Bring a copy of the relevant student learning outcome and a description of the student work to be evaluated for the team-work part of the session.

As part of the professional development for those teaching next fall in our Inquiry ARC pilot group, we will be offering a series of assessment workshops during the summer months.

To sign up for a workshop, please contact Annis Lytle (255-7206, amlytle@unca.edu). Enrollment in each workshop is limited to 15 people. If you would like to attend the TracDat workshops but cannot attend on those dates or if you want an individual session, please contact Jessica Dunsmore (232-5199, jdunsmore@unca.edu).