Assessment Notes
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An occasional newsletter from the Director of Academic Assessment

Assessment Update

1. Not for liaisons only
   - Just a reminder that programs in all cohorts are expected to collect and enter some kind of data every year. Although our IE process does not require programs to execute every assessment every year, having assessment data from multiple years within a cycle is very helpful for developing action plans.
   - With the adoption of the new University Student Learning Outcomes (USLOs) last spring we are reconfiguring TracDat to new model of linking programs to USLOs. Instead of linking program outcomes to USLOs, we will link assessment of program SLOs to assessment of USLOs. We will work with you to make sure that your TracDat plans are organized in a way that lets us set these direct links for you.
   - Our focus for this year is to help programs develop sustainable assessment plans. Our goal is to revise program assessment plans to make them more focused, more sustainable and more directly linked to our new University Student Learning Outcomes. The model distributed at the meeting of chairs and program directors and emailed to liaisons is available for download at http://ierp.unca.edu/ie/program-assessment/resources.
   - Several initiatives, local and system-wide, have implications for our program assessment work.
     - Our move from the ILS program to the LAC program means we will discontinue assessment of clusters, WI courses, QI courses and ILI courses.
     - The move also means that in addition to assessing students’ oral competency, majors will be required to assess students’ mastery of writing and information literacy within each major program. If your major program does not already include assessments of these skills they will need to be added to your assessment plans by the end of this academic year.
     - It appears that the UNC General Administration is moving toward adopting system-wide student learning outcomes. The two on the table are critical thinking and written communication. The good news is that our new curriculum will require programs to assess writing within the major. If your program does not include an assessment of critical thinking, it is advisable to start conversations now about how to incorporate this into your assessment plan.

2. Notes for Assessment Liaisons
   - If you have not done so already, please create a new folder in your Document file defined by the dates of your cohort (e.g. 2011-2014 for Cohort 2) and save all rubrics, other assessment materials, and your final report in that folder.
   - If there are revisions to your program’s student learning outcomes, please make sure to have the outcomes on the program website updated. The UNC General Administration took action last summer to require all UNC schools to have accurate SLOs posted for each academic program. The revised responsibilities for liaisons document, posted after the initiation of
stipends for liaisons, includes ensuring the accuracy of posted SLOs to assessment liaisons (see document posted at http://ierp.unca.edu/ie/program-assessment/schedules-and-instructions).

- A complete schedule of assessment activities for the 2013-14 academic year is posted at http://ierp.unca.edu/ie/program-assessment/schedules-and-instructions.
- Instructions for running a TracDat report to add to your documents for the year are available at http://ierp.unca.edu/ie/program-assessment/schedules-and-instructions.

QEP Update

1. California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory

Last year we introduced a description of the California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory (CCTDI), one of our institutional measures of the impact of Inquiry ARC on UNC Asheville students:

“The CCTDI measures the “willing” dimension in the expression "willing and able" to think critically. A person may be disposed toward truthseeking or bias, toward open-mindedness or intolerance, toward anticipating possible consequences or being heedless of them, toward proceeding in a systematic or unsystematic way, toward being confident in the powers of reasoning or mistrustful of thinking, toward being inquisitive or resistant to learning, and toward mature and nuanced judgment or toward rigid simplistic thinking. The CCTDI measures these characterological attributes and its scale scores profile the survey respondent on these seven dimensions.

Higher scores on the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory are positively correlated with a strong desire to apply one's critical thinking skills in decision making and problem solving, with leadership, with ego resilience, and with the capacity to benefit from educational training and psychological counseling.” (Insight Assessment)

We also reported that baseline data on freshman students from June 2012 indicated high scores on dimensions such as confidence in reasoning, open-mindedness and inquisitiveness but lower scores on truth-seeking and systematicity. This year we are collecting baseline data on seniors who have not completed any of our designated Inquiry ARC courses. Look for a report on what we learn about these students in the Spring, 2014 edition of Assessment Notes.

2. Student Rating of Instruction Data

Do students who participate in Inquiry ARC courses rate them differently from other courses in which they enroll? As part of our QEP assessment plan, the Inquiry ARC design team selected four SRI items to track across the years of our QEP: gaining knowledge, understanding ideas, developing creative capacity and analyzing-evaluating information. SRI responses from students in Inquiry ARC courses during 2012-13 were compared with responses from students in non-Inquiry ARC courses from Fall 2010 through Spring 2013. Although there are significant differences in the sample sizes, we believe there are enough data from Inquiry ARC students to begin making some inferences. Inquiry ARC students report small gains in “gaining knowledge” and “analyzing-evaluating information” but perhaps the most exciting data are the contrast between student reports on “developing creative capacity”. Students in Inquiry ARC courses clearly rate these courses as making greater contributions to the development of these skills.
Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Update

1. Apply for one of the third Annual Assessment Initiative Awards

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is pleased to announce the third Annual Assessment Initiative Awards, underwritten by the Office of Academic Affairs. Awards are designed to help units across campus improve their assessment processes and/or their use of the results of assessment to improve. For example, successful proposals included hiring a consultant to assist with program review, offering a workshop on an aspect of pedagogy and instruction, and purchasing an instrument to use in program assessment. Proposals may include faculty stipends for work to be completed during the summer.

Awards are limited to $1,000 and must be used during the fiscal year of the award. To give programs the time they need to prepare proposals and carry them out, applications received this spring will be for projects to be carried out during the next fiscal year (July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015).

Any unit in any VC division across campus may submit a proposal. Proposals should include a one paragraph description of the initiative that indicates the unit outcome to which it is linked, the way the initiative will improve either your assessment work or your unit’s effectiveness and a brief description of costs with rationales for each item. Proposals should be submitted by email to Annis Lytle, program assistant for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (alytle@unca.edu). The deadline for receipt of proposals is February 3, 2014. Proposals will be reviewed by members of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Decisions will be announced by March 7, 2014.

2. Training for Chairs/Program Directors and Assessment Liaisons

Are you a new chair or program director? A new assessment liaison? Or just someone for whom the name “TracDat” causes you to break out into a cold sweat? No problem. Jessica schedules TracDat training several times each semester for those who are new to the system. I can give refresher sessions whenever you need them. Entering results, and editing plans, whatever you need—just let one of us know what you need.

3. Institutional Surveys

Following the retirement of several employees, responsibility for campus surveys has moved from Institutional Research to Institutional Effectiveness. One of the initiatives we are in the process of is creating a master calendar of surveys. To help us in this process, please fill out the form located here if you will be administering a survey during this academic year, or if you have already administered a survey this academic year. We are interested in any survey which uses students, faculty or staff as the population.

4. Data resources

If you are looking for data or information for your IE plans or other departmental planning, there is a wealth of information located on our website. Frequently requested data can be found here. Other data reports related to enrollment, alumni, graduates, faculty and departments can be found here and the Common Data Set (full of all kinds of institutional data) can be found here. Results of various institutional surveys can be found here. Finally, if you cannot find the data you are looking for on our website, please fill out this form.