

## **Assessment Strategic Plan 2010-2014**

This strategic plan for Assessment at University of Nebraska Kearney (UNK) is based on input from the Advancement Section of the Higher Learning Commission's feedback report from the focused visit in 2008, information on the expectations of the HLC for our next accreditation visit in 2014, and current practices in assessment in Higher Education in the U.S. The plan covers program/department level assessment at UNK

### **Program Level Assessment**

Although the HLC evaluators indicated that the Department Level Assessment at UNK was acceptable, they provided feedback on areas that could be improved or addressed. According to the evaluators: *While there is a lot of very productive assessment activity on the UNK campus, every assessment plan can benefit from a periodic reevaluation. These years before the next comprehensive visit would provide an opportunity for such reevaluation.*

The specific recommendations included:

1. Insure the sustainability of the current assessment efforts
2. Develop a cadre of "experts" on assessment
3. Review/revise student learning outcomes and measures
4. Develop appropriate rubrics for evaluating learning outcomes
5. Develop curriculum maps

### Sustainability of the current assessment efforts

The HLC evaluators' comments in the area of sustainability included: *The amount of work that has been accomplished in the past four years has been substantial. It is not clear, however, whether or not this level of activity can be, or in some cases should be, sustained.*

Sustainability issues are being addressed in several ways since the 2008 HLC visit. These include the implementation of WEAVEonline, elimination of department level reports for Writing Intensive courses (WI), elimination of department level GS reports, and review of all departments' assessment methods to eliminate ineffective data collection and to streamline the assessment process.

**Implementation of WEAVEonline** began in fall 2007 when Assessment Office staff entered learning outcomes and measures for all departments in preparation for the NCA Focused visit. Departments began inputting their annual assessment results into WEAVEonline in fall 2008. This has streamlined the assessment reporting process for all departments by eliminating the need for a lengthy written report that was submitted by all departments on an annual basis. Results from each year are retained and available in WEAVEonline to provide a record of assessment results over the years.

**Elimination of department level WI reports** was implemented in fall 2008 when departments began reporting their Writing in the Discipline results as one of the learning

outcomes within their WEAVEonline report. Prior to this, each department was submitting a separate written report for their courses in the Writing Across the Curriculum program. Elimination of this report and inclusion of WI as one of the department's overall learning outcomes has significantly reduced the time required for reporting on WI results within each department.

**Elimination of department level GS reports** was implemented in fall 2008 when departments no longer needed to collect data and in fall 2009 when departments were no longer required to complete a GS report in WEAVEonline. This was initiated as the new GS program was being defined and implemented. Following implementation of the new program in fall 2010, departments will collect data in their GS courses by grading the common GS assessment assignments in TaskStream, where data will be compiled for the General Studies office for reporting purposes. Elimination of the GS report and moving reporting responsibility to the GS program level will provide significant savings in time and effort for departments teaching GS courses.

**A review of each department's assessment process** with detailed feedback was begun in fall 2007. In addition assessment personnel began meeting with individual departments in spring 2009 to review their assessment process and ensure that learning outcomes and measures provide useful results in answering questions about student performance. These meetings will continue until all departments have reviewed and made necessary revisions to their assessment process.

**Implementation of changes to increase efficiency** and reduce workload in assessment reporting is occurring as follows:

1. Implementation of WEAVEonline for assessment reporting—Fall 2007-ongoing
2. Elimination of department's WI report—Fall 2008
3. Elimination of department's GS report—Fall 2009
4. Continuing review of department's assessment process—Fall 2007-ongoing

The Office of Assessment will continue to identify ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of department/program level reporting of assessment results. By 2013 all departments will have reduced their workload related to assessment and will be collecting the most useful data to improve their programs.

#### Develop a Cadre of Assessment "Experts"

The HLC reviewers recognized that there would be turnover in the faculty with responsibility for departmental assessment and that these individuals may experience burnout over time. Their recommendations related to this included: ***Attention will need to be paid to the development of new faculty related to assessment. To move to the next level, faculty assessment coordinators will need to be developed from "coordinators" to "experts" in assessment. Recognition, remuneration, and rewards for excellence in assessment might be considered.***

The Office of Assessment began to address the issue of developing department-level assessment "experts" in fall 2008 with the selection of a faculty member from each

department to be trained on WEAVEonline and to be designated as the assessment contact person in his/her department. These individuals received a stipend for becoming the WEAVEonline “expert”.

In May and August of 2009 we began the process of training these “experts” to implement Curriculum Mapping in their departments. These individuals are receiving stipends for implementing this process, since it requires a review of the department learning outcomes and measures and a mapping of all the department’s courses to the learning outcomes. Over a 4 year period training will be provided to faculty responsible for assessment and they will receive a stipend for their participation.

Recognition and rewards for excellence in assessment have been a part of the assessment process since spring 2005 when the Assessment awards luncheons were initiated. Every spring departments and individuals are recognized and receive awards in various categories related to their outstanding work in assessment.

**Developing and rewarding a cadre of assessment experts** has begun and will continue over the next four years.

1. TaskStream e-portfolio implementation stipend for faculty and departments 2010-ongoing
2. Curriculum mapping training stipend for faculty and departments--2009-ongoing
3. Training a Cadre of assessment experts—Fall 2008-ongoing
4. Remuneration for assessment experts—Fall 2008-ongoing
5. Annual Assessment Awards Luncheon—Spring 2005-ongoing

#### Review/revise Student Learning Outcomes and Methods

Comments on program level assessment on the feedback report indicated that ***Virtually every department could benefit from a serious examination of their student learning outcomes and methods. Effort is being spent on assessment activities that may not yield genuinely useful information***

The Office of Assessment began a process to review and revise the learning outcomes and associated measures of all academic programs over the next four years. This is being done through written feedback on annual assessment reports, in training sessions, and through individual meetings with departments/programs. This process began in the fall of 2007 with written feedback provided to all departments submitting annual assessment reports. In the summer of 2009, ten departments attended training that included review and revision of their learning outcomes and measures. This training will continue each year with ten additional departments until all have completed it and revised outcomes and measures. Faculty being trained receive a stipend, as do their departments. Additional departments have received individual input on their outcomes and methods. These changes will be reflected in their annual assessment reports in WEAVEonline.

Currently 50 academic departments/programs submit annual assessment reports. To ensure that all departments have reviewed and revised their learning outcomes and

measures before 2014, an additional 15 departments a year will need to be trained or assisted in one-on-one sessions.

**Implementation of reviews and revisions of learning outcomes and measures** has begun and will continue over the next 4 years.

1. Written feedback given to departments on their annual assessment report—Fall 2007-ongoing
2. Review of learning outcomes and measures in training sessions—Summer 2009-ongoing
3. Individual meetings to review outcomes and measures—Fall 2009-ongoing

#### Develop Appropriate Rubrics to Assess Learning

The HLC evaluators commented: *Rubrics can be an effective tool for assessing student achievement. Many of what UNK departments are currently referring to as rubrics are simply rating scales. As opposed to scales, rubrics describe performance standards at different levels of achievement, thus providing more standardization in their application across faculty and more utility to students receiving feedback.*

To address this issue the Office of assessment provides written feedback on department's annual assessment reports which includes comments on the rubrics being used. In addition, training of department's assessment personnel began in summer 2009 with workshops on Curriculum Mapping that included training on developing rubrics. Ten departments received training in the first workshops and additional departments will be trained each year for the next three years. The Director of Assessment is also meeting with individual departments to provide assistance in revising rubrics being used for evaluation of student performance.

**Implementation of rubric revision** has begun and will continue through 2013.

1. Written feedback given to departments on their annual assessment report—Fall 2007-ongoing
2. Training sessions that include a review of rubrics—Summer 2009-ongoing
3. Individual meetings to review rubrics—Fall 2010-ongoing

#### Create Curriculum Maps

The HLC evaluators recommended that departments and programs develop maps of their curriculum to identify where their learning outcomes are being introduced, developed and assessed. The evaluators indicated that curriculum mapping would help UNK meet the anticipated requirements for assessment in the 2014 accreditation visit. Their comments included: *Curriculum mapping is a valuable process. In many cases, it is the first time that a curriculum has been systematically examined to see how the individual courses function in the curriculum. A curriculum map also provides a chance to check for alignment in the curriculum. It identifies which outcomes may not be supported adequately, areas of overlap, and perhaps program outcomes that have been overlooked.*

To address this issue, the Office of Assessment began the process of implementing the curriculum mapping function of WEAVEonline in academic departments and programs. During the summer of 2009, ten departments/programs on campus received training on curriculum mapping which included a review of their learning outcomes, measures, and rubrics, plus the use of the WEAVEonline curriculum mapping function. The workshops were difficult to schedule and were time consuming. As a result, the Curriculum Mapping training is being converted to self-directed training and will be made available to all departments beginning summer 2010. This will allow all departments/programs to be trained on Curriculum mapping and to have developed their curriculum maps by fall 2013.

**Implementation of curriculum mapping** has begun and will continue through 2013.

1. Curriculum Mapping workshops delivered to 10 departments—Summer 2009
2. On-line Curriculum Mapping training available to departments/programs—  
Summer 2010-ongoing.

#### Develop e-portfolios for assessing student learning

The field of assessment in academia is moving away from the use of standardized tests to assess learning to demonstration of “authentic learning” through the use of e-portfolios. To address these changes in the assessment process, the Office of Assessment has encouraged departments to evaluate the use of e-portfolios for their majors. Beginning in Spring 2010, departments on campus began to use e-portfolios as part of their departmental assessment process. Teacher Education in the College of Education had required students to develop e-portfolios beginning in 2007 to meet NCATE accreditation requirements. They had done a thorough search of available applications and chose TaskStream. As a result, TaskStream is being used as other departments implement e-portfolios. Women’s Studies and Social Work implemented TaskStream in 2011; the College of Business and Technology undergraduate business program will begin to use e-portfolios for all majors in Fall 2012 as will the Psychology Department. Physics, the Honors Program and several other departments are in the initial stages of evaluating and implementing TaskStream for their majors.

Beginning in Summer Orientation for Freshman 2012, all students and their parents will be given information about the new e-portfolio called YOU@UNK. Student mentors will be available to help students begin to develop their own personal e-portfolio which will later be used for assessment purposes as well.