

2010

An Overview of Selected University Assessment Systems

Prepared for the University of Florida
Assessment Committee

This report provides an overview of assessment systems at 11 universities, the AACU Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Project, and some questions for consideration as the committee moves forward.



A Brief Overview of Selected University Assessment Systems

Timothy S. Brophy, Assistant Dean for Research and Technology, College of Fine Arts

For: the University of Florida Assessment Committee

The assessment information collected for this report was obtained at this website: *Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment* <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>. This is (perhaps) the most comprehensive compilation of information and links about assessment in higher education available. For this review, I searched for common themes or practices among peer and other institutions that might inform our work at UF. The findings shared here are based on a quick overview of these sources. We will benefit from an in-depth review of these practices, processes, and policies. Findings:

- University wide assessment systems are developed and implemented from the Provost's Office; in most cases, there is an individual (or office) assigned to lead this work, usually a director – but it is not always easy to find out “who's in charge.”
- Once the assessment program and approach is determined, the university assessment director provides a general framework for reporting assessment data and practices that is aligned with the university's assessment data needs, and is broad enough to be applied meaningfully across units and programs within units.
- Each unit prepares reports on its assessment progress and/or plan on a recurring basis, but not always annually.
- Assessment activities are grounded in the mission of the university, and this is publicly articulated to varying degrees at each institution – but usually “stimulated” by an accrediting body's request for evidence of student learning and program assessment. The assessment “mission,” “guiding principles,” “purposes,” and/or similar statements by the Provost or other upper administration personnel are included on the institution's assessment website.
- Assessment websites are critical information sources for the university's constituents and include assessment overviews, resources (templates, websites, university publications, etc.), examples, stories, professional development and workshop notifications, etc.
- Ongoing faculty professional development in the form of workshops on teaching and assessment are offered at each of these universities – this is a consistent finding.
- University Assessment committees/councils guide the formation and recommendation of assessment policy and procedures, but with the support of an assigned individual, office, or center.
- Assessment plan templates are consistent in content and form. In general, they are relatively brief and are designed to gather the following information from colleges/units/programs:
 - (a) student outcomes and/or program goals;
 - (b) methods for measuring/assessing these and collecting the data;
 - (c) results of the data collection;
 - (d) a plan for using these results;
 - (e) a timeline for the plan's implementation;
 - (f) and improvements made as a result of the data collected (usually referred to as program improvement).
 - In some plans, the units provide past results and a description of the process used to develop the assessment plan.

- The university administration does not impose particular methods of assessment, however these are often provided as resources and in workshops. However, some universities impose specific campus – wide assessments for all or selected subsets of students.

The VALUE Project

The AACU *Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE)* Project (<http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm>) provides generalized rubrics for three assessment domains: intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. Within the domains, there are a total of 15 measurable outcomes and a generalized rubric for measuring these outcomes. These generalized rubrics are adaptable to individual institutions, and provide a list of criteria and achievement descriptions for each outcome. Table 1 provides the links to these rubrics. (Note: to access these you will need to enter your email address.)

Table 1. General Rubrics for the Assessment of Undergraduate Education (VALUE Project)

<i>Domain</i>	<i>Measurable Outcome Rubric</i>
Intellectual and Practical Skills	Inquiry and analysis Critical thinking Creative thinking Written communication Oral communication Reading Quantitative literacy Information literacy Teamwork Problem solving
Personal and Social Responsibility	Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global Intercultural knowledge and competence Ethical reasoning Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
Integrative and Applied Learning	Integrative and applied learning

Some Questions

Based on this overview, the following questions seem appropriate for us to consider:

- What background work – purpose, mission, goals, guiding principles, etc. - do we need to do before moving forward?
- Would we benefit from an in-depth review of assessment systems on other campuses?
- What is our vision of assessment at UF?
- Do we need to establish a philosophical framework for what we do?
- Who is “point person” for assessment at UF?
- What is our “plan of action” for the assessment of student learning?

Summary of Resources

The following pages provide a brief summary of the resources I reviewed, and links to them. Information from Ohio State, UW-Madison, Penn State, University of Michigan, University of North Carolina, University of Kentucky, University of Maryland, and the University of Illinois reveals that university-wide assessment is varied in degree of development and implementation. On our own campus, I provide links to the Student Affairs Assessment page, the College of Engineering's ABET Accreditation Page, the College of Education's Educator Assessment System, and Music Education's online Music Teaching Portfolio system, all well-developed assessment systems here at UF. The James Madison University and Kansas State University assessment systems provide other approaches to consider, and are among the more well developed campus-wide efforts.

AACU – Association of American Colleges and Universities

- VALUE Project - "Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education" <http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm>
- Resource for Developing VAUE Rubrics http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=28553362&CFTOKEN=82214042
- General Information about the history of assessment in higher education <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/evaluation/AACUAssessment%20.pdf>

Ohio State University – the [College of Engineering](#) seems to be the only college with a published assessment plan

- Scroll down to *Outcomes Assessment*, and open the college's *assessment model* (pdf file).
- There are also results from *surveys* of students, alumni, and project/internship supervisors (*html* pages, *pdf* files, *Word* documents).

University of Wisconsin – Madison <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/>

- Assessment Council – who they are, what they do - http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/Assessment_Council.html
- Assessment Plan for the University – initiated in 2003, updated in 2008 http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/Assessmentplan2003_R2008.pdf
- Assessment Approach and Plan - <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/manual/manual1.html#uwplan>
- Assessment Manual – a good example of how to organize these efforts - <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/assessment/manual/>

Pennsylvania State University - <http://assess.psu.edu/>

- Their approach includes an articulation of “spheres of assessment” – course level, general education, institutional level, co-curricular - <http://assess.psu.edu/Approach/>

- Program assessment procedure - <http://assess.psu.edu/ProgramAssess/>
- Each College has assigned one person as the Assessment Facilitator for each of its units - <http://assess.psu.edu/Facilitators/>

University of Michigan - <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/assessment/index.php>

- They have an e-portfolio program with a specific framework and guiding questions; examples are found at <http://eportfolio.dmc.dc.umich.edu/egallery/>
- University of Michigan College of Engineering – Assessment for Curricular Change [www.engin.umich.edu/teaching/assess and improve/handbook/plans.html](http://www.engin.umich.edu/teaching/assess_and_improve/handbook/plans.html)

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign <http://cte.illinois.edu/outcomes/outcome.html>

- They provide a form, "Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs" at <http://cte.illinois.edu/outcomes/pdfs/AssessmentPlan.pdf>
- They report on 80 units – the provost required the first report in 2000, and the second report was in 2007

University of Kentucky - <http://www.uky.edu/IRPE/assessment.html>

- *Sizzle* – "What's Hot in Assessment" – Newsletter
- Drafting and Refining Unit Assessment Plans - [http://www.uky.edu/IRPE/assessment/workshops/oa/Drafting and Refining Unit Assessment Plans081809.pdf](http://www.uky.edu/IRPE/assessment/workshops/oa/Drafting_and_Refining_Unit_Assessment_Plans081809.pdf)
- Unit Assessment Outline - <http://www.uky.edu/IRPE/assessment/handouts/UnitAssessPlanTemplatev2.pdf>

University of Maryland - <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/LearningOutcomes/>

- Provost's Commission on Learning Outcomes Assessment - <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/AssessmentUM/prov.commis.shtml#plan>

University of North Carolina

- "Opportunities to Enhance Quality" includes a brief description of their student learning outcomes assessment - [www.unc.edu/inst_res/SACS/files/ppt/Faculty Council Sept 3.ppt](http://www.unc.edu/inst_res/SACS/files/ppt/Faculty_Council_Sept_3.ppt) (a PowerPoint document)

In our own back yard – University of Florida

- Student Affairs Assessment - <http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/committe/saas/saas.shtml> is their comprehensive site, and the assessment template is here <http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/committe/saas/docs/DSADepartmentsTemplate.pdf>
- College of Education – Educator Assessment System - <http://education.ufl.edu/web/?pid=1096>
- College of Engineering - <http://www.ece.ufl.edu/academics/ABET/main.html>
- Program/ Student Learning Assessment: Music Education Teaching Portfolios (aligned with the COE – EAS system) - <http://portfolios.music.ufl.edu/>

James Madison University - <http://www.jmu.edu/assessment/JMUAssess/Overview.htm>

- A smaller university with a well developed assessment program
 - Assessment Days
 - Assessment Fellowships for Faculty
 - Assessment Awards

Kansas State University - <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/index.htm>

- Their description of what they do - <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/about/ksuasl.htm>
- Their assessment plan page – very comprehensive - <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/plans/index.htm>
- Their recommended *Measures, Rubrics, & Tools for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes* - <http://www.k-state.edu/assessment/plans/measures/index.htm>

Many of the university assessment resource pages also reference this list:

Nine principles of assessment

Nine *Principles of Assessment* were developed by a task force from the American Association for Higher Education (Alexander W. Astin; Trudy W. Banta; K. Patricia Cross; Elaine El-Khawas; Peter T. Ewell; Pat Hutchings; Theodore J. Marchese, Kay M. McClenney; Marcia Mentkowski, Margaret A. Miller; E. Thomas Moran; and Barbara D. Wright).

The link to the original article is: (<http://www.aahe.org/assessment/principl.htm>)

The nine principles include:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.

4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is more likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Proposed Models for Assessment

Based on the review of assessment systems presented here, the following two figures present a starting point for consideration as we move forward with developing an assessment approach for UF. Figure 1 presents a proposed continuous improvement plan based on assessment, and Figure 2 presents a suggested series of four phases for initiating an assessment plan at UF.

Figure 1. A Proposed Assessment/Continuous Improvement Process for UF

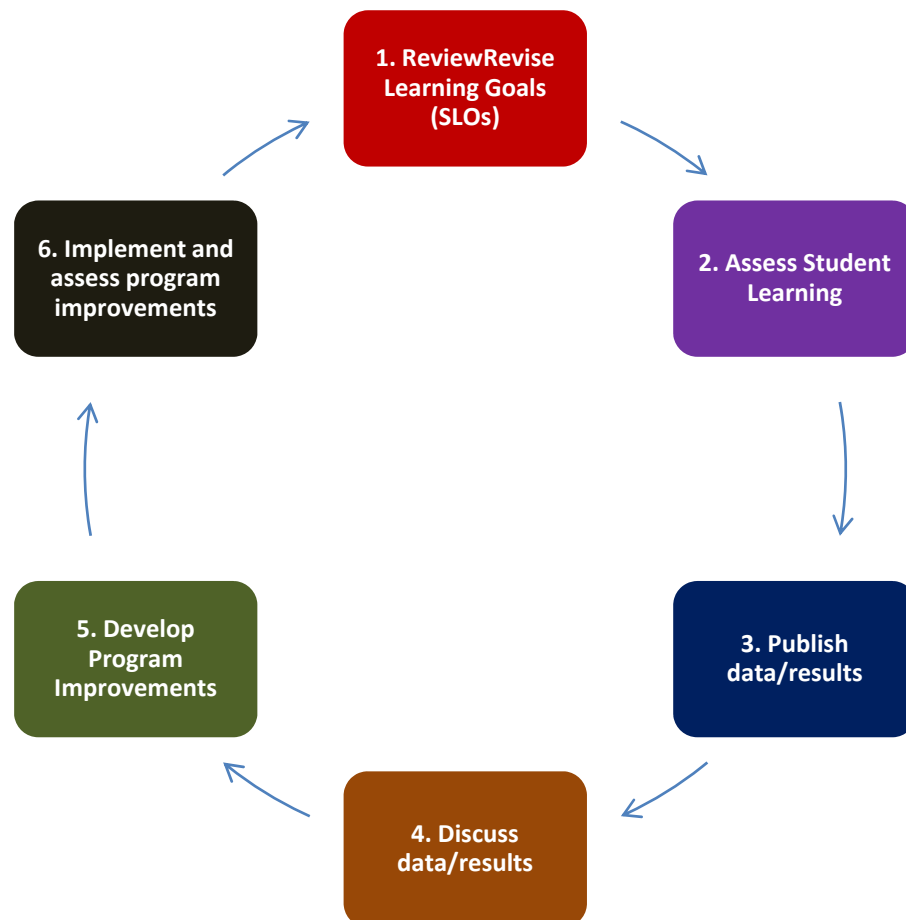


Figure 2. Proposed Phases for Initiating an Assessment Plan at UF

