2010 Annual Meeting Presenter Packet

Sample Papers

Examples from the 2009 Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

NCA

30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400 | Chicago, Illinois 60602

312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440 | Fax: 312.263.7462

ncahlc.org

Serving the common good by assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning

Advancing Academic Quality through an Innovative Model of Shared Leadership

Gretchen K. Carroll

The National Problem

As technological change advances, globalization impacts national and regional economies, organizational resources continue to dwindle, and traditional leadership paradigms begin to change, higher educational organizations have begun to rethink how to lead and manage in a changing academic environment. Challenges such as cost containment, accountability to the public, measurement of student outcomes, and the increasing size and complexity of organizations make it exceedingly more difficult for organizational administrators, faculty, and staff to relate to the institution as a whole and to comprehend the vast array of performance objectives demanded by internal and external stakeholders (Alfred 2008). Therefore, it is no longer appropriate to place responsibility for leadership and change on the shoulders of any one individual leader (Randall and Coakley 2006). Moreover, traditional hierarchical and authoritative organizational models of leadership that focus on competencies and behaviors of individual leaders are being challenged by academic quality improvement imperatives that require the support of all institutional stakeholders. Undoubtedly, in our new world, being successful in academia requires inclusion of the expertise of individuals throughout the organization and bringing diverse voices to the decision-making and planning process (Kezar 2000). In essence, in order to support academic quality and build organizational capacity, stakeholders must be mobilized to tackle the tough problems facing academia and do the adaptive work necessary for progress (Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer 2004). Therefore, educational institutions are searching for new approaches to leadership that optimize organizational capacity and take into account the needs and demands of various stakeholders while including them in the change process.

A Shared Leadership Solution

As an AQIP institution and a member of the Strategic Horizons Network, Owens Community College (OCC) found it increasingly clear that, in order to thrive in an increasingly competitive market and meet accreditation, enrollment, outcomes, and stakeholder demands, it needed to find a way to actively engage and empower all institutional stakeholders in collaborative leadership. The big question was how. How could we meaningfully empower and engage a diverse and pluralistic group of faculty, staff, and administrators with competing interests to assist in making the adaptive decisions of the college? How could we begin the cultural transformation necessary to support any organizational change effort, especially with traditional administrative and faculty mindsets? How could we take an institution with two campuses, more than twenty thousand students, more than one thousand full-time and part-time employees, and three collective bargaining units through an organizational change process that requires a shift in paradigms from a hierarchical, closed system to a loosely coupled and open system capable of dealing with ambiguity and contradiction? Perhaps even more important, how could we create a culture that is adaptable and responsive and embraces continuous process improvement and academic quality?

Armed with Adrianna Kezar's strategies for engaging diverse voices in the leadership process (2000), Randall and Coakley's research on applying adaptive leadership to successful change initiatives in academia (2006), John Kotter's theories of organizational change (2005), support of a forward-thinking institutional president and her cabinet, and the underlying belief that organizational capacity will be achieved only when the talent, skills, and competencies of people throughout the organization are used to the fullest extent possible, Owens Community College underwent a nine-month process of creating a pluralistic and adaptive model of shared leadership—a leadership model that was specifically designed to ensure inclusiveness while mobilizing organizational stakeholders to work collaboratively together and creatively solve problems in order to foster successful and sustainable modifications in the relationship between Owens Community College and its stakeholders.

The Process of Designing a Shared-Leadership Model

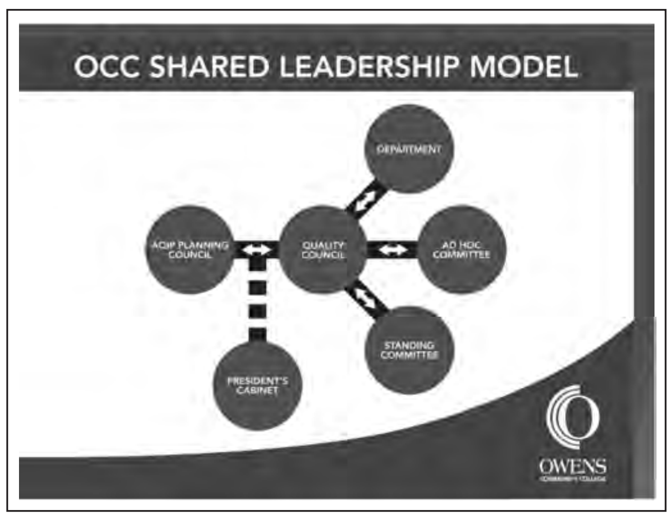
The process began with the identification of an internal faculty facilitator, a professor in the School of Business who was familiar and experienced with various leadership theories and organizational change models. After presenting the research of Kezar; Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer; and Kotter at a President's Council meeting, she was empowered by the president to assemble a guiding coalition of individuals from across the college to create a new leadership model for the college. Membership of the coalition was diverse and consisted of the provost, five vice presidents, three faculty members, the AQIP liaison, two deans, two student services directors, two staff representatives, an academic chair, and a member of the board of trustees. In pulling together the guiding team, the facilitator followed the recommendations of Kotter (2005) and sought individuals with leadership skills, credibility, communications ability, authority, analytical skills, and a sense of urgency to help set the stage for the change process.

The first meeting of the guiding coalition occurred in January 2008. After distributing the book *Our Iceberg Is Melting* (Kotter 2005), and reviewing the eight-step process of successful change, the facilitator began building a team committed to setting the stage for change by transforming the coalition into a colony of penguins that needed to find a new iceberg. The first step was drafting a team operating agreement, team norms and objectives, and a mission of developing an environment of collaborative leadership based on trust, action, and accountability. A sense of urgency was created through coalition objectives that included having leadership teams in place by fall 2008.

Developing the change vision and strategy was a time-consuming process that took more than seven months and one hundred hours of dedicated meeting time. The work of the coalition was promoted and communicated through the intranet, campus publications, word of mouth, and town hall meetings so that the college community was involved in the process. Copies of *Our Iceberg Is Melting* were placed in the library and the bookstore, given to the members of the board of trustees, and distributed at all campus meetings. Penguins began appearing everywhere. The coalition drafted mock press releases about how the future leadership would be different from the past and how that future would become a reality; it was determined that by sharing the leadership of the college Owens Community College would be a "leader in learning."

As the coalition analyzed college-wide initiatives and processes, it determined that the new iceberg needed to be an inclusive habitat that focuses on stakeholders, has broad-based involvement, is learning centered, respects people, promotes collaboration, encourages participation, is responsive to change, and embraces the AQIP Principles of High Performance Organizations as well as the values of Strategic Horizons. Furthermore, the new model needed a continuous process-improvement focus that streamlined processes and eliminated redundancies between efforts. In essence, the focus of the coalition became creating a new leadership model that would create a culture of excellence driven by academic quality.

According to Heifetz, Kania, and Kramer (2004), rather than focusing on leadership as an individual function, adaptive leadership is a process that requires people to focus on the specific problems at hand and change the way they have worked together in the past. Moreover, because it is a process, it should compel the stakeholders to work collaboratively toward a solution through debate and creative thinking and should result in positive, nonthreatening change. The coalition's goal was to create a leadership model that provided a framework for attaining employee commitment to actively participate in the change process and support AQIP initiatives. Furthermore, the model needed to facilitate communication among all members of the college community and place authority for decision making with those who should be making the decisions. As shown in the figure, it is a flattened model of circles, rather than ladders, in order to reduce the hierarchical structure of the institution, and it allows for the two-way flow of information and establishes a structure for decision making at the appropriate point of contact.



The model includes two standing councils, the AQIP Planning Council (APC) and the Quality Council (QC); President's Cabinet; OCC departments; standing committees and ad hoc committees; and college personnel, as individuals and groups. It recognizes that all members of the college community are leaders and that all should have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Therefore, membership on the councils is determined by both an appointment and an election process. APC serves in an advisory and decision-making capacity and makes the adaptive decisions concerning the strategic direction of the college. It is instrumental in the selection of AQIP projects and action items. QC determines who is responsible for action and implementation of the adaptive decisions made by APC. It, along with an internal quality trainer, assigns projects/initiatives to a standing committee, an ad hoc committee, or a department, division, school, or individual. QC is responsible for providing support to the assignee and reporting back to APC on the status of the project. Our AQIP liaison is responsible for making it happen through the coordination and implementation of the model.

Results

In the four months since the model was announced to the college community we have been focusing on communicating for understanding and buy-in, empowering others to act, producing short-term wins, and not letting up. The model was approved by the board of trustees, the councils have been populated, and we are preparing for stakeholder elections. APC and QC have monthly meetings, and AQIP action items and projects for the 2009 calendar year have been determined. The AQIP liaison has prepared a slide show and video for presentation at department and school meetings and at The Higher Learning Commission, and the work of APC and QC is being communicated via the intranet, internal newsletters, and meetings.

Making the shared leadership model work and making it stick will require patience and time. We recognize that we are creating a new culture that supports academic quality, and we need to develop the trust level within the college and know that we can rely on each other, our processes, and our systems. Furthermore, we all need to take action, get involved, and hold ourselves responsible and accountable for all that we do. Although organizational and cultural change is challenging, the guiding coalition has a great sense of accomplishment and has proved that we can collaboratively work together to share the leadership of the college. Now we need to hold on to the new ways of behaving, replace old traditions, and make sure that we succeed!

References

Alfred, R. 2008. The next horizon: Organizational capacity. Rethinking how we lead and manage community colleges. Paper presented at the Strategic Horizon Network, Ann Arbor, MI.

Heifetz, R. A., J. V. Kania, and M. R. Kramer. 2004. Leading boldly. *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 2(3):20–32.

Kezar, A. 2000. Pluralistic leadership: Bringing diverse voices to the table. *About Campus* July-August, 6–11.

Kotter, J. 2005. *Our iceberg is melting*. New York: St. Martins Press.

Randall, L. M., and L. A. Coakley. 2006. Applying adaptive leadership to successful change initiatives in academia. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal* 28(4): 325–335.

Gretchen K. Carroll *is Professor of Management and Leadership at Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio.*

A Program Model of Experiential Learning: Enhancing Student Learning and Career Readiness

Patrick M. Green

Since the work of John Dewey and David Kolb, experiential education has been a topic of interest for many in higher education. The National Society of Experiential Education (NSEE) frames experience-based learning to include career-related activities, internships, cooperative education, and service-learning. Ryan (1999) suggests experiential education is difficult to define, but often includes internships, service-learning, cooperative education, science labs, field studies, and practica in professional areas such as education or nursing. Furco (1996) places experiential education in a broader context of community service, service-learning, community service work-study, study abroad, and internships, all of which provide students with professional experience tied to their course of study. In recent years, community-based experiences have been viewed as valuable teaching grounds for students and as effective means for providing students with pre-professional experiences.

The last several decades have seen a renewed emphasis on experiential learning research, reminiscent of John Dewey's democratic education, highlighting internships, service-learning, and community-based work-study. Experiential education programs, often relegated to internship or co-op work experiences, provide students with professional, real-world experience tied to their academic course of study. The emergence of service-learning, as a pedagogy that combines academic rigor with community-based learning, also has provided students experiential learning in real-world settings. In a review of the literature, service-learning is often identified as a form of experiential learning and often cited as an example of experiential learning in the classroom.

In addition, off-campus federal work-study opportunities provide employment experiences in community-based professional settings. In this context of community-based education, federal work-study (FWS) emerges as one of higher education's best kept secrets. Although the statutory requirement of institutions is that 7 percent of their FWS budget be dedicated to community-based work-study positions, well-structured programs transform the community-based experiences into community service internship programs. According to Davidson (2007), an FWS program has the potential to be a "powerful educational, career-preparation, and community service internship program." Davidson notes that community-based FWS programs, like academic internships and service-learning, have significant impact on a students' skill-building and career readiness, such as exploring interest in public service work; developing interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership skills; learning new workplace skills; and exploring potential career paths.

Besides internships, service-learning, and community-based work-study, students have an overwhelming choice of curricular and co-curricular activities, such as participation in student organizations, athletic teams, leadership programs, and undergraduate research. Increasing participation in study abroad excursions provides students with numerous global experiences as well. Perhaps our perception of experiential education needs to be broadened to address the continuum of engaged learning in higher education. In turn, the structures within higher education institutions need to reflect this broad spectrum of experiential education.

A Structural Model of Experiential-Learning Programs

As a program model for engaged learning, the Center for Experiential Learning at Loyola University Chicago houses four experiential learning programs: academic internships, academic service learning, community-based federal work-study, and undergraduate research. A recent program evaluation and assessment initiative has provided rich data on student outcomes, employer feedback, and the impact of experiential learning. A preliminary review of the assessment data, including student surveys, employer surveys, and focus groups, offers evidence of experiential learning opportunities positively impacting students' academic competencies and skills, improving career readiness and professional opportunities, and enhancing the capacity development of employing organizations.

As the largest Jesuit Catholic university and the largest Catholic research (high) institution in the nation, Loyola University Chicago is situated in a major metropolitan area—the city of Chicago—with three campuses in Chicago and one campus in Rome. Committed to the promise of "preparing people to lead extraordinary lives," Loyola University Chicago was founded in 1870 and enrolls more than 15,600 students, which includes more than 10,100 undergraduates hailing from all fifty states and eighty-two foreign countries. Community engagement is a focus in Loyola's mission—"We are Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University—a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith"—and in Loyola's vision—"to seek new knowledge in the service of humanity in a world-renowned urban center as members of a diverse learning community that values freedom of inquiry, the pursuit of truth and care for others."

The Center for Experiential Learning (CEL), under the Office of the Provost, is an academic support service for faculty, students, staff, and community partners, and the center houses four experiential learning programs (service-learning, academic internships, the community-based FWS, and undergraduate research). The CEL staff consists of a director, a service-learning coordinator, an academic internship coordinator, an Americorps Vista coordinator for community-based FWS, a graduate assistant, and eight student leaders. The CEL is the university's central structure for community-based work that is connected to academics, but, given the size of Loyola, there are several departments and centers at Loyola that engage in community-based learning. University Ministry houses the co-curricular community service program and the alternative break immersion program. The Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL) is the university structure for community-based research, offering faculty fellowships, graduate fellowships, and undergraduate research fellowships for engaged research with community-based organizations. A number of academic departments are engaged in experiential learning, including the schools of nursing, education, and social work, the medical school, and various academic departments such as psychology and sociology. The CEL communicates and collaborates with each of these departments, offices, and centers to enhance the experiential learning opportunities at Loyola University Chicago.

Impact of Experiential Learning on Students and Community Organizations

The program evaluation and assessment initiative consisted of a pre- and post-survey methodology, utilizing an online Web survey. In the first week of service-learning classes and academic internship classes, the pre-service survey was administered each semester. In the last week of classes, the post-experience survey was administered each semester as well. When FWS positions existed beyond a semester, mid-year and end-of-year surveys were administered. Although quantitative analyses of the complete year of data will be run in the future to test for statistical significance, the focus here is on the preliminary review of quantitative and qualitative data from the first two semesters (summer 2008 and fall 2008) with more than three hundred student responses and more than fifty employer partner responses. Specifically highlighted is the impact of these three forms of experiential learning in relation to academic skills and career readiness:

- Students reported a general increase in academic skills and abilities after the experience.
- Students identified improvement in cultural competencies.
- Students indicated an increase in understanding communities issues, concepts of justice, and leadership opportunities in the community.
- Students demonstrated a stronger understanding of engagement in the community.
- Students found that each of the experiential learning opportunities helped define their career interests, develop skills for their careers, and foster their career goals (internships especially).
- Students reported that experiential learning opportunities created new professional opportunities, including internships, experiences in a different setting or industry, part-time and full-time employment, networking, and professional contacts.

In addition, employing organizations were surveyed, which included community partner organizations that employ students via internships or FWS positions and non-profit organizations that host students as service-learners. Highlighted below is the feedback of these employers:

- Employers indicated that experiential learning opportunities are beneficial for employment opportunities.
- Employers indicated that community-based experiences influence their hiring decisions.
- Employers reported that experiential learning programs provide significant capacity development for their organization.
- Employers commented on social capital of college students.

In effect, the employer feedback provided strong encouragement for experiential learning programs and called for increased participation in the program.

Practical Suggestions for Program Implementation

The student and employer surveys demonstrated more than just the impact of experiential learning on academic skills and career readiness. The data also provided distinct suggestions for program development. The following points emerge from the student and employer feedback and establish practical suggestions for program implementation:

- **Preparation.** Experiential learning programs require planning, and, to implement them, students need to plan as well. Students must prepare for their internship, service-learning, or other experiential learning opportunity in advance. Just as applying for a job takes time, so too does applying for other professional experiences. Communicating clearly to students the need to plan well ahead is essential. From resume review and interview preparation for internships to service-learning, volunteer applications, and background checks, students often wait six weeks or more before they have identified their final site. This timing suggests that students need to work a semester in advance to prepare for experiential learning opportunities.

- **Communicate clear role expectations for students and employer partners.** Students need to know their roles and responsibilities in the organization. Just as a professional position would have a job description, students need position descriptions and written understanding of their responsibilities. Likewise, the employer and community partners expressed the need to clarify expectations for the different experiential learning programs. Guidelines for program expectations need to be communicated clearly and succinctly to partners.
- **Integrate reflection assignments.** Students enrolled in the service-learning courses and the internship courses indicated that the reflection assignments (papers, journals, final projects, in-class discussion) helped them connect the experience in the community to the course content most significantly. Integration of the community-based experience into the course curriculum is essential. Through reflection assignments, students connect their experiences to their learning in the context of the course topic.
- **Staff support for program implementation.** Employer feedback consistently mentioned specific staff roles and the support of the CEL staff (service-learning coordinator, academic internship coordinator, director, and so on). It is essential to support experiential learning programs with staff support, including multiple staff positions to implement multiple programs. The theme of positive CEL staff support of experiential learning programs was consistently reported by employers.

In effect, experiential learning programs are based on partnerships between the university and the community. The employer partners and community partners are treated as co-educators in experiential learning programs, and the walls of the classroom extend into the community and professional settings. It is essential to make sure the partnerships are mutually beneficial and meeting the expectations of all involved, including the students and employer and community partners.

Conclusion

Experiential learning programs, if well-structured and integrated into the curriculum, have potential to be pathways for transformational learning. Through strong academic internship programs, academic service-learning programs, and community-based FWS programs, student learning is enhanced in community and professional settings. The evidence here is that experiential learning opportunities have a positive impact on students' academic skills and career readiness. Their experiences in the community, whether through serving at a community-based organization for a few hours a week or working at an internship for many hours a week, influence their career exploration and professional preparation. Likewise, employers, serving as co-educators in such programs, seek community-based experiences in new hires and identify such experiences as helpful in hiring and training new employees. Through building high-quality experiential learning programs in higher education, community-engaged learning opportunities have potential to lead to transformational learning and career preparation for students.

References

Davidson, R. 2007. Community service federal work-study: The best-kept secret in higher education? In *Earn, learn, and serve: Getting the most from community service federal work-study*, ed. E. Bowley. Corporation for National and Community Service under Learn and Serve America. http://www.compact.org/fws/chapters/community_service/.

Furco, A. 1996. Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In *Expanding boundaries: Serving and learning*, ed. B. Taylor, 2–6. Washington, DC: CNS (Corporation for National Service).

Ryan, M. 1999. *Standards of excellence for experiential education through internships*. ERIC Digest ED 435820. Washington, DC: Institute for Experiential Learning.

***Patrick M. Green** is Director of the Center for Experiential Learning (CEL) and Clinical Instructor of Experiential Learning at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois.*

Enhancing the Campus Climate for Scholarship: A Successful Action Project

Cynthia A. Prosen and Jill B. K. Leonard

During the 2007-2008 academic year, Northern Michigan University (NMU) conducted an AQIP Action Project called Enhancing the Campus Climate for Scholarship. This project had the goals of evaluating the status/frequency of scholarly work and determining how faculty perceived the climate for scholarship on campus. In particular, the committee was asked to identify real and perceived barriers to scholarship and to make recommendations to alleviate these barriers. The project included substantial data gathering and campus community input, and the working committee ultimately produced a report that provided a centralized source of data as well as a comprehensive set of recommendations. This paper describes successful strategies used in the conduct of this project.

Origins of the Action Project

The origins of this project lay in the dissatisfaction of faculty with support available for scholarship on campus. Prior to the project's selection, several meetings had been held on campus, typically sponsored by a science honor society, regarding needs for scholarly work. In addition, the campus had recently gone through a series of budget cuts that, at one point, led to the elimination of the position of dean of graduate studies and research. Though this position was eventually reinstated, support for scholarship was generally perceived to be low. In addition, the state of Michigan was beginning discussions related to formula-based funding for universities, and these discussions seemed to favor giving credit for grant acquisition, making research an area of growth for the university. We also were aware that students had given input to faculty that they needed more hands-on experience for career success, but that student scholarly activities were perceived as being in short supply.

The process of submission of ideas for Action Projects was via an anonymous electronic submission box following a campus-wide electronic solicitation. All submitted ideas were then released for general dialogue from the entire campus community on an electronic bulletin board. Based on this collected input, the president's council selected the three top-rated projects for consideration by the NMU board of trustees. Several projects were submitted that related to scholarly reform on campus. The Enhancing the Campus Climate for Scholarship project was selected, but then was modified to include elements of other suggestions by an ad hoc steering committee. This committee produced the final action plan for the project, which was then again vetted by administrative groups prior to submission to AQIP for comment. Overall, the selection process took two to three months, and included substantial opportunity for input from all sectors on campus.

How Was the Project Conducted?

Once the project was approved, the chair and committee members were selected by the associate provost, in consultation with the academic deans and university vice presidents. The committee was expressly formulated to include faculty (including department heads) and staff. This representation was particularly useful since mid- and upper-level staff members responsible for research oversight were included as well as secretarial staff; both of these areas brought input to the discussion that was not in the realm of faculty. The committee was fairly large (twelve members) and represented disciplines including social, physical, and natural sciences as well as the humanities and the arts. This breadth of representation turned out to be critical since different disciplines had disparate ideas of what constituted scholarly activity. All members of the committee were asked to join because of their known interest in scholarship issues and were free to decline to participate.

The working committee then proceeded to plan how to work on the extensive charge and developed subgroups that allowed focus on the five most important themes: faculty time allocation for scholarship, evaluation of the current scholarly activity level on campus, student involvement in scholarship, outreach to the campus community for participation in both the Action Project and building a more cohesive campus community, and evaluation of support systems for scholarship on campus. These groups met and reported their progress to the entire committee. The working committee also dealt with large issues such as developing a definition of scholarship acceptable to various groups on campus. The division of labor was critical since the scholarship project was very large in scope and touched many elements of the institution. Members were selected to participate in subgroups that focused on their personal areas of interest and skill sets. For example, several of the social scientists joined in the work that required data collection via surveys, while the physical scientists dealt with quantitative data acquisition and analysis based on archived data.

Information was collected by data mining from a variety of university units as well as by solicitation of input from the campus community. We found that quantitative data had been inconsistently collected in the past. In fact, at the end of this project, we could not precisely state how much scholarly activity was ongoing on NMU's campus. The most difficult problem related to access to existing faculty scholarly output data. NMU is a collective-bargaining contract institution, and the faculty is represented by two unions. These unions were reluctant to allow the committee access to data that exist as part of the annual faculty evaluation system. Despite substantial efforts to reach an agreement to access these data (essentially lists of publications, presentations, and the like), the problem was intractable, and the committee eventually had to give up the goal of being able to describe the current level of faculty involvement in scholarship. The project did make progress in collecting and analyzing data available from other sources, however.

Additional data collected were in the form of community input via a university-wide forum hosted by the NMU president and our provost, focus groups (grouped by faculty rank, students, and department heads), and an electronic survey (focused on faculty time allocation). We also conducted interviews with successful grant recipients and various administrators with impact on scholarly activity (such as deans and the controller). The campus community input was particularly important to the success of the project because it allowed the collection of ideas from across campus while also building substantial support for the project via the commitment to inclusivity and community investment in the process. This critically important involvement generated substantial discussion on campus about the potential negative impact of greater requirements for scholarly activity. While substantial concerns about the ramifications of administrative requirements for scholarly activity remain, the concerns have been voiced and discussions are ongoing.

Outcomes

Data were analyzed by the working committee and integrated into a summative final report. While many recommendations were discussed, we ultimately constructed the report with twenty-two recommendations, grouped into four major themes: support, encourage, value, and assess. Grouping the recommendations by theme allowed better understanding of major issues that were discovered as part of the project and also made the recommendations easier to digest. Each recommendation was specifically constructed not only to list the recommended goal, but also to include a process for the accomplishment of the goal (including the relevant parties involved) as well as a timeline for accomplishment and expected outcomes for assessment. The final report also included a detailed overview of the status of scholarship on campus as well as summations of data and comments collected. This report was submitted to the NMU provost, the campus community, and AQIP. Responses were, in general, positive. Many on-campus comments suggested that the report was well-received, with the perception that valuable information had been collected to generate strong recommendations. AQIP stated "the global judgment regarding this Action Project is that the institution has achieved an exceptional accomplishment through this project, and its work represents an 'outstanding practice' that ought to be shared with other higher education institutions."

Following the project, response to the Action Project remains positive, and there has been modest progress toward accomplishing the recommendations. Progress has been slowed by current difficult economic realities and ongoing contract negotiations with one of the faculty unions. There has been good progress in administrative support areas, particularly in the Grants and Research Office. We are cautiously optimistic that this Action Project will result in significant improvement on campus and that scholarship will become a part of faculty contract negotiations.

What We Learned through This Project

Campus-wide Buy-in Is Essential

We gained substantial insight into the conduct of large-scale projects, in particular the critical need for buy-in from multiple campus groups (faculty, administration, and staff); inclusion of these groups is necessary for success in a project of this scope. We also uncovered a tendency for some participants to seek to maintain boundaries. Often this was precipitated by a desire to be nonconfrontational or to limit misunderstanding. For example, our project does not have as much input from students as it might have as a result of the desire to not expose students to university's "dirty laundry." While this is understandable, it weakened our final outcome.

Collective Bargaining Units Must Be Involved in the Process

We learned that it is critical to involve collective bargaining units in a project of this type, and that, while we were not entirely successful in working with these groups, communication was necessary. This project was not merely focused on institutional "nuts and bolts," it was fundamentally concerned with the social climate and culture of our university. An appreciation of the extent of the project by the faculty unions was important for project success.

University-wide Outcomes Assessment Data Are Helpful for Multiple Purposes

We gained a firsthand appreciation of the necessity of assessment for on-campus programs. Much of the information we sought for this project should have been available in a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan, but some of the data were not included in these reports. We note that a 2008–2009 NMU AQIP Action Project is entitled "Documenting and Benchmarking the NMU Outcomes Assessment Process."

Concrete Recommendations with Expected Outcomes Are Important for Action Project Success

We were pleased that we generated concretely defined final recommendations. While broad recommendations seemed appealing, a revision to more refined options resulted in easier implementation. While this part of the work is ongoing, the likelihood of accomplishment is increased because our report provided both guidelines and deadlines.

Tips and Approaches

- Make sure that those working on the Action Project are committed and willing to dedicate themselves to the project.
- Ensure comprehensive treatment of ideas by including different disciplines, some of which may not appear central to the project, and people with different job descriptions—secretarial support, faculty, department heads, and administrative staff.
- Be open and public in your work. Seek input from all, including those who do not support your project.
- Choose some AQIP Action Projects based on emergent needs at your university. Ideas for this project were discussed long before the call for new AQIP Action Projects was announced.
- Administrative support is key to the implementation of Action Project recommendations. Similarly, at a university with collective bargaining, bargaining member support also is critical. In our case, it was important to maintain good communication with both the university administration and the union administration throughout the project.
- Utilize the skills, expertise, and abilities of all committee members, and reach out to other campus community members who have skills that will assist your project.

Cynthia A. Prosen *is Associate Provost, and* ***Jill B. K. Leonard*** *is an Associate Professor at Northern Michigan University in Marquette.*

Faculty Chilly about Assessment? Warm Them Up with Professional Development

Tracey L. Smith and George Banziger

Introduction

The perceived burdens of additional work and preparation on the part of faculty in order to conduct meaningful assessment of student learning has been a constant impediment to the full implementation of assessment processes. Top-down mandates about assessment are often met with resistance (both active and passive), while bottom-up ideas are rarely institutionalized. In order to reach consensus and to provide the best education for our students, administration and faculty must work together to develop strategies and methods of assessment of student learning by creating an environment that respects each others' viewpoints and that leads to total institutional participation in the assessment process. Lewis and Clark Community College (L&C) has developed a consensually based model that promotes a culture of assessment and that has resulted in 100 percent faculty participation and substantial administrative support.

Background

Lewis and Clark established its general education committee in 2000. That same year, faculty workshops were held to train faculty in writing measurable student outcomes. All course syllabi were then revised to reflect measurable course objectives. This step was an initial attempt (albeit insufficient at the time) to address the need for an institution-wide approach to the assessment of student learning. One of the results of the 2003 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) comprehensive review was to note L&C's particular insufficiencies with respect to the assessment of student learning. HLC granted L&C continued accreditation with the next comprehensive evaluation in ten years after the team visit in February 2003. However, that accreditation was accompanied by the requirement for an assessment monitoring report to be submitted by September 2006.

In response to this requirement, L&C focused on three areas of student learning assessment: general education, program-level, and course-level assessment. In 2003 the idea of assessing student learning through rubrics was explored. Rubrics were subsequently developed in all three areas, including the general education categories of writing, speaking, critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, social reasoning, and global awareness. In the academic year 2004–2005, rubrics were shared and revised, and data were collected and documented using these rubrics.

The year 2005 marked a turning point for L&C assessment when the general education committee partnered with faculty across disciplines to assess, document, and analyze general education objectives across the curriculum. That year, with consent of the Lewis and Clark Faculty Association (the faculty union at L&C), the expectation for faculty's annual performance objectives (APO) was revised to include a report on each faculty member's assessment activities and research as well as what action looping (course, curricular, or institutional changes that emanated from assessment data) resulted. It was also in 2005 that two of the focus elements of the L&C model that are addressed in this paper were established. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CETL) was formed, and educational teacher training (EDTR) classes were created and offered to faculty.

Since that point in L&C's progress in assessment of student learning, every full-time faculty member has assumed the responsibility of assessing one course (assigned in collaboration with the dean of the division) on which to conduct course-level assessment and to report in the APO. Program-level assessment is usually carried out by full-time faculty members who serve as coordinators of their academic programs. Assessment of general education has come under the purview of a general education assessment committee that is led by and composed of full-time faculty members representing each of the general education categories. A recent innovation to general education assessment has been the establishment of partners across disciplines, whereby faculty members from different disciplines team up to conduct assessment of one of the general education categories.

The assessment of general education, with systematic and statistically appropriate tools, has been greatly facilitated by the identification of a core group of students who have completed a minimal set of general education requirements. All of these assessment efforts have been supported and strengthened by the activities of CETL and by the offering of EDTR courses. The development of the full range of assessment activities at L&C is in line with the spirit of the recommendation that assessment needs to be institution-wide in order to be effective (Doherty, Riordan, and Roth 2002). These successful steps toward assessment also follow the intentions of the nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning (Astin et al. 2003).

The September 2006 assessment monitoring report was focused on six implementation goals for assessment:

1. Develop and institute effective practices that improve student learning.
2. Engage in 100 percent faculty involvement in assessment.
3. Build assessment capabilities and document them.
4. Transform a culture of compliance into one of commitment.
5. Integrate assessment into every aspect of teaching and learning.
6. Provide an environment that encourages/facilitates faculty creativity and self-direction.

After review of the 2006 report, HLC confirmed our belief that L&C had developed a culture in which assessment of student learning was documented and ongoing. The Commission's reply to the report indicated that "it is clear that L&C has taken the mandate to develop an effective institution wide assessment program very seriously and has been able to achieve an excellent program and institutional culture of assessment."

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is a unique approach to professional faculty development. While many institutions have similar centers, they are typically administered by full-time staff or by a faculty member who receives release time for managing the center and its activities. L&C's center is managed by a committee of faculty members with administrative and clerical support. CETL is the only institutional committee that has an annual budget. In 2005, after discussions with the administration that were initiated by the faculty through the Lewis and Clark Faculty Association (LCFA), agreement was reached by both parties to establish CETL. Initial funding of $6,000 provided by the National Education Association (NEA) and matching funds from the college are supplemented annually by $1,000 allocations from the LCFA and the L&C budget, totaling a $2,000 annual budget for faculty development projects. A computer lab where several of the assessment-related courses and training sessions could be held was designated as the official location for the center.

National Speakers

CETL has sponsored, organized, and paid for three national speakers to present workshops and lectures for the L&C faculty: Gerald Nosage, Neil Flemming, and Benjamin Akonde.

Workshops

CETL is the professional development arm of the college faculty. It sponsors several workshops for faculty each semester, including in-service training during the first week of each semester. Anyone wishing to present a workshop contacts the committee and is assisted with arranging the event. In addition, CETL prepares and offers short workshops on topics of interest to the faculty throughout the academic year. Topics have included how to write your annual performance objectives, assessing general education outcomes, how to do educational research, and mentoring.

The establishment of the CETL group, a faculty-led committee, is an example of recommendations for the organizational and political structure of successful assessment efforts that scholars such as Ewell (1988) have recommended.

New Faculty Roundtable

Every academic year, L&C's newly hired faculty members participate in a year long roundtable. These meetings are the committee assignments for new faculty hires during their first year of employment at L&C. The new faculty members meet monthly with the four college deans and with other visiting experts. CETL meets with the roundtable at least twice an academic year to offer assistance and to listen to what is needed in the area of professional development. At least two sessions of the new faculty seminar are devoted to assessment of student learning, including a discussion of course-level assessment. By midyear, each new faculty member has identified his or her designated course on which the first APO report of course-level assessment will be based.

Educational Teacher Training Classes

The most successful part of CETL's accomplishments has been with the educational teacher training classes for which the center is responsible. Fourteen EDTR courses have been developed through the center. These faculty-developed courses are offered free of tuition and fees to all L&C faculty (full and adjunct). Full-time faculty members can use the credit earned (usually one semester hour) toward requirements for promotion.

The courses are offered in a variety of formats to assist faculty members with scheduling needs. Courses are presented in face-to-face, Web-enhanced, Web-blended, and totally online environments. Faculty and staff develop the courses based upon interest and need and are compensated for the development and facilitation of the classes. Some current EDTR classes are EDTR 255, Instructional Design; EDTR 251, Classroom Assessment Techniques; EDTR 262, Assessing Writing; EDTR 259, Course-Level Assessment; EDTR 261, Assessing Oral Presentations; EDTR 260, Teaching for Critical Thinking; EDTR 279, Program-Level Assessment; EDTR 249, Assessment: An Overview; and EDTR 265, Educational Research.

Annual Performance Objectives

Annual performance objectives have been a part of faculty performance review for decades at L&C. In 2005, the L&C administration and the L&C Faculty Association agreed to modifications in existing APOs to include a method for faculty members to report on their individual research related to their own course-level assessment projects. A key factor in the success of this endeavor is that when faculty members find a deficiency in student learning or in their assessment process, they develop a plan for remediation and follow through, which we refer to as "action looping." Follow-up reports then document the success of such action. Recently APOs have been revised to provide the faculty members who participate in program assessment and general education assessment the opportunity to report their findings, thus giving them credit for additional work in our ongoing assessment quest. Faculty response to this recognition has been positive.

Exemplary course-level assessment reports are submitted to L&C's director of institutional research for later inclusion in the institution's report on assessment for the next HLC visit. Deans, who review and provide individualized comments on each APO, have noted significant improvement in assessment reports over the past three years. As faculty members have matured in their assessment of student learning, customized rubrics have been refined in some cases, and in other cases faculty members have opted to employ nationally standardized rubrics, such as those of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Recently, faculty members have expressed the need for background skills in statistics and research so that they can better analyze and draw appropriate conclusions from data on student learning. This expressed need has resulted in the establishment of a new EDTR course on educational research, which will be offered for the first time in fall 2009.

Conclusion

The success of L&C's assessment work is based upon a variety of approaches, all dependent upon collaboration and mutual respect between the administration and faculty. This approach is in line with recent recommendations about complementary leadership in order to achieve effective processes of assessment (Mangin and Stoelinga 2007) and the need for sincerely engaged faculty who are committed to assessment (Angelo 1999). Faculty members became the leaders in student assessment as they discovered that such work was important in helping their students learn in their own disciplines and across the disciplines. Alliances were forged that have resulted in assessment of general education objectives in multiple disciplines. For example, speaking effectively is now assessed not only in speech classes but also in the fields of office technology, sociology, English, Web design, and other courses not designated as speech courses. Through participation in EDTR classes, faculty members learn how to assess their students effectively. Workshops and guest speakers assist faculty in continuing this work. Changing a culture from one of compliance to one of engaged and effective enthusiasm has required time and energy on both the administration's and faculty's part. However, through perseverance and mutual understanding, L&C has come together to better student learning. So, if your faculty is chilly about assessment, we offer our model as a way to warm them up!

References

Angelo, T. A. 1999. Doing assessment as if learning matters most. *AAHE Bulletin* 51(9):3–6.

Astin, A.W., et al. 2003. Nine principles of good practice for assessing student learning. http://www.aahe.org/assessment/prinicpl.htm.

Doherty, A., T. Riordan, and J. Roth. 2002. *Student learning: A central focus for institutions of higher education*. Milwaukee, WI: Alverno College Institute.

Ewell, P. T. (1988). Implementing assessment: Some organizational issues. *New Directions for Institutional Research* 59:15–28.

Mangin, M. and S. Stoelinga. 2007. *Effective teacher leadership: Using research to inform reform*. New York: NY Teachers College Press.

***Tracey L. Smith** is Professor and Program Coordinator of Speech, and **George Banziger** is Dean, Mathematics, Science, and Technology, at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, Illinois.*

From Dry Cleaning to Self-Service: Providing Scalable Support for Enhanced, Hybrid, and Online Courses

Don Carter, John Doherty, Walter Nolan, and Suzanne Pieper

Introduction

In this paper, we discuss the evolution and growth of e-Learning support systems over the past ten years at Northern Arizona University (NAU). Initially, in the late 1990s, Web-course development support to develop fully online courses was available only to a select group of faculty. Typically, a faculty member would drop off the course materials, and a more or less fully formed course was returned to the faculty member teaching the course. Now, in 2009, e-Learning support is offered to all faculty at NAU, with an emphasis on educating and mentoring faculty to empower them to be self-sufficient. The e-Learning Center (ELC) supports hundreds of faculty members and thousands of courses running the gamut from modest Web enhancement for traditional face-to-face courses to hybrid delivered courses and fully online courses. Over the last decade, we have evolved from the "dry cleaning" model or boutique course development of fifty to one hundred courses a year to the current "self-service" model that supports all faculty and all courses. Initiated in 2006, all courses at the university have an online shell using Blackboard Vista. By providing library e-reserves only within the shells, our usage is above 60 percent, which translates to about three thousand course shells in use each semester.

Evolution of the e-Learning Center

For more than thirty years, distance learning at Northern Arizona University has been an important strategy supporting our mission to provide access to higher education throughout the state. Online programs are an increasingly popular mode for students in Arizona who wish to participate in our distance programs. Historically, the distance programs were face-to-face or interactive TV classes meeting in the now more than thirty sites around the state. Beginning in the late 1990s, NAU introduced online classes with fully online degree programs offered soon after those first courses. During the past decade, enrollments in distance programs have grown to about 7,000 of the total university student population of nearly 22,500 (FTE), and of those distance students, more than 2,500 are enrolled in online degree programs. Originally, the information technology revolution had its largest impact on distance classes. Now, however, e-Learning techniques are regular features in all learning environments, including face-to-face classes enhanced using Web resources, hybrid classes with partial seat-time in online activities, and fully online classes.

The first online classes developed at NAU predate learning management systems (LMSs) such as Blackboard, WebCT, Desire2Learn, and Angel. The early courses used e-mail, Web pages, and Web forms with complicated scripting to accomplish many of the tasks that are now relatively simple using tools such as Blackboard. Students now expect these tools and the activities they offer, such as discussions, online quizzes, online readings, and other Web resources not only in online courses, but in all their courses at the university. Today, with intentional mentoring and training, most faculty members learn to manage and teach in the modern environments and also to construct courses and upload materials. A decade ago, it was a rare faculty member who could or would construct an online course on his or her own. Typically, courses were one-of-a-kind developed by a team coordinated by a project manager (PM). The developers, more often than not, were handed a stack of papers containing the content for a course from which they were expected to construct the online course environment; hence the term *dry-cleaning model*. The PM ensured that the process stayed on track by coordinating communication with the faculty as needed for content clarification. NAU's development team included an instructional designer, a graphic designer, and a Web programmer.

In early 2000, there were two synergistic activities at the state level concurrent with the desire to expand e-Learning support for all classes at NAU as articulated in the original e-Learning business plan. The first of the state activities was the passage of state proposition 301 designed to provide twenty years of funding for science and technology research and to support technology education and e-Learning activities. This fund is the technology research initiative fund (TRIF). The second state-level activity was the January 2001 report written by the Governor's Task Force: The Arizona Partnership for the New Economy (APNE), "An Economy That Works for Everyone." The APNE report prioritized e-Learning, among other strategies, as fundamental to broad participation by Arizona citizens in what is now commonly referred to (by the Arizona governor) as "the innovation economy." The NAU e-Learning Center was established in 2002 to support curricular innovation using information technology and to provide new modes of access for degree programs. Over the next several years, distance degree programs expanded with enrollment increases in online courses. In 2005, NAU was granted an institutional change by The Higher Learning Commission to change NAU's affiliation status, which authorizes online delivery of Web-based degree and certificate programs. The evaluators made special note of NAU's extensive infrastructure to support faculty development of online courses, effective network of services and support for online learners, and strong commitment of faculty and staff to provide student access to quality undergraduate and graduate education throughout the state (*Inside NAU* 2005).

The Self-Service Model

The current self-service model places more responsibility on faculty members to design their enhanced, hybrid, or online courses. The ELC provides extensive course support as needed. A team of ELC staff members, working in collaboration with librarians, consults with faculty members to plan and create course content and to build courses. Additional support in the form of training and tools also is provided, including an instructional media lab, online and in-person tutorials, and a faculty help line. This model promotes the goals of the ELC: developing the technology skills of faculty and students, assessing the use of technology to improve student learning, and providing access for distance students.

The emphasis of the self-service model is not on using technology for technology's sake, but on using technology to improve student learning and success. The kick-off meeting that begins the course development process reflects this philosophy. At this initial meeting, a team consisting of an instructional technologist, an instructional designer, a graphic designer, an assessment specialist, and, often, a librarian, meets with the faculty member. The team members introduce themselves and briefly describe how they can assist with course design. The faculty member is encouraged to describe the course and the goals for student learning. Faculty members are prompted to think about goals, assignments, and assessments before considering how learning management tools might help them accomplish their goals. Faculty members receive teaching and technical checklists (ELC Checklists 2008) as well as steps and schedules for developing an enhanced, hybrid, or online course. Faculty members also are reminded of training and tools available to them as they develop their courses. Depending on the needs of the faculty member, follow-up meetings with various team members are scheduled.

Assessment plays a key role in the self-service model. As part of the course development process, an assessment specialist assists faculty with designing creative, engaging course assessments. Faculty members planning to teach online courses are particularly interested in incorporating more performance tasks in their courses, and they receive assistance with developing rubrics or guidelines to assess those tasks. The assessment specialist also collaborates with faculty who want to study the impact of technology on student learning. The ELC currently offers mini-grants (ELC Mini-grants 2008) to faculty to study a wide variety of technology interventions from interactive tutorials in general chemistry to online guided listening and score readings in undergraduate music history. (Because of the current budget challenge in the state, the next RFP for mini-grants has recently been suspended.)

The self-service model has enabled the ELC to provide increasing access for distance students. The following table summarizes the number of student enrollments in online courses as well as the number of faculty members supported by e-Learning over the past seven years: Some numbers are missing either because they were negligible or were not recorded.

	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008
Number of enrollments in online courses	7,110	9,476	10,133	12,381	14,116	20,526	31,568
Number of new online courses developed	125	101	121	141	22*	78	67
Number of new Web-enhanced courses developed	0	32	42	53	7	80	>1,500
Number of enrollments in hybrid courses						36	1,350
Number of faculty members new to e-Learning support	150	117	155	126	241	325	210

* Implemented a new learning management system and migrated all existing courses.

Lessons Learned

Deal with Distrust and Skepticism

Our initial transition from the limited, highly controlled, and high-service dry-cleaning model to serving the masses in a self-service mode was met with some level of distrust and skepticism. The skepticism was evident from the few who were served by the dry-cleaning model: they had come to expect to offload most of the mundane or confusing tasks to those providing the dry-cleaning service. Many of those who had not previously benefited from the old model expected the new self-service to be inconsistent and inadequate. Because e-Learning staff were worried about overload and losing the collaborative and peer relationships that often developed with faculty, we launched a number of new activities and new approaches to address these and other concerns.

- **Help Line: We organized a help line for faculty for phone and e-mail support.** Initially, to ensure the highest quality service, we staffed the help line with the current professional instructional technologists in the ELC. There was some protest, but in the end that strategy was a success in four ways: (1) Faculty members received high quality help; (2) the staff learned new details and techniques that helped them be more versatile; (3) the students who eventually took over the phones were well trained; and (4) we learned to document the calls that became the foundation of the frequently asked questions database.
- **Showcases: Once each semester, fall and spring, we have a faculty showcase to highlight faculty work.** The majority of the presentations are from the work of mini-grant recipients. Most showcases have a theme and last for four to five hours with lunch provided. Food is a powerful force for gatherings of faculty to discuss their ideas and practices for teaching and learning.
- **Annual e-Learning Institute: For each of the past four years, we have sponsored a three- or four-day annual e-Learning institute the week after grades are due in May.** Our institute is a faculty development program formatted as a conference. Generally, there are four or five tracks that provide opportunities for training and sharing effective practices. A forum such as this allows an immersion experience for faculty, helping to build trust and foster collaboration among faculty members and between faculty and ELC staff.

Manage Expectations and Be Consistent

Meeting expectations and providing consistency are important in designing and implementing support policies, work flow practices, technology change, and faculty training. Surprises using technology are often considered not only unpleasant in the learning environment but also unacceptable. Try very hard to gain consensus on policies and procedures. When implementing or changing a technology, bring the end users into the conversation early. Make it clear you are not just listening but intend to act on what is said.

To aid in understanding and managing expectations, we have biweekly meetings with representatives from the ELC, the library, information technology services, academic assessment, distance learning, the registrar, the academic computing help desk, and the academic information office. This counsel has been invaluable in defining business rules and associated technical details that affect all these constituents.

Make Quality Number One

High-quality courses are best developed by a team with a variety of perspectives, complementary expertise, and the willingness and ability to agree on basic principles. For an academic program to have a cohesive curriculum that makes sense to students, it is helpful to have guidelines for course style that are determined by faculty offering a program informed by instructional designers and assessment experts. We are in the process of implementing peer review of courses using our teaching quality checklist. Our belief is that the faculty in a program are best able to assess quality and should be responsible for course and program quality. The role of the e-Learning staff is to provide a consistent framework for assessing course quality.

Prepare Online Courses Carefully

Finally, teaching can be a messy activity, and teaching online can turn disastrous if the course is not carefully prepared and in place before the term starts. We pay special attention to online courses and the principle that there is not a second chance for a good first impression. We believe all courses, online or not, should be well-thought-out, carefully planned, founded on learning theory, and prepared in advance of their start date. That said, it seems in practice that face-to-face and hybrid courses have different kinds of opportunity for rescue because of their synchronous and co-spatial meetings. When using technology in a face-to-face class setting, always have a plan B. This dictum is much harder to follow in an online course, and thus we still provide extra support to carefully constructed online courses before the course begins.

References

Arizona Partnership for the New Economy. 2001. An economy that works for everyone. http://www.arizonatele.com/atic/docs/APNE%20Final%20Report%202001.pdf.

ELC Checklists. 2008. Northern Arizona University e-Learning Center's course quality checklists. http://www.nau.edu/elearning/support/course_support/checklists.php.

ELC Mini-grants. 2008. Northern Arizona University e-Learning Center's grants program to support faculty research in effective use of information technology and curricular revision. http://www.nau.edu/elearning/grants/index.php.

Inside NAU. 2005. Northern Arizona University's online programs endorsed by the Higher Learning Commission. http://www4.nau.edu/insidenau/bumps/12_7_05/hlc.htm.

Don Carter *is Director,* ***John Doherty*** *is Associate Instructional Designer,* ***Walter Nolan*** *is Lead Instructional Designer, and* ***Suzanne Pieper*** *is Coordinator for Assessment at the e-Learning Center at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.*

Putting Theory into Practice: The Career Development Series

Patricia Matthews, Rebecca Doak, and Sara Fugett

The career development process in higher education is often both disjointed and redundant between academic departments, individual faculty members, professional recruiters, and career offices. Independent campus initiatives, while well intentioned, often conflict in content and process, causing confusion to both the student and the professional recruiter. There exists a critical need for collaboration between faculty and career development offices in order to provide students with a seamless delivery of academic and career programming, from selecting a major to obtaining a satisfying career and/or graduate education.

As a result of identifying these obstacles, a successful collaboration between the Mount Union College Department of Economics, Accounting, and Business Administration and the Office of Career Development led to the creation and implementation of the national award-winning Putting Theory into Practice academic course series. The courses are a succinct three-tier, campus-wide, and cross-curricular academic career development process designed to increase and improve student success. As a result of this initiative, career development information is now integrated into the academic process and is delivered on a more consistent and seamless basis by campus constituencies. Furthermore, new and existing programming, experiential opportunities, and all collaborative initiatives have been enhanced as a result. Career development information delivered to students from the onset of their college careers and continued in a sequential fashion is easier for students to understand and implement, resulting in a smoother and more competitive transition into the world of work. Such integral and cohesive programming has a profound impact on student success, leading to an increase in retention rates.

Trends: Then and Now

The committee designed the collaboration as a work in progress, cognizant that the ever-evolving career process is vulnerable to continuous changes in student profiles and needs and must quickly respond to global market trends. Our goals of realizing improved student success, contributing to institutional retention, and broadening experiential desires and opportunities needed to be adaptable.

The career planning process has been delivered in many forms to a variety of individuals over time. Vocational planning was a common process with collegiate career coursework, gaining popularity in the decades following the 1930s. The impact of early career intervention on student success and retention has been well documented. Engaging students during their orientation process may help them to begin to integrate career decision making with academic identity (Dorn 1992). Career planning course participants, having been educated in the selection of a major through the career planning process, typically return for the subsequent school term at a significantly higher rate than do non-participants (Bechtol 1978) and are more likely to become connected with college-sponsored activities (Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey 2005). Also supporting the notion, Feldman (2005) connects student satisfaction to retention by indicating that fostering the career development of incoming freshmen increases student satisfaction and has the added benefit of aiding the institution's retention efforts. Additionally, one meta-analysis reported that career courses were more effective than individual counseling or other interventions (Spokane and Oliver 1983).

More recent external and internal data concur that prospective college students and parents are becoming savvier consumers. Unprecedented economic events and rising tuition costs make consumers expect a greater return on investment, and they are now even more vigilant about researching and comparing institutional success data. According to an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

> Students entering their first year of college consider career preparation the most crucial factor in determining the value of their postsecondary education, according to a new report from Eduventures, an education consulting firm.
>
> Of 6,200 traditional-age college freshmen surveyed, 72 percent said "professional preparation" was very important to them, while 62 percent ranked the "strength of the academic program" in the same category. Almost half, or 47 percent, said affordability was very important, according to the report.
>
> "Many enrollment managers assume that students will equate academic strength with career preparation in determining the return on investment for their education," said James Quinn, a senior enrollment-management analyst for Eduventures. "But as tuition rates rise and the amount of debt students take on increases, they're looking at a lot of other factors beyond that when choosing their college."

> Students in the survey said they viewed programs and services that would assist them in career-development efforts as the most likely indicators of a college's commitment to professional preparation. The three most significant factors that convey that commitment to students are the opportunities a college provides for internships, the quality of its career office, and job-placement records of its graduates. (Farrell 2006)

Mount Union College Enrollment Management conducted its own Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory in 2006 that mirrored the national trends, indicating that the factor of highest importance in deciding to enroll at Mount Union College was future career opportunities (6.45), with academic reputation (6.42) as a very close second (on a seven-point Likert scale).

The Collaboration

With the goal of increasing student success, representatives from the Department of Economics, Accounting, and Business Administration (EABA) and from Career Development convened to identify problematic/ineffective programming, and to speak to improving, streamlining, and integrating the career development process within the institution's academic coursework. The culmination of these efforts was the development of a three-course series integrating career application into academic preparation that met all core competencies set forth by the EABA curriculum.

As a result of the Putting Theory into Practice initiative, intradepartmental collaborations became more organized and had more impact. On-campus recruiting and job and internship fair attendance increased due to faculty investment, endorsement, and referrals. Professional recruiter-facilitated mock interview schedules filled to capacity, and student use of the career center's job and internship database increased exponentially. Communication improved among all constituencies, and professional protocols were established and successfully implemented. More professional networking channels became available as departments shared more information on a regular basis. In general, a greater sense of camaraderie developed among faculty members, career personnel, and students.

The Academic Course Series

The course series is a graduation requirement for EABA majors. Instructors are EABA faculty and personnel from the career development office. Each one-credit course, offered both fall and spring semesters, meets once a week for one hour and requires a final examination. The courses are often selected as electives by non-EABA majors.

The foundation course, Integrating College and Life Options, is intended to generate an enhanced level of self-awareness related to integrating college and life choices: choosing a major and a career path. Students are challenged to identify their personal skills, goals, and objectives and relate them to curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular opportunities and possible professional/career alternatives. A review of current economic, professional, and societal trends and opportunities help students become aware of diverse career alternatives. The course includes comprehensive career assessments, internship preparation, informational interviewing opportunities, resume introduction, life-stage and career-cycle lectures and discussion, guidance in matching careers to majors, goal-setting exercises, and entrepreneurship. The course is composed of second-semester freshmen and first-semester sophomores.

The second course in the series, Exploring and Evaluating Life Options, is designed to help sophomore students reflect upon and refine professional and personal objectives while gaining vital skills and knowledge that will help them successfully plan for and achieve those objectives upon graduation and throughout their lives. Students engage in activities and personally relevant research designed to expand their knowledge of available opportunities and personal and professional success factors for those opportunities, while continuing to relate them to curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular opportunities. They also develop a better awareness of their personal strengths and weaknesses as they relate to their desired futures and refine or develop plans for pursuing careers and/or courses of graduate study. The course includes refining resume portfolios, examining corporate culture, career planning and alternatives, career field analysis, personal SWOT and gap analysis, personal brand and marketing, and identifying transferable skills. At the conclusion of this course, many of the students have identified areas in which they would like to identify internship opportunities that they can participate in during their junior and senior years.

The capstone course, Pursuing Personal Life/Career Plan, was created to assist upper-class students in accomplishing a successful transition from college to graduate study or a professional career. Students are challenged to understand various elements of successful pursuit of an ultimate career, including interviewing, career-related communication, and professional presence. Workshops and lectures led by recruiting professionals provide important applied techniques and theories. Students integrate these theories and techniques into their own skill and knowledge base and use them to map strategies for achieving their professional and personal objectives to maximize opportunities and outcomes for their education. The course includes the completion of the professional resume portfolio, practice job fair and evaluation, videotaped mock interviews, job search and graduate school selection strategies, economic and relocation impact, corporate communication protocols, salary and benefit education and negotiations, and even an etiquette luncheon.

Experiential

A significant component of all three courses is to encourage students to take advantage of the many experiential opportunities made available as a result of the increased collaborations. This is paramount; according to the most recent National Association of College and Employers research, 72.6 percent of interns received job offers from their employer (NACE Research 2006). Class participants are coached to search out and maximize internship and externship experiences and subsequent contacts. Students also have increased exposure to professionals via classroom panelists, networking events, and professional association and advisory groups. The advantages and application of service-learning projects, extracurricular activities, and relevant part-time, temporary, and work-study positions are discussed. Academic-sponsored initiatives, such as competitive academic teams and the BEST (Bringing Executives and Students Together) program as well as a variety of other campus and departmental initiatives serve to expose participants to more rigorous and prestigious experiences.

Outcomes

Both quantitative and qualitative data are used to assess the value and success of this collaborative effort. The faculty and staff members who teach the courses meet regularly to review the most recent data, student evaluations, and employer and recruiter input to determine what appropriate changes to the course curriculum seem to be called for as well as to develop companion programming. Examination of the quantitative data from student evaluations indicates that students are extremely positive about the experience, information, and counseling they have gotten throughout the three-course sequence. Recruiters involved in course presentations, panels, and related events indicate immense support for the series content and the results they have seen in the graduates of Mount Union College whom they interview for employment opportunities and in their new hires. To date, eleven recruiters have requested course syllabi for use in corporate professional development workshops and seminars provided to new hires.

The initial course in the three-course sequence specifically addresses the needs of the still deciding freshman or sophomore student. These summer transition students are particularly vulnerable to withdrawal. From academic years 2004–2005 through the most current retention data, first-year students who completed the foundation course, Integrating College and Life Options, have a retention rate that is on average 10 percent higher than students who did not complete this foundation course.

Mount Union College has enjoyed a sustained increase in annual institutional student success reports since the course series was launched. Of those seeking full-time, degree-related employment or attending graduate school, the rate of success has increased from 93.43 percent in 2003 to 98.99 percent in 2007, and the time to obtain their first job after graduation decreased from 2.75 months to 24.78 days during the same period. Recent graduates report a continued positive impact and usage of the skills developed throughout the series during their first year on the job. They also report continued use of the course materials for reference and assistance in subsequent employment changes. In addition, Mount Union College has found that many parents of first-year students encouraged their students to choose Mount Union College as a result of the availability of this course series. As a result and due to student demand, additional course sections have been added. As of spring semester registration, nearly 20 percent of the institution's students have registered for one or more of the series.

There are several expected and unexpected collateral benefits of the course series. The success of the series spawned departmentally specific sophomore-level courses created by other academic departments that allow all majors to develop their career process in tandem and integrated into their academic curriculum. The series has been nationally recognized as outstanding educational programming, therefore further enhancing the institutional image. The benefit of collaboration between all areas of student career preparation has resulted in an enhanced experience for our students, a program of distinction for the college, and strong linkages and relationships between potential employers and alumni of the college.

References

Bechtol, W. 1978. Helping undecided students select a major career. *Journal of College Student Personnel* 19:570–571.

Dorn, F. J. 1992. Occupational wellness: The integrations of career identity and personal identity. *Journal of Counseling and Development* 1(4).

Farrell, Elizabeth F. 2006. Freshmen put high value on how well college prepares them for a profession, survey finds. http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/12/2006121202n.htm.

Feldman, R. S. 2005. *Improving the first year of college: Research and practice*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

NACE Research. 2006. *2006 experiential survey*. Bethlehem, PA: National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Niles, Spencer G., and JoAnn G. Harris-Bowlsbey. 2005. *Career development interventions in the 21st century,* 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Spokane, A. R. and L. W. Oliver. 1983. The outcomes of vocational intervention. In *Handbook of vocational psychology*, ed. B. W. Walsh and S. H. Osipow, 99–116. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Patricia Matthews *is Dean of the Division of Professional Studies and Professor of Business Administration,* ***Rebecca Doak*** *is Director of Career Development and Lecturer in the Department of Economics, Accounting, and Business Administration, and* ***Sara Fugett*** *is Assistant Director of Career Development and Lecturer in the Department of Economics, Accounting, and Business Administration at Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio.*

Shared Learning Outcomes: Bridging the Divide between General Education and the Disciplines

Mardell A. Wilson and Tricia Widner Johnson

Purpose and Scope

The ability to accurately describe the learning that occurs on a college campus challenges many institutions of higher education. While still complex, measuring students' abilities and skills related to discipline knowledge is often aided by the discrete and recognizable nature of the skills taught in the disciplines. Determining a student's ability to apply a mathematical theory or make use of effective writing techniques may be more easily accomplished than assessing the values and skills encompassed by a general education program. On some campuses, faculty may even have a greater appreciation for and understanding of such discipline-specific assessment, without a clear understanding of the purpose and value of assessing general education. Yet, the primary goals of general education are some of the most essential aspects of a college education.

One of the greatest challenges to developing and implementing a new assessment process is determining how to ensure that it is a valued and valuable exercise among its stakeholders. At Illinois State University (ISU), the charge to develop a comprehensive, yet manageable, approach for assessing general education resulted in a need to unite a campus somewhat divided by general education and the disciplines. Preliminary discussions with a newly developed Task Force for General Education Assessment, the Council for General Education, and the Assessment Advisory Council revealed that assessment itself or a new assessment process was not the primary obstacle. Instead, it was determined that, in order for a new assessment process of general education to be successful, the current general education program and its complement to the disciplines would have to be reintroduced to the faculty. It had been nearly ten years since the current reiteration of the general education program had been developed, and since that time nearly half the faculty had turned over, thus, leaving a significant knowledge gap regarding the general education program. Even among faculty who taught a general education course, a comprehensive syllabi audit revealed that fewer than 15 percent actually included the general education goals that had originally been identified for the courses when all courses were submitted for review under the new program a decade ago.

Shared Learning Outcomes

As an assessment process was considered, the twelve established goals for general education at Illinois State were carefully reviewed. In an effort to capture the more than forty distinct skills and/or abilities outlined for students as a part of the many goals, four shared learning outcomes were developed. The learning outcomes were purposefully identified as *shared* to represent a purposeful organization and branding of skills and abilities that are introduced and developed in the general education curriculum, with the intention that those same skills and abilities are valued and refined in the various disciplines. The four shared learning outcomes represent students' capacity to think critically and solve problems, to comprehend and contribute to diverse and global perspectives, to be stewards of lifelong learning, and to advance public opportunity—all recognized as valuable assets for students whether their majors are in chemistry or theater or interior and environmental design or finance. The four shared learning outcomes are:

1. **Critical inquiry and problem solving.** Students will develop and communicate a range of interests and curiosities, engaging those interests and curiosities through critical thinking, reasoning, and problem solving.
2. **Public opportunity.** Students will identify the resources and articulate the subsequent value of civic and community engagement.
3. **Diverse and global perspectives.** Students will be exposed to diverse and global perspectives by developing and communicating an appreciation for the impact made in personal and professional lives.
4. **Lifelong learning.** Students will utilize the skills indicative of an effective lifelong learner actively pursuing knowledge and applying new information and skills in interdisciplinary approaches.

Institutional Portfolio Process for General Education Assessment

At Illinois State University, an institutional artifact portfolio (IAP) is a collection and subsequent review of student work (artifacts) produced for each of four shared learning outcomes based upon the twelve goals of general education. A compilation and analysis of the artifacts occurs during the fall and spring semesters, and an annual report is generated based upon a predetermined assessment cycle. The unit of analysis is the institution, not a class, faculty member, or student (Seybert 2005).

How Does an Institutional Portfolio Work?

The collection and compilation of artifacts are organized and managed by the University Assessment Office (UAO) at Illinois State. Each semester, faculty teaching courses in the targeted core (inner, middle, or outer) of the general education program and shared learning outcome (public opportunity, diverse and global perspectives, critical thinking and inquiry, and lifelong learning) under review will be invited to submit student artifacts that address the assessment items as outlined by a rubric that has been designed for each of the four shared learning outcomes. This is a voluntary system with no penalty for not participating, and faculty members retain the autonomy to select the assignments for review. However, the process requires that faculty members submit artifacts from all students in their course.

Once participants are identified, a submission date is scheduled by the faculty. On that date, a staff member from the UAO picks up the artifacts from the faculty member, makes copies, and returns the artifacts within one business day. This process occurs prior to faculty grading so as to avoid influencing reviewers' opinions of artifact quality. The UAO codes the copies, removes any identifying student information, draws a random sample based upon a predetermined stratification, and prepares the artifacts for review. Since the general education program is the collective responsibility of the ISU faculty, the review of the artifacts is carried out by teams of multidisciplinary ISU faculty members using the four developed rubrics. The results are generated by a consensus process.

The results of each semester's review are further analyzed by the UAO, and background institutional data are introduced into the analysis. Results of the annual institutional portfolio assessment are reported directly to the Council for General Education (CGE). The CGE evaluates the assessment results to make informed decisions about the general education program.

The benefit of the institutional portfolio model for assessing general education is that it is minimally intrusive to students and faculty. No additional tests are required. In fact, students see no changes in their courses or course demands whatsoever. Additionally, all that is required of faculty members is for them to review the rubrics and consider what assignments in their syllabi meet the criteria that they would be willing to have reviewed by the faculty team.

Re-Introducing General Education to the Campus

After careful consideration, the implementation of the newly developed institutional artifact portfolio process for assessing general education was delayed by one academic year to enhance campus marketing efforts of the general education program and the new shared learning outcomes. The communications campaign included a newly developed Web site where faculty and students could access more user-friendly, stakeholder-specific information regarding the general education program. In addition, a full-color brochure entitled "Faculty Investment in the General Education Program" was developed for all faculty. This brochure provided information regarding the construct of the general education program, the shared learning outcomes, and the institutional artifact portfolio process. In addition, the director of university assessment met with every college council, the University Chairs Council, all academic advisers, the Academic Senate, and the provost's advisory council to discuss the newly developed shared learning outcomes and the IAP process. Select departments and schools also invited the director of university assessment to attend department/school meetings to discuss the various aspects of general education and the newly developed assessment process. Last, the new faculty orientation and the new chairs and directors orientation were identified as important venues to introduce and establish the foundation for the concept of sharing the outcomes established for general education but expected of any discipline. The message that regardless of whether a faculty member teaches a general education course, each and every faculty member is a consumer of the general education program and an important participant in the refinement of the skills outlined in the shared learning outcomes that complement each discipline represented on campus continues to be the primary emphasis at these events.

Rewards and Challenges

The institutional artifact portfolio process has been well received at Illinois State University, with faculty participation above initial projections. In a recent faculty needs assessment study with an unrelated focus conducted by the University Assessment Office, more than 70 percent of all faculty members responded that they had an awareness of the general education program and the shared learning outcomes. Although no baseline data exist to make an exact comparison, the previous syllabi audit (which revealed a very low percentage of faculty teaching a general education course who even included the identified goals of general education the course was linked to), may provide some indication that the enhanced marketing efforts regarding general education were beneficial.

However, ongoing communication remains key. Comments about general education and the shared learning outcomes from select participants at the fall 2008 new faculty orientation included items such as "Not relevant to me. I don't teach a general education course," and "Good information if I taught general education." Although we believe significant progress and been made and that Illinois State University faculty and students are provided with much more easily accessible and comprehensible information regarding both the general education program and the connection of the shared learning outcomes to a student's entire academic experience, ongoing communication efforts are needed. Fortunately, the all-campus assessment process for general education serves as an ongoing vehicle to facilitate the message regarding the shared learning outcomes and how those outcomes truly can and should bridge any divide between general education and the disciplines.

Reference

Seybert, J. 2005. The institutional portfolio: A performance-based model for assessment of general education. Paper presented at the annual Indiana University-Purdue University Assessment Institute, Indianapolis.

Mardell A. Wilson *is Assistant Provost, and* ***Tricia Widner Johnson*** *is an Assistant Professor at Illinois State University in Normal.*

Turning a Successful Self-Study into a Plan of Action

John Burney and Rachel Dykstra Boon

Though often an occasion for stress and long hours, the accreditation process at a university provides valuable time for reflection and even a spark to action in sometimes dormant areas. The experience is defined in important ways by the manner in which a campus initiates and drives its self-study process. In February 2008, Drake University underwent a comprehensive visit from a Higher Learning Commission consultant-evaluator team. The process was completed with the granting of continued accreditation in late June 2008. While we are certainly pleased with the result, the process of the self-study itself proved even more valuable in providing focus and motivation to the campus community in a variety of areas. Four main aspects were of particular importance to our campus:

1. Focus on learning outcomes. An early decision was made to base the process, from the beginning, on engaging the whole community in a discussion of how to achieve the learning outcomes drawn from the mission.
2. Focus on evidence. The campus focused on evidence and thus on the need to improve assessment.
3. Focus on connections. We made sure that the self-study did not exist in limbo, but played into existing systems of communication and governance and, where necessary, led to the creation of new standing committees or offices.
4. Focus on honesty. We made sure that the self-study did more than summarize the evidence for meeting each criteria, that it went farther to take a global look at the institution and honestly convey the challenges and opportunities facing the university.

Taken together, these steps have ensured that the work of improving learning at Drake did not stop when the accreditation team left campus, but has continued.

Focus on Learning Outcomes

Our recent PEAQ self-study process was in preparation for evaluation for continued accreditation. The full self-study process began in 2004 with the appointment of an accreditation steering committee and the creation of sub-committees for each criterion. Key to initiating this process was developing a clear understanding of the university's mission statement and the institutional goals and student learning outcomes that were to be drawn from it. Beginning at an annual presidential retreat that involved more than sixty administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students, we identified the outcomes to be drawn from the key mission statement terms: exceptional learning environment, meaningful personal lives, responsible global citizenship, professional accomplishments, collaborative learning, and integration of the liberal arts and sciences with professional studies. During the fall, the campus engaged in a community discussion refining the concepts first laid out during the summer and resorting in a mission explication that was discussed and approved by the student senate, the all staff council, the faculty senate, and the board of trustees. Clear articulation of the mission outcomes then became a touchstone not only for the self-study process, but for the ongoing planning and evaluation that takes place on campus.

Focus on Evidence

Once the learning outcomes were established, we could begin to identify the evidence needed to evaluate our programs. Drake has long been interested in continuous improvement. The university carried out a university-wide review in 2000–2001, and at various points have had working groups looking at our first-year program, senior capstones, and advising. However, concentrating on the mission-based learning outcomes gave us a powerful organizational tool to start to pull together insights from individual task forces and several years of data drawn from a home-grown Drake student survey and the annual use of the National Survey of Student Engagement. A working group of faculty and staff members drawn from the Criterion 3 and Criterion 4 committees created a mission map that compared the current Drake curriculum to the mission explication outcomes. Gaps of either coverage or effectiveness were identified, and summer working groups developed initiatives to enable us to more intentionally improve our achievement of critical thinking and engaged citizen outcomes.

We also realized the necessity of going beyond student satisfaction surveys to start developing direct assessment of student learning. The Criterion 3 committee sponsored an all-university workshop by assessment expert Mary Huba. Internal workshops to follow up on writing outcomes statements and the merits of a variety of assessment tools were held in the months following Huba's visit. These efforts expanded beyond the formal curriculum; Student Life carried out similar mission mapping on its own programs and began to develop assessment tied to the mission outcomes. The focus on developing evidence for the achievement of mission learning outcomes created a common language and purpose across Drake's six schools and colleges, the faculty governance body, and co-curricular areas.

That focus also helped us realize that we had to build a structure to continue the development and evaluation of evidence after the self-study committees dissolved. To address this concern, in 2006 the provost created the curriculum analysis and planning committee chaired by a vice provost and charged with making recommendations to the university curriculum committee to improve learning in the Drake curriculum based on ongoing assessment. It also led Drake to join the first cohort of The Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning in December 2006, and to use the resources of the academy to lay the groundwork for long-term assessment of our mission outcomes.

Focus on Connections

A self-study fails if the efforts are seen to belong to a small group of people; it ultimately needs to be tied to the regular planning and budgeting processes of the institution in order to have a real impact. Drake worked hard to make sure that there was broad information on the self-study process and that the information generated played into the regular planning processes.

The Criterion 1 subcommittee designed campus communication, from a Mission in Motion channel on our portal to an on-campus poster session to which all criterion committees contributed posters highlighting their main evidence and conclusions ten months before the team visit. More than two hundred members of the campus community attended the session, informally discussing the findings with criterion subcommittee members and other attendees.

The Criterion 2 subcommittee helped design a new planning process, which was subsequently approved by the faculty senate, ensuring that on a three-year cycle Drake academic and non-academic units will carry out environmental scans, produce white papers based on available evidence of current achievement and future trends in each area, and participate in a campus-wide futures conference to feed ideas into the university strategic plan.

The Criterion 3 and Criterion 4 subcommittees not only looked at the current state of the mission but also used the appropriate faculty governance processes at each step so that, as noted several times, faculty, staff, and student bodies were drawn into the discussions and the faculty senate has approved each step in revising the curriculum and creating new structures to continue the ongoing evaluation and planning.

Focus on Honesty

From the beginning, Drake treated the self-study process not just as an effort to convince The Higher Learning Commission that we met the Criteria for Accreditation but also as a real tool to improve the quality of education at Drake and to develop a culture of evidence for future planning. Thus Drake added a concluding chapter on challenges and opportunities that not only anticipated most of the issues that a team might find on campus, but also indicated the steps that Drake was going to take to deal with them long after the team had gone. We organized this chapter around the Criterion headings. Items identified included

- Relating the Drake curriculum more closely to intentional achievement of the mission outcomes and doing more to help students see the Drake mission as a road map for their liberal education
- Discussing how to keep faculty governance vital in a time when active learning pedagogy and the demands of scholarship make individual faculty members feel more time pressures
- Complying with an ever growing number of federal and state regulations
- Increasing the diversity of the campus community
- Doing disciplined planning in a time of rapid financial, technological, and demographic change
- Reducing institutional dependence on tuition while keeping education affordable
- Improving teaching and learning in particular areas
- Creating a fuller partnership for experiential learning with the Des Moines community and the central Iowa region

In each case, we stated both the current challenge and the opportunities that we see for attacking that particular issue. The final chapter helped lay out a road map that was considered in our parallel strategic planning efforts and was a touchstone for our own internally motivated desire to improve at the conclusion of the reaccreditation process. The honesty of this admission was one the Consultant-Evaluators found valuable. Each institution has challenges in various areas to varying degrees, but challenges cannot be addressed without first being acknowledged. The blueprint we created by illuminating this set of challenges and opportunities now plays a critical role in focusing our momentum going forward.

Drake had a highly successful accreditation report. By the way we approached accreditation, we have made it clear that our efforts to assess and improve did not shut down once the final Commission action was taken. In particular:

1. **Focus on mission.** The mission outcomes have been used to drive the strategic planning process that resulted in a new strategic plan adopted by the board of trustees in October 2008.
2. **Focus on evidence.** The newly created Drake curriculum analysis and planning committee has led the institution in developing a critical thinking rubric and joining the Council of Independent Colleges consortium for the Collegiate Learning Assessment in August 2008. The committee is currently guiding campus discussions on using learning assessment software to develop electronic portfolios and rubric-based management of mission outcomes.
3. **Focus on connections.** The questions raised about the link of the Drake curriculum to mission learning outcomes were referred to the university curriculum committee, appointed by the faculty senate. The committee charged a task force to begin work in June 2008 on revisions of the general education program and on connection of the general education program to co-curricular programs through student life and individual centers.
4. **Focus on honesty.** Discussions that have taken place on the curriculum and the strategic plan now regularly cite the need for more and better evidence and for an honest appraisal of our strengths and weaknesses. They have resulted in a strengthening of Drake's structure to carry out institutional research and assessment; as well as in a determination to send faculty and staff members to conferences to learn best practices and ensure that we do not develop a false sense of our own achievements.

Did we do everything perfectly? No, of course not. We had a high degree of community involvement during the year prior to our visit, but in the four months before the visit we were so focused on writing the self-study and marshalling the evidence that some of the community discussion lagged. This made it all the more important that we had merged the self-study insights into our new planning processes and a new structure for assessment so that the drive behind our self-study insights would continue.

In these ways and others, the self-study has served as a step in a broader institutional process of planning and development. Now a year removed from the comprehensive visit, Drake is still engaged in the conversations that were initiated during the process. An updated strategic plan has been released; a general education curriculum revision is under development; we have expanded our assessment processes within mission-critical elements of our general education program; and we are consistently reminding ourselves of the challenges ahead if we are to accomplish our goals. Efforts to maintain the energy must be ongoing and sustainable over transitions in key administrative positions (a new provost and two new deans in 2009).

John Burney *is Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and* ***Rachel Dykstra Boon*** *is Director of Institutional Research and Academic Compliance at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.*