WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PROGRESS REPORT

TO THE

NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2004, in a letter addressed to President Karen W. Morse, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) requested that Western Washington University (WWU) provide a progress report addressing Recommendation 1 of the 1998 Accreditation Evaluation Committee Report. The 1998 recommendation stated that “…while there are numerous assessment activities that have been conducted and planned, there is no overall formal institutional assessment plan. In addition, the Committee observed selected deficiencies in educational assessment at the course and educational program level.” To provide evidence for the University’s strong commitment to the assessment of student learning at an institutional level, WWU submitted, in April, 2000, an institutional assessment plan to the Commission entitled The Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at Western Washington University: Plan, Progress, Organizational Developments, and Future Activities. In a letter dated July, 2000, addressed to President Karen W. Morse, the Commission indicated that the “Commission was pleased to find that the information in the report indicated significant progress has been achieved by the University in its efforts to meet Standard 2.B - Educational Program Planning and Assessment and Commission Policy 2.2 - Educational Assessment.”

Since 2000, WWU has continued to increase and refine our institutional assessment efforts, both at the programmatic level and with regard to the outcomes assessment of student learning. In response to the NWCCU’s most recent request (July 16, 2003), WWU has prepared this progress report to further address concerns as outlined in our 2003 Regular Fifth-Year Interim Evaluation Report. Specifically, the focus as outlined in the Commission’s recommendation is:

The evaluator recommends that the University continue implementation of its institutional assessment plan to ensure that assessment is integrated fully and thoroughly in all departments throughout the institution. While significant progress has been made in planning and some units have noteworthy success, some programs have not yet identified and published learning outcomes. Furthermore, there does not appear to be consistency in reporting on how the evidence gathered on the “effectiveness of educational programs” results in “improvements in the program” as a result of the evaluation process (Standard Two Educational Program and Its Effectiveness; Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment).

To prepare this most recent progress report, information was gathered through a variety of sources: face-to-face interviews with students, faculty, and other stakeholders; surveys; reviews of the University’s catalogue and department/program websites; and analysis of various shared governance committee proceedings and policy statements.
In addition to the information described above, the report describes the University’s organizational arrangements responsible for institutional assessment and the collaborative relations established with programs responsible for improving teaching and learning. Summary descriptions are provided for campus activities involving the relationship between assessment and accountability and how they are influencing the assessment of student learning at all levels within the University. Information also is provided describing the status of the General Education Requirements (GER)\(^1\) reform and review currently under consideration by the University’s faculty and administration. A number of academic programs also provide evidence about the ways in which program and student assessment efforts have resulted in substantive changes to enhance overall program quality and student learning. The report closes with a review of pending University policies that can affect the documentation and annual reporting of student learning and assessment activities.

**Assessment and University Mission and Goals**

The first rule of good assessment is to "assess what is important." Therefore, assessment at Western is primarily guided by the principles and purpose set forth in the University's mission and goals statement.

The Western faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees have devoted considerable attention to the formation of these guiding principles, which appear, in part, in several places. These include the Role and Mission Statement adopted by the Board of Trustees in December, 1997; the 1997 Accreditation Self-Study Report, Volume I; and the Strategic Action Guidelines adopted in December, 1991. A summary statement of the common principles in these many versions of the mission statement could be stated as follows:

The mission of Western Washington University is to provide Washington State students a high quality undergraduate education, which nurtures the intellectual, ethical, social, physical, and emotional development of each student, through:

1. A common, broad-based mastery of the fundamental concepts, history, perspectives, and significance of the arts, sciences, social sciences, and humanities; and
2. Baccalaureate and master's degree major programs of a practical and applied nature directed to the educational, economic, and cultural needs of Washington residents.

Specifically, the University strives to provide graduates who can critically analyze and use information; who can communicate effectively both orally and in writing; who have developed quantitative, analytical, and mathematical skills appropriate to their fields; who have developed a set of abilities to recognize when information is needed and the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information; who understand

\(^1\) Formerly called General University Requirements or GURs.
and appreciate creative and aesthetic expression; who understand and will help to resolve the complex social and environmental challenges of the modern world; and who are committed to serving their communities as principled and responsible citizens.

These goals are further elaborated in Western Washington University’s Strategic Plan, which emphasizes the three goals of educational quality, multicultural enrichment, and community service. The role of assessment, therefore, is to determine how well these goals are being achieved, and to apply that knowledge for the continual improvement of student learning.

**Summary of Western’s Assessment Plan and History**

Assessment activities at Western are not new; beginning around 1970, these activities have included academic program reviews, end-of-program capstone assessments of students, and annual surveys of entering students, returning students, enrolled students, employers of Western’s graduates, and alumni. Until about 1988, these activities were sporadic, conducted by a number of individual offices, and relatively uncoordinated. Assessment began to expand significantly with the advent of accountability reporting in 1988.

The 1987 Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) Master Plan for State colleges and universities asserted the importance of assessment efforts to state authorities by imposing measurement and reporting requirements for a number of specific institutional outcomes. These first mandates for accountability reporting rather quickly led to research on a wide range of related topics, and have measurably improved the quality of undergraduate education at Western.

Seventeen years’ experience has given Western an extensive assessment database and sophisticated analytical expertise, in the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Testing (OIART), the Office of Survey Research (OSR), and the Office of Institutional Research and Resource Planning (OIRRP). The three offices actually are an integral part of the OIART and work collaboratively on all assessment, accountability, and institutional research activities for the University. This expertise has been applied well beyond the requirements of accountability reporting to a wide range of assessment activities. Most notable is the publication and distribution of over 90 technical reports and 40 *Focus* research summaries in both hardcopy and on an extensive and comprehensive Website with links to a multitude of student learning assessment activities occurring nationwide.² Moreover, the OIART’s Dialogue forum papers present scholarly discussions of teaching, learning and assessment issues.³ These studies and papers contributed significantly to Western’s 1997-98 accreditation review

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² See http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~assess; and http://pandora.cii.wwu.edu/cii/resources/outcomes/default.asp
³ See http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~dialogue
and self-study process, to the development of budget proposals, and to the building of a foundation for continuing monitoring and assessment of retention, progress to degree, graduation rates, writing competency, information technology literacy skills, developmental of critical thinking skills, quantitative reasoning skills, employer perceptions, and student and alumni satisfaction with their educational and extracurricular experiences. Moreover, findings from the reports and publications assist departments and academic programs in their annual review of their mission, goals, student learning outcome objectives, and the effectiveness of their assessment activities.

Periodically, the OIART distributes to each department, college deans, selected administrators, and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs copies of reports of graduates' detailing their perceptions of various performances by each department, including ratings of advising, level of intellectual challenges and support, support for efficient conclusion of the degree, and level of knowledge and skill added in a wide range of areas. Findings from the reports are disaggregated by college, department and academic program. In addition, more detailed data has been collected for specific departments during their evaluation and program review cycles; this activity began in 1990 and continues to occur on an annual basis.

In April, 2000, Western Washington University developed a university-wide assessment plan that emphasized the assessment of student learning at the department and academic program level. The fundamental purpose of Western's assessment plan is to establish guidelines and responsibilities for the practice of assessment activities at Western Washington University. The university strongly maintains that assessment is an internal feedback process designed to improve performance through an ongoing, integrated set of activities grounded in assessment information.

Student learning is Western's primary product; what students and graduates know and are actually able to do as a result of their WWU education is the most important measure of success for Western as an institution. Therefore, the purpose of Western's Assessment Plan is to establish procedures and responsibilities for monitoring the quality of student learning across the campus environment, including both academic and non-academic programs, and for using assessment results as the basis for continual improvement in the quality and depth of student learning.

Department and academic program involvement in addressing student learning outcomes at Western Washington University encompasses a wide range of levels of interest, planning and implementation. Since any campus-wide plan to evaluate the assessment of student-learning outcomes must be implemented cautiously and in phases, as part of its plan Western developed the following three-phase timeline for introducing and monitoring a campus-wide plan that commits all departments and programs to addressing student learning outcomes. As of April 2005 Western has made significant progress in achieving all of the elements described in its institutional plan.
After three years of campus-wide review and dialogue regarding the general education requirements, the Faculty Senate of Western Washington University formally adopted recommendations (with some modification) that were the result of this process in late spring 2004. The campus-wide dialogue that was the foundation for the recommended changes in general education requirements spanned all academic disciplines, and included student support professionals, community members, and, of course, undergraduate students. From this dialogue emerged a more detailed and collectively agreed upon set of student learning outcomes and program objectives (see Purposes of General Education, Appendix C, which features the learning outcomes), as well as a more streamlined set of course requirements and an expansion of some learning goals to better meet the needs of today’s graduates.

This new set of curricular requirements is scheduled to begin in Fall 2005. Thus, in preparation for offering these new requirements, the 2004-05 academic year was dedicated to conducting a campus audit of courses that currently exist or could be modified to fulfill requirements in four of the newly identified domains of student learning. These new domains are a) quantitative and symbolic reasoning, b) a second-level writing requirement, c) a first-year experience, and d) a diversity requirement to be fulfilled in courses that feature national and cross-national perspectives. Each of these four domains has specific student learning outcomes associated with it, and departments and faculty were instructed to review the current curricular offerings to identify courses that could qualify in meeting student learning objectives as defined. While the audit process is not yet completed, preliminary evidence suggests that there are existing courses that could potentially meet the learning objectives of the new general education program. The caveat, however, is that academic departments and programs would require additional resources to offer enough additional sections to meet enrollment demand of all incoming students. Thus, in 2005-06 the campus community will endeavor to find the means to expand and add new offerings to fulfill the goals of the new general education program.

One cost effective means of helping academic units design and upgrade general education courses was to develop a common website as a campus resource that features student learning outcomes in these domains. This website was designed by the Center for Instructional Innovation, in concert with the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Testing. In addition, and perhaps of even great importance to the campus community, this website also provides assessment tools and strategies to help teachers and departments assess student learning across the curriculum. For complete information about the website see www.pandora.cii.wwu.edu/gened This website has already been widely used across Western’s campus, and colleagues beyond the campus of Western have also found it to be a useful resource.

With regard to piloting a number of approaches for assessing student learning in the new general education program, a number of very active faculty-focused
workgroups have begun and will continue their efforts throughout the coming academic year. A workgroup on QSR (quantitative and symbolic reasoning) and a first-year experience group have recently been formed, and they are providing content for the centralized website referenced in the previous paragraph of this document. The writing group has been a long-time representative in our collective assessment efforts, and that group has recently expanded its role by offering additional sections of faculty workshops to assist those faculty members who are teaching writing and assessing student learning through writing. These workshops are very well attended, and additional resources have been allocated for 2005-06 to expand the writing workshops.

A pilot project is scheduled to begin in 2005-06 that would make it possible for students enrolled in our general studies degree to complete an electronic portfolio that assesses their learning in general education courses as part of a capstone to that degree. It is estimated that about 125 students will be part of that pilot project next year, and expansion of the electronic portfolio to students in other disciplines is the hoped for result from this pilot. In addition, the Colleges of Business and Economics and Woodring College of Education have graciously shared their web-based student learning outcomes software as a means of stimulating similar electronic portfolios in other colleges at Western.

As the new general education requirements are implemented, beginning in Fall 2005, the General Education Committee (a standing faculty committee of the Academic Coordinating Committee) will play a major role in assisting departments in identifying the student learning outcomes of their general education courses. As new courses are proposed, the General Education Committee will work closely with the academic units to determine that the outcomes are clearly stated in the course syllabi and that the appropriate assessment techniques are part of the proposal process.

**Levels of Implementation**

WWU recognizes that its departments and academic programs are at varying stages and levels of progress in forming and developing their student learning outcomes assessment plans and activities. Some units and programs are in the early or definition stage of development; others are at a sophisticated and mature stage. To assist us in understanding, evaluating, and improving our assessment programs, Western adopted the Levels of Implementation procedure developed by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NCA).

NCA developed the Levels of Implementation template and protocol initially from over 400 accreditation evaluation team reports written from 1997 to 1999 (Lopez, 1999, 2000). Results from the reports indicated that assessment programs from their institutions fell along a continuum. Additionally, the NCA found that institutional progress towards realizing their assessment plans was relative and “dependent upon their unique histories, cultures, missions, attitudes towards assessment, and the
prevailing faculty perception of the feasibility of improving students’ learning across academic programs” (Lopez, 2000, p. 4). The assessment of department and program progress also followed the same patterns. The “Levels” concept was developed and reviewed by NCA staff and several evaluators and released for use in 1999. The “Levels” approach is well thought out and grounded in the experience of accreditation evaluators. And as it provides institutions, departments, and programs an opportunity to evaluate where they are and where they have to go to reach a mature and sophisticated level of progress, it is also proactive.

NCA’s Levels of Implementation template is a 3 by 4 matrix consisting of three implementation levels and four patterns and characteristics for each level. To assess the current status or level of each of our departments and programs WWU used the “Efficacy of Assessment” template that consists of three levels: 1) Beginning Implementation of Assessment Programs; 2) Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs; and 3) Maturing Stages of Continuous Improvement. Descriptions that characterize the attainment of “efficacy” for each level serve as criteria for determining where a program falls on a continuum. There are three sublevels within a major level: thus a program could be at Level One and at the high end or sublevel 3, while another program could be at Level Two but at the low end or sublevel 4. The progress for each of Western’s colleges is evaluated following the Levels’ categories, accompanied with brief descriptions and survey research summaries.

**Progress and Summary of Outcomes Assessment of Student Learning at the College Level**

Western Washington University is organized into a Graduate School and seven colleges: College of Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Business and Economics, College of Fine and Performing Arts, Fairhaven College, Huxley College of Environmental Studies, College of Sciences and Technology, and the Woodring College of Education. Each of the colleges has specific mission statements and corresponding learning and academic goals and objectives. Along with offering a curriculum that provides a general education experience each college offers intensive study in major fields of concentration through their departments and academic programs. (Note: not all colleges offer study in special academic programs—Fairhaven College, for example.)

Additionally, the College of Business and Economic and the Woodring College of Education are accredited by their respective accrediting associations, viz., the International Association for Management Education and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Some of the departments and programs within the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Fine and Performing Arts are accredited by specific accrediting boards and associations, specifically: music (National Association of Schools of Music), computer science (Computing Sciences Accreditation Board), engineering technology (Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology), physical education, health, and recreation (National
Recreation and Parks Association), communication sciences and disorders (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Certification); chemistry (American Chemical Society); and psychology (mental health and school counseling programs - Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs). All of the accrediting commissions and professional associations listed above require programs to provide evidence for the presence of extensive assessment of student learning activities, policies, and procedures; hence all of the programs listed complied with the standards, ones that are consistent with NASC.

In the following section, summary information is provided describing the status and progress of each of the colleges’ efforts towards the assessment of student learning outcomes and educational program planning. Following this section, summary findings from a Winter 2005 survey of departments and academic programs concerning their educational program planning and assessment status and progress are provided.

**College of Business and Economics.** The College contains five departments offering programs at both bachelor’s and master’s degree levels to slightly more then 2000 students. The College also is home to five centers that offer a variety of specialized research and development opportunities to business and industry primarily in the region.

The Mission of the College is to provide high quality programs in business and economics focusing primarily on undergraduate instruction. The College serves the needs of students from throughout the region by offering programs that provide a global perspective, a knowledge of information technology, and the ability to apply economic and business principles.

“The College also offers a general graduate program in business administration and provides instruction to students from other colleges within the University. As a supporting part of this educational mission, the faculty of the College engage in applied, integrative, and pedagogical scholarship and provide services to their profession, the community, and the University. The College seeks continuous improvement in the quality of its pedagogy, scholarship, and service to its constituents.” (Western Washington University 2004-2005 Bulletin, p. 88). The College of Business and Economics (CBE) is fully accredited by AACSB International (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business).

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since April 2002 on the assessment of student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Three, Rank 9 (Maturing Stages of Continuing Improvement). Using the Levels of Implementation descriptors as examples of the College’s efficacy, a Rank of 9 indicates that: “Student learning has become central to
the culture of the College and finding ways to improve it is ongoing; A ‘culture of
evidence’ has emerged, sustained by a faculty and administrative commitment to
excellent teaching and effective learning; Explicit statements regarding the College’s
expectations for student learning are widely publicized; Programmatic benchmarks are
established against which students’ learning outcomes are assessed; Departmental
assessment programs are annually reviewed updated annually; The College maintains a
system of data collection that helps sustain an effective assessment program; Syllabi for
courses being offered and all submitted courses and programs state measurable
objectives for student learning and provide for the assessment of students’ academic
achievement; and The College publicly and regularly celebrates demonstrated student
learning, performance, and achievement.” All departments offer a required capstone
experience and some also offer required supervised internship experiences.

**Fairhaven College.** Fairhaven College, opened in 1967 as an experimental college within
Western Washington University, and exists today as an undergraduate learning
community defined by five attributes: interdisciplinary study; student designed studies
and evaluation of learning; examination of issues arising from a diverse society;
development of leadership and a sense of social responsibility; and curricular,
instructional, and evaluative innovation.

The College’s interdisciplinary curriculum is centered on the process of inquiry
as well as on the development of knowledge. Courses and experiences introduce
students to thinking strategies used in various disciplines and areas of study, and
application of these thinking and problem solving skills to larger issues and questions.
Classes prepare students to learn on their own, and move from the skills of critiquing
and interpreting knowledge to constructing knowledge. Fairhaven prepares students to
listen carefully and engage respectfully in discussion, to value and respect different
worldviews, and to appreciate multiple voices reflecting the diversity of experience in
our society.

The assessment of student learning experiences takes on numerous forms at
Fairhaven. Students must assemble a portfolio containing representative examples of
their writing as completed at the college level within the preceding three years. This
portfolio must include a minimum of three (3) papers. In addition, students must
submit a written introduction that explains the contents of the portfolio. In addition,
collaborative learning is often used together with independent research. Narrative
assessments, including a student self-evaluation and written responses from faculty
replace letter grades. Fairhaven emphasizes a student-centered approach to learning
and education where assessment is based on performance as expressed through
writing, recitals, exhibits, internships, oral presentations, and a variety of other means
of demonstrating knowledge and skills. All students are required to complete a
capstone experience. In effect, the assessment of student learning experiences at
Fairhaven College is an ongoing integrated process that occurs at all levels of the
student’s experience. Results from the assessment activities are consistently and
constantly evaluated by faculty in consult with students and used to make significant and appropriate changes in the curriculum.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since April 2002 on the assessment of student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Three, Rank 9 (Maturing Stages of Continuing Improvement). Since Fairhaven is rated at the same Level as the College of Business and Economic the Levels of Implementation descriptors are the same.

**College of Fine and Performing Arts.** The College offers a wide variety of courses within the fine and performing arts disciplines, with degree programs in the departments of Art, Music, and Theatre Arts, as well as instruction in the Dance program. Established in 1975, the College was founded to improve the state of the arts on the campus of Western Washington University and in the State of Washington by stimulating the quality and quantity of creative and artistic effort through the educational processes and the degree programs offered by the College. The College provides for an educational environment enhancing the creation, development, performance, and teaching of the fine and performing arts.

The nature of instruction within the College provides for a nurturing atmosphere with the faculty acting as mentors to their students. This approach is consistent with the unique goals and dreams that each student brings to the College. The College enables the student to grow in a specific discipline, while concurrently encouraging cross-disciplinary experiences. A commitment to a career in an arts discipline warrants and demands exploration in all the arts. The departments of the College provide the necessary flexibility to develop the specific talents and interests of each student. As a testament to the College’s commitment to providing high standards for student learning in the arts the College’s music department is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. The assessment of student learning occurs through required Senior level capstone courses, recitals, dance performances, adjudications, seminars, exhibits, theater documented competencies, and theatrical performances. The College also relies on use of alumni and current student survey results to guide their understanding and review of student learning experiences.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since April 2002 on the assessment of student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Three, Rank 7 (Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs/Maturing Stages of Continuing Improvement); the lowest rank in Level Three. Using the Levels of Implementation descriptors as examples of the College’s efficacy, a Rank of 7 indicates that: “Student learning has become central to the culture of the College and finding ways to improve it is ongoing; A ‘culture of
evidence’ has emerged, sustained by a faculty and administrative commitment to excellent teaching and effective learning; Explicit statements regarding the College’s expectations for student learning are widely publicized in a most programs; The College publicly and regularly celebrates demonstrated student learning, performance, and achievement; Faculty members are increasingly engaged in interpreting assessment results, discussing their implications, and recommending changes in academic programs and other areas in order to improve student learning; Many of the College’s academic units and programs are collecting, interpreting, and using the results obtained from assessing student learning; The conclusions faculty reach after reviewing the assessment results and the recommendations that they make regarding proposed changes in teaching methods, curriculum, course content, instructional resources, and in academic support services are beginning to be incorporated into regular departmental and/or institutional planning and budgeting processes and included in the determination of the priorities for funding and implementation; and Assessment findings about the state of student learning are beginning to be incorporated into reviews of the academic program and into the self-study of institutional effectiveness.”

**College of Humanities and Social Sciences.** The College is new to Western’s academic college system. The thirteen departments and two programs offer more than forty bachelor's degrees and eight master's degrees, along with interdisciplinary degrees in East Asian Studies, Linguistics and student-faculty designed majors. The College houses several research and service centers, including the Center for Cross-cultural Research, the Center for Performance Excellence, the Office of Survey Research, and two community-based professional training centers: the Speech and Hearing Clinic and the Psychology Counseling Clinic. In addition, the College has five nationally accredited professional programs: school counseling, mental health counseling, speech pathology, audiology and recreation. In addition, there is available a variety of interdisciplinary programs, and students may design their own majors through a program managed by the Department of Liberal Studies.

The mission of the College is to provide the humanities and social and behavioral sciences core of the University through academic majors, support courses for other programs, and contributions to the general education program. The College also collaborates with other colleges to provide interdisciplinary, professional and applied programs that grow from the content, methodology and philosophy of the humanities and social and behavioral sciences and provides the academic content and a substantial portion of the pedagogy for many of the students preparing to be teachers. Through these offerings, the College aims to promote a holistic approach to learning, including an awareness of the complex nature of our global society; the ability to communicate effectively; the ability to collect, analyze, and synthesize information in order to make informed choices; and the incorporation of learning as a lifelong pursuit.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since on the assessment of
student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Two, Rank 6 (Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs). Using the Levels of Implementation descriptors as examples of the Colleges’ efficacy, a Rank of 6 indicates that: “Although considerable program-level data about student and program performance is available, individual units vary in the degree to which they use this information to improve the quality of educational experiences; Faculty members are increasingly engaged in interpreting assessment results, discussing their implications, and recommending changes in academic programs and other areas in order to improve student learning; Assessment findings about the state of student learning are beginning to be incorporated into reviews of the academic program and into the self-study of departmental effectiveness; data are being collected for the purpose of reporting rather than the improvement of student learning, and a ‘culture of evidence’ has emerged sustained by the faculty and administrative commitment to excellent and effective learning.”

Several of the College’s departments in fact are at Level Three (Maturing Stage of Continuing Improvement), including psychology, sociology, PEHR (physical education, health and recreation), communication sciences and disorders, and modern and classical languages. Several others are at varying Ranks within Level Two.

**Huxley College of the Environment.** Huxley College offers a learning environment rich in interdisciplinary course work, diverse in its faculty and students, and innovative in its approach to environmental education. A diverse student body of more than 500 undergraduate and 50 graduate students from around the world come to Huxley College with a commitment to hands-on environmental problem solving. Established in 1968, Huxley is one of the oldest environmental studies colleges in the nation. Its innovative and interdisciplinary academic programs reflect a broad view of our physical, biological, social, and cultural world. The College has won national and international recognition, thanks to its comprehensive undergraduate and graduate degree programs in environmental studies. Up until a few years ago, Huxley’s academic programs were organized around Centers. However, as a result of alumni and student survey results and faculty review the Centers were converted to two departments, the Departmental of Environmental Sciences, and the Department of Environmental Studies: Policy, Planning, Education, and Geography. Huxley also sponsors three institutes: the Institute of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry, the Institute for Watershed Studies, and the Institute for Spatial Information and Analysis. Also, marine studies are offered at the University’s Shannon Point Marine Center, and terrestrial and aquatic studies at the 2,300-acre community forest with 1,000-year-old trees and alpine wetlands. Assessment of student learning occurs at multiple levels at Huxley including a required capstone senior level course and an internship (or foreign country experience or senior thesis). Each internship experience is supervised by at least three faculty members; students are required to submit a written account of their experiences and research findings. Huxley conducts its own alumni and former student
survey and also relies on survey results obtained from the OIART to assist the faculty in reviewing student learning experiences, making adjustments in the curriculum, and evaluating the balance between student learning competencies and skills and the College’s stated mission and learning objectives.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since April 2002 on the assessment of student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Three, Rank 9 (Maturing Stages of Continuing Improvement). Since Huxley is rated at the same Level as the College of Business and Economic and Fairhaven College the Levels of Implementation descriptors are the same.

**College of Sciences and Technology.** The departments and programs of the College are an integral part of the strong liberal arts tradition of Western Washington University. Although the College is only a little over a year old, the departments that make up the College, and the faculty of its well-established departments, represent the instructional and intellectual core of the sciences, mathematics, and technology on our campus. The College of Sciences and Technology consists of seven academic departments: Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering Technology, Geology, Mathematics, and Physics/Astronomy. In addition the college is home to Western's Science, Math, and Technology Education (SMATE) program. The departments and SMATE are housed in various locations through Western's campus but are bound by a common dedication to providing a high quality education for students by using undergraduate research and practical laboratory-based experiences designed to stimulate intellectual curiosity, critical thinking abilities, and the application of the scientific method.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College of Sciences and Technology programs have made considerable progress on the assessment of student learning. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Two, Rank 6 (Making Progress in Implementing Assessment Programs). Using the Levels of Implementation descriptors as examples of the Colleges’ efficacy, a Rank of 6 indicates that: “Although considerable program-level data about student and program performance is available, individual units vary in the degree to which they use this information to improve the quality of educational experiences; Faculty members are increasingly engaged in interpreting assessment results, discussing their implications, and recommending changes in academic programs and other areas in order to improve student learning; Assessment findings about the state of student learning are beginning to be incorporated into reviews of the academic program and into the self-study of departmental effectiveness; data are being collected for the purpose of reporting rather than the improvement of student learning, and a ‘culture of evidence’ has emerged.
sustained by the faculty and administrative commitment to excellent and effective learning.”

Several of the College’s departments in fact are at Level Three (Maturing Stage of Continuing Improvement), including chemistry, engineering technology, and geology. Several others are at varying Ranks within Level Two.

**Woodring College of Education.** The Woodring College of Education is responsible for developing and implementing those professional education programs which lead to teacher certification, credentialing of school administrators, and professional training of leaders in human services and adult and higher education administration. It serves as a clearing-house for the exchange of information and as a coordinating agency for programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The College’s Departments of Elementary Education, Secondary Education, and Special Education offer teacher education programs that lead to Washington State Certification. These departments, along with the Department of Instructional Technology and the Educational Foundations Program Area, offer both undergraduate and graduate course work in elementary, secondary, K-12, and special education. The Educational Administration Program Area offers programs that lead to Washington State Certification for school principals. Professional education programs are developed and reviewed with the assistance of professional education advisory boards with representatives from cooperating school districts and professional associations. The Department of Adult and Higher Education and the Department of Human Services offer programs that prepare professionals in the areas of adult education, higher education personnel administration, and human services.

The Woodring College of Education mission statement provides context and purpose for its activities. Woodring facilitates learning that prepares and advances quality educators and human services professionals throughout their careers. As academic leaders, educators, mentors, and scholars, the College seeks to: model best practices in teaching and learning which, in turn, lead graduates to use best practices in their professions; cultivate student competence through extensive field experiences with exemplary practicing professionals; construct, transform, and convey knowledge by integrating research, theory, and practice; act with respect for individual differences; develop collaborative partnerships that promote the learning and well-being of individuals, families, and the community; and evaluate processes and outcomes to assure continual program improvements.

Woodring’s programs lead to certification and/or to graduation of professionals who have entered the College with a sound knowledge of basic social sciences, humanities, sciences, mathematics, and English, and who exit as graduates who are professionals in all aspects of their behavior. It is Woodring’s goal that all of our graduates will be excellent communicators who can work cooperatively and collaboratively with their colleagues, are sensitive to human and social diversity, and are leaders of change in education and society. Graduates of the Woodring College of
Education will be skilled classroom leaders who understand children and youth, or will be proficient human service professionals or adult educators. They will display mastery of state and national standards expected of a beginning teacher, administrator, counselor, human service professional, or adult educator by drawing upon what they know about pedagogy and academic content to demonstrate a positive impact on student learning and other human and organizational behaviors. Woodring College is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The assessment of student learning experiences, skills, and competencies at Woodring primarily are performance based and follow the standards established by NCATE and the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Woodring also relies heavily on enrolled student and alumni survey results to assess student learning. All programs and departments require a capstone course for seniors.

Survey research results, interview data, and a review of various publications indicates that the College has made considerable progress since April 2000 on the assessment of student learning across its numerous and varied departments and academic programs. Following the Levels of Implementation template (see Appendix A) the College collectively is at Level Three, Rank 9 (Maturing Stages of Continuing Improvement). Since Woodring is rated at the same Level as the College of Business and Economic, Fairhaven College, and the Huxley College of Environmental Studies the Levels of Implementation descriptors are the same.

**Survey of Departments and Academic Programs**

In this section, we address the progress departments have made toward identifying and publishing student learning outcomes by providing a summary of current activities across Western’s campus. Indeed, results from a web-based survey of department chairs and academic program directors conducted during the Winter quarter 2005 indicate that with very few exceptions, academic programs have made considerable progress in the development of their assessment programs. Surveys were returned by 38 chairs and program directors; the survey form is attached Appendix B, and results of the survey are presented below.

Although programs vary widely in their levels of development of their assessment plans, it is clear from survey results that most departments have made considerable progress in articulating and implementing assessment plans since the last survey in 2002. At present, all program faculties are now aware of their responsibility to develop a coherent assessment plan with five clearly articulated elements:

- a formal mission statement,
- learning goals consistent with the mission,
- learning objectives for each goal,
- measurable learning outcomes for assessing each objective,
• procedures for analysis and interpretation of outcomes data, and
• mechanisms for using outcomes data for program improvement.

Implementation of outcomes assessment of student learning

The survey begins by asking whether the program assessment plan contains the five recommended elements listed above. Responses are shown in Figure 1, and demonstrate that about three quarters of departments have an effective assessment plan structure in place, and are well into the implementation phase of those plans.

Next, each program faculty was asked to rank their program assessment plan with regard to developmental level, implementation level, outcomes analysis level, and action/response level. Results are shown in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 below. As shown in Figure 2, nearly all programs are now engaged in developing assessment plans: about a third are still in the planning stage; about a third are in the emerging stage; and about a third are in the maturing stage.
As shown in Figure 3, nearly all programs (94%) have implemented assessment plans at some level. The largest group of programs (41%) selected the response “Implementation of several assessment activities to assess multiple learning” (choice “c”); the next largest group (29%) were using “a variety of assessment activities to assess the most important learning goals;” and about a quarter (23.5%) are just beginning the implementation phase of their assessment programs.

As shown in Figure 4, about 85% of programs responding were doing at least some analysis of student learning outcomes for program assessment. About a third (29%) were doing “some analysis of student outcomes for some learning goals;” nearly half (44%) had advanced to doing “some analysis of student outcomes for most learning goals,” and about 12% had developed mature assessment programs that constitute “comprehensive analysis of the most important learning goals.”
Evidence of effectiveness of outcomes assessment of student learning for program improvement

Since the central objective in assessment is to use outcomes data for program improvement, the proof of maturity of any assessment plan is in the application of data to program improvement. Because several rounds of data collection may be required to provide a solid basis for program change, the action/response elements of an assessment plan also take the longest to develop. Those programs which have been doing assessment the longest, often driven by requirements of professional organizations, generally have programs which are furthest advanced. These programs provide examples of successful assessment plans to other academic units. As shown in Figure 5, about 60% of programs indicate they are implementing program improvements on an ongoing basis (responses “c” and “d”), while about a third of programs have not yet reached this stage of development (responses “a” and “b”).

Program faculty were also asked what kinds of outcomes they were assessing. Figure 6 makes clear that about a third (31%) of responding programs assess across-the-curriculum abilities such as writing, speaking, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, problem solving, ethics, and information literacy, primarily in their lower division classes, and about two-thirds assess most of these general abilities in some form in their upper division programs.
A follow-up question focused on learning outcomes more specific to disciplines. It asked: “Please indicate which, if any, of the following types of student learning outcomes you are currently using for program evaluation and improvement, and at what level.” As shown in Figure 7, between 10% and 40% of the 38 programs responding indicated that they are assessing each of these learning outcomes at the lower division level; and between 52% and 76% are assessing these developmental outcomes at the upper division level.

Program faculty use a wide range of direct measures to assess student learning. As shown in Figure 8, these include the frequent use of a number of increasingly complex assessment tools, such as presentations or performances (80%), locally developed tests (65%), and senior theses or capstone projects (56%).
In addition to the direct measures shown in Figure 8, a number of indirect measures of student learning are also used for program assessment. As shown in Figure 9, the most commonly used indirect assessment instruments are the comments and ratings from student evaluations of teaching (94%). Student self-evaluations are also being increasingly explored, as is the use of survey information from graduates and employers.

All of these measures have combined in recent years to give program faculty useful information about their programs, which has been applied in a number of innovative ways for program improvement. The abbreviated comments provided in the
following table are responses to the survey question: “Please briefly describe three to five specific examples of how your department or office has used outcomes assessment information (including program reviews) to implement program changes in the last five years.” The range of responses demonstrates broad and innovative application of assessment tools to the unique needs of each program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairhaven</td>
<td>Major Core curriculum revision resulted from information about writing difficulties and lack of understanding of the complexities of social relationships of incoming students. Since both are essential to the Fairhaven curriculum, the Core was restructured to include required courses in both areas (sometimes linked) for all incoming students. Fairhaven has moved to an on-line evaluation process resulting from student and faculty feedback about the cumbersome nature of the old process. Fairhaven is currently exploring an on-line portfolio process which would document students' progress toward the major outcomes imbedded in the Fairhaven mission statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1) Additional classes for music major (i.e., Mus 105). 2) &quot;Jury&quot; requirements standardized by area. 3) Evaluative measures for part-time faculty standardized (in process). 4) Inclusion of improvisation in curriculum (NASM recommendation). 5) Overhaul of Music Theory Curriculum (lower division).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance Program</td>
<td>Portfolio Revue. Outside evaluation of proposed BA/BFA Dance Major. Constantly from feedback to students in performance revues we determine changes or additions in the approach we take in our curriculum to achieve the best results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics/Astronomy</td>
<td>1) Student program survey resulted in changes to math prerequisites to improve skill sets and degree-path efficiency. 2) Internal program review resulted in changes in courses orderings—again to provide students a more efficient route through the program. 3) Alumni surveys/interviews have contributed to changes in the physics major lab sequence, both in terms of content and assessment. The result has been the addition of oral presentations and overall 'modernization' of skill sets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education (all programs)</td>
<td>1) Blocked three practica with academic coursework in response to NCATE, CEC, and student data regarding field experiences. 2) Implemented summative IDES internship evaluation early and often throughout the curriculum. 3) Required capstone senior project as a &quot;gate&quot; for internship. 4) Added remedial math class in response to student, school, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Data or Methods Used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>We have used our capstone seminar to assess student learning. This has led us to restructure our undergraduate core by re-sequencing classes and adding a class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>1) Introduction of course on computer security. 2) Revision of course on Windows software development. 3) Revision of courses on computer organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Business &amp; Economics</td>
<td>1) Faculty survey of core curriculum (possible changes in core. 2) Standardized test results (more emphasis on this in curriculum). 3) Employer feedback (changes in management concentration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Business &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Portfolio/reflective paper/self-evaluation used to: 1) beef up ethics component; 2) change structure of core; and 3) revise skills curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater Arts</td>
<td>Nothing formal. A constant informal process—always evaluating. New: Senior Exit Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1) We have used alumni and employer feedback to examine changes in our school &amp; mental health counseling master's degree programs. 2) Used feedback from students in senior seminars to adjust curriculum. 3) Used information about curriculum from other universities to redesign our undergraduate major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMATE (Science Education)</td>
<td>We are in the early stages on major revisions of our program funded by NSF. Working groups of faculty and staff are engaged in developing outcomes, assessments, research projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Educational</td>
<td>PEAB utilization of data and revision of the principal preparation program based on the ISLLC Standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/Educational Administration Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>Scores on West B and West E, scores on IDES, and portfolios are utilized to assess student outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern and Classical Languages</td>
<td>1) Surveying Spanish majors indicated a need for a business Spanish course. It was then added to curriculum. 2) Diagnostic tests in 100-level French indicated a need for revision of Fren 101, 102, 103, and the review 104. 3) Assessment of student comments regarding study abroad options inspired increased advising in this area in order to maximize student experience. 4) Student scores on national business German tests confirmed that methods were working—decided not to change program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>The department of anthropology initiated a required portfolio four years ago. We have been collecting exit interviews for five years. This information is still being assessed but we have begun a curriculum revision to address perceived needs. This includes a capstone course, a new core requirement in qualitative methods, and the initiation of required courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
needed to declare a major.

<p>| English       | 1) Undergraduate curriculum revision. 2) Graduate curriculum revision. 3) English 101 curriculum revision. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>1) Employer and graduate feedback is always used as we continually upgrade our program. 2) As we are instituting major program changes for next year, faculty look at other successful programs, including research-based approaches, to make decisions. 3) Every five years Washington state and the NCATE national review board evaluate our program and we follow with program improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Technology (all programs)</td>
<td>Feedback from alumni surveys and internal program reviews suggested insufficient inclusion of teamwork/leadership skills. Somewhat open-ended team projects were introduced to several courses to further emphasize these skills, and teamwork and leadership skills are assessed in these courses through self/peer evaluation. Self-assessment and external program advisory boards suggested a need for ethics instruction. In addition, alumni surveys, internal reviews, and program advisors suggested a need for additional writing a presentation skills. In response a new writing intensive course was developed that incorporates ethics and oral presentations. In addition, an ethical component was introduced into several additional classes, including the capstone senior project. Student self-evaluation suggested that students were not comfortable applying design for assembly and design for automated assembly concepts to real projects. A new project structure was developed giving students the opportunity to practice those skills. Subsequent surveys have shown students are now comfortable with those skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with aspects of Math 102 led to the introduction of the QSR sequence 106-107. Inadequacy of Math 240 for its client disciplines (especially social sciences) led to changes (such as the introduction of SPSS) to be introduced in fall, 2005. The need to measure up to external mandates (NCTM standards) motivated the expansion from Math Ed 381-2 to 381-2-3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>We now require a senior seminar of all graduates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
<td>Use of problem solving essays pre &amp; post in six sections of old core course. SCORED FOR MEASURE OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT (MID) PROBLEM-SOLVING STEPS. ALSO USED AN OBJECTIVE MEASURE OF CONTENT LEARNING (PRE/POST) AND STUDENT SELF-REPORTED LEARNING. THE RESULTS HAD MODEST IMPACT ON COURSE DEVELOPMENT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology (all major concentrations and BA)</td>
<td>1) Evaluation of written class projects (senior level) for critical thinking. 2) Formal assessment of essential professional skills through the entire geology curriculum. 3) Identification of critical skills by polling alumni and assessment of which skills were successfully provided by graduate and undergraduate courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>1) Senior evaluations and exit interviews. 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSD (Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Program)</td>
<td>1) Reviewed need for more information on dysphasia. Hired faculty consultant to do workshop on subject. 2) Considered multicultural offerings in department at request of American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Decided to infuse more information throughout curriculum. 3) As the result of a recent Graduate Council review of our programs in SLP and Audiology, a plan is being developed to provide more release time for faculty to engage in scholarship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td>1) An advisory committee comprised of professionals in the Northwest identified key learning outcomes. This lead to a dramatic shift in the curriculum: courses added and others dropped. 2) Quarterly assessment/feedback from students has lead to changes in the past two years in course sequencing and scheduling, course topics, and internship structure. 3) Capstone presentation of major applied research project lead to changes in expectations for research in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Services &amp; Rehabilitation (MA Program)</td>
<td>1) National accreditation review resulted in advising load changes and reduced supervision loads (2004). 2) Analysis of course content and student survey results resulted in more comprehensive training of adjunct faculty. 3) Student performance evaluated in practicum and internship is resulting in the creation of an advanced clinical practice course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huxley College Program on the Peninsulas (through EESP)</td>
<td>The program re-started Fall 04 after a four-year hiatus; hence we have only a short period of experience (less than one year). Previous program was thoroughly reviewed prior to re-start. We’re very introspective as we start faculty discussions, student feedback (individual meetings with program director, course evaluations), meetings/discussions with two-year college partners, preparation and revision of strategic plan, evaluation of modes of delivery (ITV/video conferences, field labs), evaluation of most suitable curriculum, possibilities for additional courses and tailoring courses to student career needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EESP (Birth-to-Five Care Certificate)</td>
<td>1) Certificate began summer of 1998 as a collaborative project between Head Start and Early Childhood Administration Program to fulfill the academic requirements to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate from the Council for Child Development (CCD). 2) Summer of 2001, Kris Slentz and Jacqueline Baker-Sennet of WCE at WWU rewrote the course outlines to reflect newly adopted content identified and legislated by the State of Washington and the federal government. 3) Based on a needs assessment within the local Head Start region, the need of a Spanish language program was identified to provide for the staff in migrant camps. This program began fall of 2001. 4) An initial survey was administered to ascertain the technical skills of the migrant population regarding the use of a computer and the Internet. A two-day, hands-on, face-to-face training session was held to familiarize the students with the technology. 5) It was realized early on this population group would need more assistance than originally thought in regards to reading and writing in English. Consequently additional translation assistance was provided for resource materials unavailable in Spanish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EESP (Emergency Management Certificate)</td>
<td>1) The Emergency Management Certificate offered the first class fall of 2001. The previous two years was spent developing the program as a direct response to an emerging need of the professional community. Need based on survey of first response agencies and organizations. 2) Three core classes developed to provide basic skill set for working professionally in the field. Skill set established by Emergency Management Institute (EMI) of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) to determine core competencies. 3) Additional special topics added to program based on suggestions from EMI and FEMA. 4) Instituted pre-requisite or permission of instructor requirement for special topics based on feedback from instructors regarding student’s ability to adequately grasp information in a meaningful manner. 5) Sought development of business continuity planning topic in response to awareness created in the business world following the terrorist attacks in New York City in September of 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>1) New curriculum with emphasis on capstone seminar (senior seminar). 2) Internship portfolio. 3) Self-reflection (student) in internships and many upper decision courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>1) Deciding to add a program specific statistics class to course offerings. 2) Changing the number of writing intensive course offerings from two-three per year. 3) Changing the content of specific courses in pedagogy to meet external review criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEHR (Community Health)</td>
<td>1) Increased emphasis on certain class content that is tested in our national certifying exam to become a Certified Health Education Specialist. 2) Included a grant writing assignment to the community Health class. 3) Removed Jour 330 as a CH requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEHR (Recreation Program)</td>
<td>1) Greater emphasis on ethics throughout the curriculum. 2) Enhanced writing component in senior capstone. 3) Better integrate internships with curriculum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

Western Washington University has made significant improvement in all academic departments and programs with regard to clarifying and implementing outcomes assessment of student learning. Since the shift toward student learning outcomes assessment began, the campus has begun embracing a wide variety of assessment data (qualitative and quantitative, demographic and survey). Indeed, as indicated by recent survey findings, the majority of academic departments and programs have begun to utilize data for continuous improvement. Moreover, as part of assessment efforts, Western will continue its commitment to improving the quality of learning experience through the careful development of a wide variety of assessment techniques. Additional resources have been allocated to further facilitate our assessment efforts, including expansion of the role of the Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Testing to work with the broader campus community on the design, implementation, and analysis of outcomes assessment of student learning. A number of workgroups have been formed that advance outcomes assessment at the department and program level, most notably with regard to major revision in our general education program and first-year offerings. The Center for Instructional Innovation, which is charged with the primary responsibility for faculty development in student assessment, has expanded its role in helping faculty craft meaningful assessment strategies as part of their professional development opportunities here at Western Washington University. The institutional cultures within academic departments and programs have made substantial change with regard to assessment practices. The evidence provided in this progress report documents the many ways student assessment of learning and program assessment for continuous improvement are now well established and part of the institutional culture at Western Washington University.
REFERENCES


Appendix A:
Levels of Implementation template for assessing the progress institutions, departments, and academic programs achieve in developing their assessment outcomes of student learning

Levels of Implementation and the Patterns of Characteristics
Analysis Worksheet

Where would you place your institution, division, department, or academic unit (circle focus of your evaluation) on the continuum of assessment program implementation? Using the Patterns of Characteristics as your reference, circle your response for each Pattern of Characteristics and give your reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Level One</th>
<th>Level Two</th>
<th>Level Three</th>
<th>Evidence / Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Institutional Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Collective / Shared Values</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Mission</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Shared Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Faculty</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Administration and Board</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Students</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Institutional Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Resources</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Structures</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>4 5 6</td>
<td>7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Efficiency of Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B:

Survey form for the outcomes assessment of student learning progress at Western Washington University: “Program Assessment Plan Survey.”

January, 2005

In a short three years (2008) Western will again go through its ten-year Accreditation process. At that time accreditors and evaluators will be expecting to find in place mature processes for assessing student learning outcomes, and specific evidence that outcomes data are regularly used for course and program improvement. It is incumbent upon each program faculty to have implemented outcomes assessment practices that meet these accreditation expectations by documenting that graduates of every program have met the knowledge and skills objectives of the program, and how learning outcomes data is regularly used for program improvement.

This survey is designed to alert program faculty to these requirements and to determine the maturity of their assessment practices relative to accreditation expectations. The following definitions taken from Middle States Commission on Higher Education provide an instructive yardstick:

The Planning stage (minimal acceptable stage in the 1998 review) is characterized by tentativeness and uncertainty; mission and goals are not clearly defined; program learning objectives are not clearly defined and may not be congruent with goals; outcomes measures are not good estimators of program objectives; assessment data are being collected or analyzed only sporadically; classroom assessment procedures are not congruent with stated program goals; or collected data has either not been analyzed or results have not applied for program improvement.

The Emerging stage is characterized by familiarity, growing confidence, and growing commitment to assessment; faculty members are increasingly engaged in collecting and applying assessment data; assessment results are increasingly used in decisions about course sequencing, faculty allocations, teaching methods, program curricula, choice of instructional resources, planning and budgeting, and program improvement; and faculty are increasingly engaged in an ongoing conversation about program improvement based on assessment findings.

The Maturing stage (minimal acceptable stage for the 2008 review) is characterized by: continued development and integration of the processes of the "emerging" level, the increasingly important role of student learning and teaching excellence in defining program effectiveness and guiding program changes, and the full engagement of faculty in an active "culture of evidence" dedicated to improving student learning, performance, involvement, and achievement.
Western's goal is for all academic program assessment plans to evolve to the "maturing" stage before 2008. Please answer the following questions about the state of development of learning outcomes assessment in each of your programs by circling or filling in the appropriate response. (Please provide a separate response set for each degree program.)

1. Department and program

1a. Please enter your name or the name of an appropriate contact person in your unit for assessment-related topics.

2. Does your department or program assessment plan currently have the following features?
   (Yes – No)
   a. A formal statement of program mission and related learning goals?
   b. Formally stated learning objectives for each learning goal?
   c. Measurable learning outcomes defined for assessment of key learning objectives?
   d. Procedures in place for using outcomes data for program improvement?
   e. Systematic documentation of the use of outcomes measures for program improvement?

3. Are these features of your program assessment plan posted on your department website? (A recommendation from the Northwest Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities.)
   (Yes – No)

4. Which of the following descriptions best characterizes the current developmental status of your program assessment plan? (Choose one)
   a. Absence of learning objectives, methods of assessment, and plan for implementation;
   b. Learning objectives, methods of assessment, and procedures for implementation are partially developed (Planning stage);
   c. Learning objectives, methods of assessment, and procedures for implementation are developed (Emerging stage);
   d. Clearly stated objectives, reasonable methods of assessment, and a manageable timeline are well developed and ongoing (Maturing stage).

5. Which of the following descriptions best characterizes the current implementation level of your program assessment plan? (Choose one)
   a. No implementation of assessment activities;
   b. Some implementation of minimal assessment activities;
   c. Implementation of several assessment activities to assess multiple learning
   d. Implementation of a variety of assessment activities to assess the most important learning goals.
6. Which of the following descriptions best characterizes the current outcomes analysis level of your program assessment plan? (Choose one)

a. No analysis of student outcomes;
b. Some analysis of student outcomes for some learning goals;
c. Some analysis of student outcomes for most learning goals;
d. Comprehensive analysis of the most important learning goals.

7. Which of the following descriptions best characterizes the current action/response level of your program assessment plan? (Choose one)

a. No action or response identified or implemented;
b. Response or action identified but implemented for few learning outcomes;
c. Response or action identified and implemented for many learning outcomes;
d. Response or action demonstrates ongoing application of assessment data for improvement of the program.

8. Western graduates must develop skills and knowledge in a number of across-the-curriculum general abilities, as well as in the more specific developmental skills and abilities of each major. Please indicate with a checkmark which, if any, of the following general abilities you are currently assessing in your courses and programs, and at what level. (Check all that apply).

(Lower division - Upper division - Graduate program)

a. Oral communication
b. Working cooperatively in group
c. Problem solving
d. Information technology literacy
e. Writing ability
f. Critical thinking
g. Quantitative/ symbolic reasoning
h. Ethics/ valuing in decision making

9. Please indicate with a checkmark any of the following types of student learning outcomes you are currently using for program evaluation and improvement, and at what level. (Check all that apply).

(Lower division - Upper division - Graduate program)

a. Basic skills, tools, or content mastery
b. Advanced skills, tools, or content mastery
c. Integrative skills across courses or fields
d. Familiarity with relevant literature
e. Demonstration/application of skills in internship or capstone project
f. Other (Please specify below)

9a. Other outcomes used:
10. "Assessment of student learning" involves gathering data on student learning not just to assign student grades, but in particular to measure, make inferences about, and improve program effectiveness. How often does your program use the following *direct* measurement tools to assess course or program effectiveness?

(Frequently - Occasionally - Seldom – Never)

a. Portfolio reviews
b. Locally developed tests
c. Standardized tests
d. Senior theses or capstone projects
e. Presentations or performances
f. Reflective writing
g. Professional or licensure exams
h. Research projects
i. Other (Please specify below)

10a. Other direct measures:

11. Program effectiveness can also be assessed by indirect measurement, such as surveys, student self-evaluations, focus groups, and so forth. How often does your department or program use any of the following *indirect* assessment tools to gather information about the effectiveness or value of particular courses, programs, course sequencing, or student learning?

(Frequently - Occasionally - Seldom - Never)

a. Student self-evaluation
b. Student or alumni surveys
c. Outside agency reviews
d. Internal program reviews
e. Student evaluations of teaching
f. Faculty surveys
g. Placement data
h. Employer feedback
i. Program advisory groups
j. Other (please specify below)

11a. Other indirect measures:

12. Please briefly describe three to five specific examples of how your department or office has used outcomes assessment information (including program reviews) to implement program changes in the last five years.
APPENDIX C:

Purposes of Western Washington University’s General Education Curriculum

Graduates of WWU must be prepared to face a complex, rapidly changing world. In keeping with the University’s mission statement, general education prepares students to be informed and effective participants in that world, as educated private persons, as citizens, and as employees and employers. Western’s General Education Program is designed to promote:

- Immediate engagement by students in the intellectual life of the university;
- Acquisition of an intellectual foundation in the liberal arts and sciences;
- Opportunities for exploration of various disciplines;
- Opportunities for engagement in critical inquiry and reflective learning;
- Students’ ability to view issues from multiple perspectives and think in integrative ways; and
- Development of academic competencies and perspectives that give students the ability to:
  1. Analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms;
  2. Analyze and interpret information from varied sources, including print and visual media;
  3. Use quantitative and scientific reasoning to frame and solve problems;
  4. Identify and analyze complex problems;
  5. Apply tools of technology, with an understanding of their uses and limitations;
  6. Explore, imagine, and create;
  7. Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of participating in, and contributing as a citizen in, a diverse society;
  8. Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities;
  9. Work collaboratively and manage projects to effective completion;
  10. Reflect on one’s own work and on the ethical dimensions of academic pursuits; and
  11. Understand and assess the impacts of interactions among the individual, society and the environment.