Summary of Current Academic Assessment
January 2011

During the fall 2010 semester the members of the Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness Committee surveyed the department chairs and program directors of all the majors at the College as well as the directors of Interdisciplinary minors asking them to provide information on whether their departments/programs were engaged in assessment of their majors/programs and, if so, to describe the assessment that is being done. A total of 38 major departments or programs were contacted as well as the directors of 29 Interdisciplinary minors. The committee members were clear in assuring all chairs and program directors that their responses would be reported anonymously and that no department or program would be penalized if they are not currently engaged in program assessment. The following is a general summary of the responses we received.

Assessment of Majors:

Number of major department chairs/program directors contacted\(^i\) – 38
Number of department chairs/program directors who responded – 32

Questions that were asked:

1. Is your department/program currently engaged in assessment of the major?
   a. Yes – 15
   b. No – 13
   c. Sort of – 4

2. Who in your department/program is responsible for assessment?\(^ii\)
   a. Chair/program director – 7\(^iii\)
   b. Department committee – 12
   c. Department faculty as a whole – 2

3. What is the goal of objective of assessment for your department/program?

   The primary answer to this question was that departments use assessment to help determine the areas of strength in their major(s) as well as areas that need improvement. Additional goals include whether or not their students are prepared for acceptance to graduate programs and/or professional careers in the discipline.

4. Briefly describe the department’s assessment plan.

   Answers varied: several departments indicated that assessment is informal and is based on student comments/complaints about courses or the program; some departments base assessment on public display or performance of their majors and the work the majors produce; the majority of departments have some way of collecting and analyzing objective measures of assessment such as test questions designed to reflect specific student learning outcomes identified by the department, analysis of written work, and/or success rates of majors who pass standardized tests such as CHES, BOC, PRAXIS II and external exit proficiency exams.
5. What type of data is collected for assessment?

Answers varied with common answers including: senior surveys, exit interviews with graduating seniors, and random samples of student work from specific courses (often the capstone course) in the major. Very few departments indicated that they assess student work at various points in the major, usually assessment is done as students finish the major.

6. Is your department/program assessing courses as they relate to General Education?

Only two departments responded yes to this question. All other departments indicated that assessment is directed toward the major although several departments that provide the majority of General Education courses acknowledged that their assessment, by default, included General Education. iv

7. Who sees the analysis of the data? How is this information used by the department/program?

Almost all departments responded that the data is shared with the faculty of the department. Only three responses indicated that data was not automatically shared with the faculty.

8. If your department is not currently engaged in assessment, when was the last time assessment was done?

Again, answers varied, but most departments that are not engaged in assessment have not done any formal assessment in 4-8 years.

Assessment of Interdisciplinary Minors:

Only Interdisciplinary minor is currently engaged in any formal assessment. The directors of all other Interdisciplinary minors indicated the only real assessment that has been done is to determine whether there is a need for a director of the program, whether there is sufficient student interest in the program to support a major, and courses which should be added or deleted from the minor. Several directors indicated they are interested in learning how they might better assess their programs and would welcome suggestions or guidance.

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iv None of the responses indicated that any assessment currently taking place is focused on the six learning outcomes approved by the Faculty Senate three years ago.