Editor's notes: Early in 1988 Academic Affairs proposed, and the faculty approved, the establishment of an Assessment Planning Committee. Its charge was to "gather all the pertinent information concerning assessment in higher education, to become familiar with the issues and problems of assessment, and to present in a report its findings and recommendations for the next step in the development of an assessment plan for the College. The committee will complete its work by January, 1989" (from Faculty Minutes, February 8, 1988). This issue directs most of its attention to the CHE-mandated "Assessment of Student Outcomes" package which will affect all the public universities and colleges in the state.

ASSESSMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE--Interview with Professor Robert Fowler

[Editor's Note: Dr. Festa appointed Dr. Robert Fowler (Education), to chair the committee, which consists of some 16 persons, six of whom were elected at large by the faculty at that February meeting.]

Ed. Readers probably have a range of knowledge about this committee and its work. Maybe we should start from scratch. What is the committee doing?

RF: The committee is attempting to see how we as an institution can best respond to several mandates regarding institutional effectiveness. The first mandate is from the professional community, which predates any CHE or legislative mandate. The professional mandate is to look at institutional effectiveness in general, and see how those measures relate back to the planning process.

Ed. So professionals in the field of higher education have been thinking about ways to measure the effectiveness of the institution for some time. The committee has been engaged in that exercise?

RF: A year ago this past January there was a conference sponsored by the now defunct Charleston Higher Education Consortium that trained several college personnel in exactly that. In October, I attended the initial meeting of the South Carolina Higher Education Assessment Network (SCHEN) at Winthrop College (Winthrop has a FIPSE grant to work on assessment).

Ed. What are the other mandates?

RF: The second mandate comes from SACS, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools--our accrediting body. It has established criteria that are more stringent now for determining institutional effectiveness than the criteria were when we were last accredited. The Federal government has indicated that the recognized accrediting agencies must have assessment of student outcomes as part of their accreditation process. Finally, the state of South Carolina, with the "Cutting Edge" legislation, requires CHE to establish what we are calling assessment criteria. In most instances, CHE guidelines parallel the SACS guidelines. There are some exceptions.

Ed. We have mentioned institutional effectiveness several times. What is it?

RF: What do we expect students to be able to do when they matriculate? How are they different human beings from when they entered? Every service and program on campus is affected by these mandates. From the standpoint of the classroom, examples include basic skills, general education, and skills in the major, for example. Student services would include adequacy of dorm living space, counseling, general atmosphere of the college community, and the like. Still other values are included, such as the students' esthetic values, philosophy of life, and knowledge of different cultures and communities.

Ed. It seems to me that each school has to have a different plan?

RF: Yes. For example, in the last example mentioned, for us, Spoleto may have a significant impact because of the way Charleston receives the festival. Students can take Maymester specialty courses, and on and on. CHE's official document acknowledges that each institution is unique; they cannot transport a process or a yardstick from one campus to another.

Ed. Is that good?

RF: Certainly. We submit a plan for assessing the College. In that plan we outline the data we wish to gather, the ways in which we will measure and obtain those data, and a timetable consistent with CHE's timetable. CHE will comment only if it believes that the plan needs improvement or a greater degree of specificity.

Ed. Those who have been paying attention are concerned that the plan will call for massive standardized testing, which would lead to "teaching to the test"--a criticism of some about the impact of the Education Improvement Act passed in 1984 for secondary and elementary education.

RF: Nothing can be further from the truth. First of all, the plan requires a multi-variate measurement scheme for all factors of the College. Suppose that we talk about seniors and assessing how well they have done with their discipline. For starters, no academic department can rely on one and only one measure to show student knowledge of the discipline. A variety of measures must be employed. Fine Arts may use juried portfolios as one measure of success in studio art, while employing other locally developed measures to show that graduates have facility with the major curriculum. Second, the way CHE has worked out their guidelines, it should be impossible to compare campuses. The fear at one time was that CHE would require all campuses to administer standardized tests. That might be bad news for the rest of the state's schools which would be compared unfavorably to us. Seriously, there are lots of different ways to measure the effectiveness of a department's curriculum. This is a decentralized effort in some sense. Departments will have to think through this process and develop their own yardsticks. The committee is here in part to guide and to serve as a resource to make it all a bit easier.

continued next page
Ed. How is the committee prepared to do that?
RF: Three subcommittees are functioning now to assist all college departments, not just the academic departments. They are: basic skills, majors, and general education. In addition to that, the College's participation in the SCHEAN will enable us to gather even more materials to make available.
Ed. Give us an idea about what is to be done by what year?
RF: The implementation of this process is going to work in stages. A few preliminaries must be set up by 1989-90. The most difficult ones for faculty, general education, and majors, must be set up by 1991-2. There is a list, but that is a general answer.
Ed. Then we don't really have to worry about any of this now?
RF: CHE stated, in part, "It is strongly urged that institutions being preparing early to implement assessment areas that are listed in [1990-2]. For example, experience would indicate that colleges and universities cannot plan for and assess all academic majors effectively in one year." So this will take more time than it appears.
Ed. OK. What about departmental autonomy to set up its plan?
RF: Assessment of majors is probably one of the easiest types of plans and one with which the public is least concerned. The hard ones are basic skills and general education requirements. We have to set up a plan to measure student attainment of those skills and tools. But this is not an assessment of faculty and students. It is assessment for students. At all times our measures are in the aggregate; nothing will be done to identify particular faculty members.
Ed. The committee was supposed to be done last January. A report was to be completed to the faculty and to Dr. Festa. I take it that things are more complicated than originally envisioned?
RF: We were waiting on CHE's guidelines, which were not finalized until February. How the College's commitment will work is this: Fred Daniels will serve as institutional coordinator for collection of data and reports; I will continue to serve as chair of the committee, which will coordinate for academic measures (departments, basic skills, and general education). It is interesting. There are 18 criteria. Most of the work of the College rests with two of those criteria. That is because we have a lot of data which can serve many of the 18 criteria; all we have to do is coordinate those data to match the criteria. But for departments, basic skills, and general education, that process is more difficult.
Ed. OK. Suppose that I am the chair of the Medieval Folklore department. What should I do first?
RF: The majors subcommittee will contact you and encourage you to do several things. [Editor's note: as this column was being prepared, department chairs received notification and preliminary timetables from Dr. Hugh Haysworth, the chair of the majors subcommittee. Excerpts from his memo appear on the next page of this issue.] One will be to strongly urge that a department member or committee be formed as a contact person/group for assessment. At that point, the committee can obtain resources and technical assistance through SCHEAN and elsewhere.
Ed. So this committee is going to continue to be in existence, what, for at least two more years?
RF: Yes. By that time we will have a fairly clear idea of what we will be doing on a continuous basis.
Ed. So, contrary to what I personally thought a year and a half ago, this notion of assessment isn't just a flash in the pan.
RF: Assessment is here to stay. There is even going to be an international conference in England some time this summer. Eventually, assessment of student outcomes will be perceived as a logical and necessary part of the planning process. In several states, assessment of student outcomes in higher education has resulted in many positive changes. The ultimate beneficiaries have been students and faculty. And, finally, as I heard one prominent person in the area say, "Assessment is a process which should be intellectually interesting to the faculty."

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**On a Lighter Note**

--1% of Americans read the Bible more than once a day
--5% of Americans go to McDonald's each day
--10% of American truck drivers are women
--15% of American married men say they do most of the cooking in the household
--20% of Americans would rather have a tooth pulled than take a car in for repairs
--25% of American banana eaters eat less than one quarter of a banana at each sitting
--30% of Americans smoke cigarettes
--35% of Americans go out for dinner once in an average week
--42% of Americans cannot name a country near the Pacific Ocean
--44% of Americans live in states with populations of more than 10 million
--50% of American men are less than 5’9" tall
--57% of American cheese is American cheese
--60% of Americans do not spend a lot of time on their personal appearance
--64% of Americans live in the state in which they were born
--70% of Americans own running shoes but don’t run
--73% of Americans have had a headache in the last year
--80% of American dog owners give their dogs table scraps

*continued on page four, column two*
Assessment of Majors Memo
[Editor's note: The following memo, excerpted, was sent to all academic department chairs.]

From: Hugh Haysworth, Subcommittee on Majors
Re: Assessment of Majors

CHE has developed Guidelines for Institutional Effectiveness which is intended to be consistent with the SACS Criteria for Accreditation. A copy of this seven page document, as well as other documents relating to assessment, are available through the Office of Academic Affairs (editor's note: a copy is also available through my office). This document includes 18 components which must be addressed in a report the College must submit in January of next year. . . [E]ach department must develop its own procedures for assessing the major (and graduate program, if applicable). . . [M]inors will not be included.

. . . Actual assessment of the Majors component must be implemented for the 1991-92 academic year.

With regard to the majors component of the plan for assessment, the immediate role of the academic departments is to develop a plan for assessment, which satisfies the guidelines of the CHE, for each major and each graduate degree offered through the department. Departments are not expected to conform to a particular model of assessment. Consequently, some departments may choose to rely heavily on standardized testing, while others will find alternative ways of assessing the major. There are no rigid guidelines which bind you to a certain model of assessment and I anticipate no two departments will use the same process.

The role of the Assessment Committee will be to review each major plan to be sure if it adequately addresses the majors component; to provide assistance to departments, if requested; to edit individual departmental reports for style; and to assemble the individual plans into the above named report.

. . . A formal calendar should be ready next month. . . . Members of the subcommittee on majors are available to offer assistance, as requested. In addition, material on assessment is being collected in the Office of Academic Affairs, for your reference. . . [I]nformation on ETS Major Field Achievement Tests, which may be of interest to many of you [are being ordered]. The tests are available for 14 majors offered at the College.

Subcommittee members: Mary Boyd (Psychology), Rose Hamm (Honor), Sam Hines (Academic Affairs), Bill Lintzstrom (Undergraduate Studies), Hugh Haysworth (Math).

---College of Charleston Science Research Poster Session will be held on Friday, April 21st, from 1 to 5 pm in the Science Center. A reception will commence at 4. Research by faculty and students in the sciences will be on display.

Communications Received and other business

--Seven state legislators wrote in reply to my letters regarding the Optional Retirement Program; one phoned. All were receptive to the letter. In addition, I received two letters from chairs of Faculty Senates at USC and at MUSC. Both were eager to obtain further information on that issue.

--The Board of Trustees meets April 11-12, with the following schedule:

2:00 Tuesday, April 11: Committee Meetings
Budget and Finance: Faculty Cafeteria Rm.
Student Affairs and Athletics: SSC 410
Academic Affairs: Maybank Conf. Rm.
Buildings & Facilities: Randolph 3d Floor Conf. Rm.

9:30 Wednesday, April 12: Board Meeting
President's Conference Room

Agenda

Minutes from previous meeting
President's Report
Committee Reports
A. Buildings and Facilities
B. Student Affairs and Athletics
C. Academic Affairs
1. Enrollment
2. Recommendation to modify faculty evaluation process
D. Budget and Finance
E. Executive Committee
Institutional Planning Document
Old Business
New Business
Executive Session
Adjournment

--The Board Meetings are all public meetings with the exception of the "executive session" part of the main meeting. Faculty are encouraged to attend any session they choose.

--A brief ceremony on Tuesday, April 11th, will open the John Rivers Communications Museum. The event will be at 3:30 pm at 58 George Street.

--The next two Board of Trustees meetings will be on July 11-12 and on September 12-13.

--The Avery Institute will honor Professor Eugene C. Hunt on Friday, April 9th, at 5 pm in the Stern Center Ballroom. Professor Hunt will be retiring after the close of the semester.

--The last Faculty Meeting of the term will be on May 8th. Business includes approving tentatively the degree list for May.

thanx to rf, hh, rh, bc, th, twp, mb, and ecm
Faculty are critical of academic administration. Two-thirds rated their administrations only "poor" or "fair" in a 1985 Carnegie Foundation survey. This attitude did not reflect indiscriminate discontent; 90 percent affirmed their institution as a very or fairly "good place for me," and a majority were "more enthusiastic about my work than when I began." From the faculty point of view, the problem appears to lie less with broad institutional policy than with a loss of control over decisions that impinge on their immediate professional environment. A case in point is the response of many administrators to demands for enhanced public accountability through assessment of undergraduate learning.

Administrators are acquiescing in the demand for new forms of assessment more swiftly than many faculty yet realize. The latest Campus News survey found that 55 percent of responding institutions have "assessment procedures underway," and 74 percent believe that "some form of assessment is likely to be introduced in the next few years." More than half of the administration respondents believe that "student assessment will significantly improve undergraduate education"; two-thirds affirm that "most faculty would support the development of assessment procedures."

This hasty acquiescence to external demands and casual assumption of faculty support is ideologically expressed in a current essay on "strategic" management of higher education which defines strategic as adaptation to the external pressures affecting the institution rather than a long-term commitment to advancing institutional values. Yet it is precisely this idea of strategy--that is, opportunistic adaptation to external events by sacrificing fundamental priorities--which has led to the debasement of undergraduate education and consequent calls for assessment.

Academic management responded to the fiscal and demographic constraints of the 1970s by increasing reliance upon part-time faculty (since 1970 the ratio of full- to part-time faculty has declined almost 50 percent, from 3.1:1 to 1.9:1) to teach less-prepared, part-time students (since 1970 the ration of full- to part-time students has declined 35 percent, from 2.10:1 to 1.37:1) an increasingly vocationalized curriculum. Now, when the critics question the consequences, administrators embrace outcomes assessment, rather than recognizing and correcting the sources of the decline.

Measurement of student performance will not in itself improve learning. In fact, it may inherently interfere with learning if standardized or intrusive measures shape teaching and curriculum. Administrators are not blind to these problems. The Campus Trends survey reports that 62 percent of respondents thought "use of nationally standardized tests for purposes of student assessment risks distorting the educational process." Yet 69 percent affirmed that "student assessment should be linked to institutional planning and budgeting."

The use of student assessment for budgeting and program accountability is precisely where the danger lies. It fosters a system in which quantitative measures overwhelm less precise qualitative measures. Our system already incorporates genuine, faculty-based student assessment. The danger of new assessment schemes is that they promise accountability through simple measurement of complex realities. Elaboration of existing measures, from basic skills tests to capstone essays or portfolios, may enhance academic quality--but only if the academic tasks of selecting, evaluating, and responding to assessment remain faculty responsibilities. In the current political climate, however, assessment will be linked to support and funding. Once this premise is introduced, faculty participation is likely to dwindle in the face of pressure to design measures acceptable to nonprofessional agencies rather than to the disciplinary colleagues and accrediting bodies that currently protect standards.

Assessment for accountability inherently implies "teaching to the test." The support of such accountability mechanisms by academic administrators is one more step in their metamorphosis from stewards to managers. The consequent diminution of the faculty's opportunity to exercise professional judgment would be one more step in their metamorphosis from professors to teaching assistants. Undergraduate education does not need more teaching assistants; it needs more full-time faculty teaching full-time students in a fully professional manner. Undergraduate education does not need managers; it needs stewards.

Notes
4. Faculty and student ratios derived from Digest of Education Statistics, 1987, CES, OERI, 122, 158.

lighter note, continued
--86% of American men use deodorant
--87% of Americans prefer not to work around people who don't use deodorant
--96% of American schoolchildren recognize Ronald McDonald, second only in recognition to Santa Claus