



ASK: Assessment Skills & Knowledge - Tools You Can Use

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UNCG OFFICE OF
ACADEMIC
ASSESSMENT

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Some Things Never Change

Many governmental and business institutions are demanding that colleges and universities demonstrate their student learning outcomes. Citing the rapid changes in American society and the world, there is the perception that higher education is not meeting the needs of a new and changing world. We are being asked not only to demonstrate what we teach but also to provide evidence of the effectiveness of how we teach our students.

Nearly 180 years ago, the faculty at Yale University were experiencing a similar problem. Under the pressures of the Industrial Revolution, many were demanding that higher education make sweeping changes in what students were taught. In the Yale Report of 1828, the faculty articulated the purposes and products of a college education. Although higher education has significantly changed since 1828 their description of the purposes and products of a college education continues to resonate to this day. In this document they discussed the purpose of a college or university, and responded to the question that still plagues many today: "What are the best modes of instruction to encourage the growth and development of our students?" The following excerpt eloquently describes what many of us are trying to accomplish in our classrooms:

"The two great points to be gained in intel-

lectual culture, are the discipline and the furniture of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important of the two. A commanding object, therefore, in a collegiate course, should be, to call into daily and vigorous exercise the faculties of the student. Those branches of study should be prescribed, and those modes of instruction adopted, which are best calculated to teach the art of fixing the attention, directing the train of thought, analyzing a subject proposed for investigation; following, with accurate discrimination, the course of argument; balancing nicely the evidence presented to the judgment; awakening, elevating, and controlling the imagination; arranging, with skill, the treasures which memory gathers; rousing and guiding the powers of genius. All this is not to be effected by a light and by a light and hasty course of study; by reading a few books, hearing a few lectures, and spending some months at a literary institution. The habits of thinking are to be formed, by long continued and close application. The mines of science must be penetrated far below the surface, before they will disclose their treasures. If a dexterous performance of the manual operations, in many of the mechanical arts, requires an apprenticeship, with diligent attention for years; much more does the training of the powers of the mind demand vigorous, and steady, and systematic effort."

The rest of the Report is available online at <http://collegiatewav.org/reading/yale-report-1828/>

WEAVE Workshops

We will offer **WEAVE Introduction, Building Objectives & Linking Measures & Objectives** on an ongoing basis. To check for session dates and to register, go to [our home page](#) and under **Workshops**, click on **WEAVE Workshops Registration**.

Assessment Resources to Enhance Your Assessment Program



More Web Help

Our website - <http://assessment.uncg.edu>, has a list of web resources for UNCG's academic departments under *Sample Assessment Plans by Department* on the home page. Also, check out *Sample Rubrics by Major*. If your program does not have links, please know that some areas are under construction.



General Assessment

Bemidji State University Guidelines: Academic Program Review & Assessment of Student Learner Outcomes, covers the assessment process step by step and even provides contact information if you need further assistance.

Gen Ed by Department

John Carroll University's Planning and Assessment site provides links to university and organizational websites with assessment plans by academic department.

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The following publications from the American Association of Colleges and Universities are available in our office:

General Education: A Self-Study Guide for Review and Assessment

Levels of Assessment: From the Student to the Institution

Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Student Achievement in College

Critical Thinking & Rubrics

Critical thinking and communication assessment are often quite complex. Rubrics help to clarify what you are trying to assess. Listed below are sources for helpful rubrics.

From PARE online (Practical Assessment, Research, & Evaluation), [What's Still Wrong with Rubrics?](#) explores the need for consistency of terms when developing or adapting a rubric

Texas Women's University's [Master Rubric to Evaluate Academic Assessment Plans](#) - constructed with the TaskStream assessment management program.

[Skidmore College Assessment Rubric](#) used to summarize a department's or program's academic assessment plan and helps assess what is most important to that department or program.

[UNLV Academic Assessment Web Resources](#) Scroll down to *Resources for Rubric Development*.

[Bismarck State College Assessment Home Page](#) provides PTA scales and rubrics

Another source from PARE Online, [a rubric for scoring postsecondary academic skills](#).

From the University of Wisconsin Colleges (freshman and sophomore campuses), [a communication skills assessment rubric](#).

[The Center for Teaching and Faculty Development web site](#) at San Francisco State University provides links and information on assessment, assessment and scoring rubrics, and evaluation guides

[The Winona State University Assessment & Research website](#) provides links to rubrics for a wide variety of programs, A through W (no Z—sorry!)

What if we didn't do assessment?

Stephen Zerwas, Director

We should be doing assessment simply because it is the right thing to do since it is an important part of our scholarship activities. But what would happen if we chose not to perform assessment? A number of people in expressing disagreement with the need to perform assessment activities have suggested that a solution could be to simply refuse to meet accreditation requirements. After all, SACS is a voluntary organization and so we could simply volunteer not to participate. Although I believe these suggestions were not completely serious, it does provide an opportunity to discuss the consequences of not doing assessment and not doing assessment well.

Initially, there would be no direct change on our activities and the demands placed upon us. People might even be happier since they could eliminate assessment from their list of responsibilities. We would continue unhindered to teach classes, perform research and provide service activities. It might cause some friction within the campus because some programs are required to perform assessment for their own accrediting agencies. The first indication would be when these programs would be unable to retain a positive accreditation status since they would not be able to provide some of the data they need. If all departments did not participate in assessment, we would still need to respond to the reactions of accrediting agencies. Most accrediting agencies would be faced with two options. The first would be probation. The second would be loss of accreditation.

In most cases accrediting bodies would respond initially by placing the institution on "probation". Usually the deficiencies in the program are articulated and the institution would be given a limited period of time in which to remedy the deficiencies or respond. Being placed on "probation" would prove problematic.

First, it would damage the perception of the quality of the institution with outside constituencies. Parents, prospective students, legislators, prospective faculty and alumni - essentially all of our stakeholders—would begin to ask for an explanation of what our probation status meant. An even worse scenario would be if we were not afforded an

opportunity to explain our probation status. Our ability to recruit and retain students, faculty and administrators would be impaired by the cloud of potential loss of accreditation.

Another area in which we might see a negative impact would be in our ability to attract funding for research and other scholarly activities. In competition with other institutions, we would be faced with the stigma of being on probation and would be forced to explain why our inability to meet accreditation requirements would not also indicate our inability to perform the functions described in grant and research requests.



Assuming that we were unable or unwilling to respond to the probation requirements, the next alternative would be the loss of our accreditation status. Here the impact would be immediate. Funding from private and governmental resources would be immediately curtailed. Students would be ineligible to receive federal financial aid. It is unlikely that the state legislature would be willing to assume responsibility for this loss of revenue. Even if students did wish to continue at UNCG,

their ability to use their degree for transfer or graduate schools would be in jeopardy. UNCG would not be able to compete for private state or federal financial support since accredited status is frequently a prerequisite for funding.

It is true that the focus of this discussion has been on the financial impact of accreditation status. It is apparent that the financial consequences would be catastrophic for all members of the university community. It is not possible in the limited space available to describe all or even most of the consequences of the loss of accreditation. Consider the personal and professional impact to you that would result from a change in our accreditation status. How would you feel if you were at an institution which had been placed on probation or lost its accreditation? Yes, it is true that accreditation is a voluntary activity just as receiving immunizations is voluntary. However, it might not be perceived as optional if the alternative was personal or institutional death. This is an institution of which we are justifiably proud. It should be worth our efforts to dem-



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Mission

Assessment is an integral part of ensuring the continual improvement of academic programs. The Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education and the Director of Academic Assessment seek to promote the scholarly practice of assessment at UNCG by:

- Consulting with academic departments to address assessment questions
- Reviewing assessment plans as part of the regular departmental review process
- Coordinating and facilitating assessment in general education
- Responding to accreditation requirements
- Providing support for special assessment projects

The More You Know

Opportunities to Enhance Your Assessment Skills & Knowledge

The website www.assessmentconferences.com lists many educational opportunities for those with an interest in student assessment.

[7th Annual Texas A & M Assessment Conference](#)

February 22-23, 2007
College Station, Texas
Building Assessment Capacity: Foundation to Fruition
Registration: \$175 before January 31

[AAC & U Network for Academic Renewal Conference](#)

March 1-3, 2007
Miami FL
General Education and Assessment—Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Learning
Registration: \$390 for members, \$490 for non-members through February 8

[ACPA-NASPA Conference](#)

March 31-April 4, 2007
Orlando, Florida
Our Power & Responsibility to Shape Education
Registration: \$350 for members, \$525 for non-members before January 31

[2007 NC State Undergraduate Assessment Symposium](#)

April 13-15, 2007
Cary, NC
Systematic, Systemic, and Sustainable Assessment: A Process of Inquiry
Registration: \$225 before March 10

