



PREFACE

Student Learning Assessment Plan

Original Proposal: December, 2005

As Revised: February 2006

AS APPROVED: MARCH 1, 2006

In crafting a student learning assessment plan for Frostburg State University, several goals remained uppermost in our minds:

- That developing an institutional understanding of student learning assessment is fundamental to the successful implementation of assessment as an integral component of teaching and learning;
- That any plan should present a “common language” for assessment;
- That student learning assessment benefits from continued and ongoing campus dialogue;
- That a key component to any assessment initiative is academic introspection; in other words, “What have we learned about our students through this process?”

Our goal for this proposal is to build the framework that will guide the University’s efforts in student learning assessment. This plan, therefore, presents

- Recommendations for a “common language” of assessment;
- An outline of methods to be used to facilitate the assessment process, and
- Recommendations for a Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group housed recognized by faculty governance.

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FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Student Learning Assessment Plan

REVISED as of February 28, 2006

APPROVED AS OF MARCH 1, 2006

I. Context

In its mission statement, Frostburg State University emphasizes the enhancement of student learning. Undergraduate Institutional Learning Goals have been formulated to provide a clear interpretation of the components of student learning at FSU. A comprehensive approach to student learning assessment contributes in a significant manner to the assurance of “the enhancement of student learning.”

II. Definition of Student Learning Assessment at Frostburg State University

At Frostburg State University, student learning assessment is defined as the systematic and ongoing process of collecting information about student learning for two distinct purposes: improving the teaching/learning relationship and providing data for the budgeting and resource allocation process. These purposes are achieved through a four-step process:

- Establish clear, measurable learning outcomes;
- Gather data on student performance using various measures;
- Analyze data to compare student performance to stated expectations;
- Use assessment results to inform decision-making in order to improve student learning and to allocate resources effectively and efficiently.

III. Student Learning Assessment: Definitions

Student learning assessment uses various terms. In order to facilitate the assessment process, the following definitions provide a “common language” for campus discussions and initiatives.

- A. Goals are overarching statements about desired achievements.
- B. Objectives are the specific actions to be accomplished to achieve a goal.
- C. Learning outcomes are the measurable products of instruction or exposure to new knowledge or skills.
- D. Formative assessments are conducted during the life of a major, course, or academic program with the purpose of providing feedback that can be used to modify, shape, or improve the major, course, or academic program.
- E. Summative assessments are conducted after a major, course, or academic program has concluded to make comparisons against a pre-determined standard of performance.
- F. Direct assessments directly evaluate student work; e.g., exams, papers, projects, musical performances, art exhibitions, etc., by requiring students to display their knowledge and skills in direct response to a set of guidelines or assignments.
- G. Indirect assessments are primarily reflective in nature and include self-reporting by students and alumni of their opinions and impressions of a program or course and their opinions on the value of their education in the development of their careers.

- H. Quantitative assessments rely on numerical scores or ratings.
- I. Qualitative assessments use descriptions or narratives, through field studies, logs, journals, etc., with an emphasis on the revealing of students' behavior and response.
- J. Course-imbedded assessments allow collection of data directly within the classroom through the use of a grading rubric that allow both the application of a grade for an assignment and a summative assessment of students' performance against established department and institutional learning goals.

IV. Goals and Objectives of Student Learning Assessment at Frostburg State University

- A. Goal #1: Engage in systematic assessment practices that provide useful and reasonably accurate information on student learning as related to the learning goals of the University.
 - 1. Objective: Implement both direct and indirect measures of assessment in order to increase the significance of assessment results.
 - 2. Objective: Ensure that assessments are cost-effective, yielding results appropriate in value to the amount of time and expense committed.
- B. Goal #2: Provide feedback on student learning in a systematic, organized manner.
 - 1. Objective: Prepare and distribute annual reports on assessment practices and results.
 - 2. Objective: Share results of assessment with both internal and external constituencies as appropriate (e.g., faculty, students, administration, accrediting agencies, alumni, etc.).
- C. Goal #3: Continually engage in self-analysis of the assessment program and make adjustments in a timely, thoughtful manner.
 - 1. Objective: Use assessment results as an integral component of institutional decisions regarding funding and resource allocation.
 - 2. Objective: Provide multiple opportunities to engage in campus dialogue about assessment and its purposes and value in order to develop a "common language" about assessment.

V. Institutional Methods of Student Learning Assessment

- A. See Appendix B for suggested timeline.
- B. See Appendix C for suggested timelines for departments/divisions.
- C. Timelines as presented can be modified and revised, based on the deliberations of the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group.

VI. Assessment of the Program of General Education

- A. General education assessment will use the same procedures and timeline as academic programs regarding the collection and dissemination of data.
- B. Coordination of the assessment of general education will lie within the purview of the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group, with the administrative support of the Assistant to the Provost.

C. The assessment of basic skills in general education will be maintained on a regular cycle. These basic skills include the following:

1. Written communication,
2. Oral communication,
3. Scientific reasoning,
4. Quantitative reasoning,
5. Information literacy,
6. Technology literacy,
7. Critical thinking.

VII. Student Learning Assessment and Institutional Improvement

The Chair of the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group will serve as a member of the Institutional Assessment Committee.

VIII. The Place of Student Learning Assessment in the Academic Program Review

- A. Student learning assessment and the academic program review, as mandated by the University System of Maryland Board of Regents, are linked because results of student learning assessments inform the academic program review. Therefore, assessment helps to increase the understanding of how academic programs are actually contributing to student learning, growth, and development.
- B. Frostburg State University recognizes the integral connection of program review and student learning assessment:
 1. Student learning assessment reflects the aggregate experiences of students and what these experiences, in turn, imply about programs and curricula;
 2. Student learning assessment helps program administrators to examine whether or not a specific curriculum makes sense in its entirety; i.e., whether or not students are receiving the types of learning that help the integration of learning from individual courses into a coherent whole.
- C. Academic program review documents will include specific expectations regarding program learning goals and assessments undertaken to assess student learning in response to both program and institutional student learning goals.

IX. Dissemination of Student Learning Assessment Information

- A. Because the facilitation and ongoing improvement of student learning is the primary goal of Frostburg State University, various audiences are interested in the results of student learning assessment and will be considered as information is analyzed and shared.
 1. Regional accrediting agencies, accrediting associations with disciplines, and state coordinating boards all have requirements for specific types of information at specific times.
 2. Future students and their parents have an interest in the academic performance of the University.

3. Current students want to know how well students are performing in particular programs.
 4. Graduate programs are interested in students' attainment of skills and proficiencies in specific areas.
 5. Employers, community leaders, alumni, and donors have an interest in the "intellectual capital" of the University.
- B. The University will produce assessment information that can be shared with various audiences in multiple ways, including project reports, themed reports, and Web-based compilations.

X. The Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group

- A. Student learning assessment activities and initiatives is under the direct purview of the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group, an entity reporting directly to the Provost as per the guidelines for advisory groups established in the charter of the Frostburg State University Faculty Senate.
- B. See Attachment A for the specific structure of the Advisory Group.

XI. Administrative Liaison

- A. The administrative liaison for student learning assessment is the Assistant to the Provost. Duties will include, but will not necessarily be limited to, the following:
1. Ensure that all assessment activities meet institutional expectations.
 2. Identify and recognize outstanding assessment activities.
 3. Maintain a repository of good assessment practices and resources.
 4. Chair the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group.
 5. Compile and submit, in October of each year, a comprehensive report that outlines department/division achievement for the assessment cycle just completed (see Appendix B for timeline).
 - a. Compile a status report in April of each year regarding implementation of improvements/resource allocation as a result of the previous year's student learning assessment results.
 - b. Maintain a systematic, ongoing approach to assessment throughout the undergraduate educational program.
 - c. Provide information needed to respond to inquiries from external reviewers and accrediting agencies.

Frostburg State University's Undergraduate Student Learning Assessment Plan draws from several excellent sources:

Other Universities: Towson University, University of Baltimore

Assessment Publications: *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (L. Suskie), *Assessment Clear and Simple* (B. Walvoord), *Assessment Essentials* (C. Palomba and T. Banta)

APPENDIX A

Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group

A. Membership

1. Faculty

- a. Three faculty with a special interest in and/or background in student learning assessment, appointed by the Provost
- b. One faculty member elected through Faculty Senate elections

2. Student and Educational Services

- a. One representative

3. Administrator

- a. Assistant to the Provost

B. Purpose

1. The purpose of the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group is to advise the Provost regarding issues of student learning assessment.
2. The Advisory Group will identify strategies to improve both student learning and the process of assessment of student learning.
3. Both sets of recommendations will contribute to the University's process of budget development and resource allocation.
4. Specific tasks are assigned to the Advisory Group.
 - a. Promulgate and maintain a common language of assessment.
 - b. Review existing assessment practices and measures, monitor their effectiveness, and suggest modification as appropriate.
 - c. Recommend guidelines and policies for all aspects of student learning assessment activities.
 - d. Coordinate assessment of the general education program.
 - e. Review the bi-annual assessment reports of programs and provide feedback.
 - f. Recommend actions to enhance assessment and student learning.
 - g. Recommend actions for consideration in budgeting and resource allocation.
 - h. Monitor the quality of the assessment of student learning that is embedded in campus structures and processes and make recommendations for improvements as necessary.
 - i. Establish and revise as necessary the appropriate protocol for reporting assessment activities.
5. Procedures
 - a. The Advisory Group, at its discretion, may invite additional individuals with particular expertise to participate in its deliberations.
 - b. The Advisory Group shall have two officers: A Chair and a Secretary. The Chair, the Assistant to the Provost, will be a non-voting member of the Advisory Group. The Secretary will be elected by members of the Advisory Group.

- c. The Advisory Group will meet once each month during the academic year. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair of the Advisory Group.
- d. A simple majority of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum. Recommendations of the Advisory Group must be approved by a majority of the members present and voting.

APPENDIX B

Student Learning Assessment Timeline (based on fiscal year)

This timeline is presented as a suggested approach to monitoring the progress of student learning assessment efforts at Frostburg State University. The Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group will have full authority to modify as necessary and appropriate (e.g., in response to accreditation timetables).

Student learning assessment is an ongoing process. This timeline identifies specific markers and deadlines regarding collection, review, and dissemination of assessment information.

Please note: "Department/division," as nomenclature to identify the academic unit, should also be interpreted to include (a) those interdisciplinary programs which are shared by two or more academic units and that have a coordinator and (b) the Lewis J. Ort Library.

This timeline is predicated on a two and one-half-year assessment cycle; i.e., departments/divisions will report the results of their assessment efforts every two years, using a format that builds upon the existing schedule of five-year academic program review. By employing such a cycle, departments/divisions will be able to assess their offerings, analyze the results, and implement change, thus reporting on the completion of an entire assessment cycle.

The two and one-half-year cycle applies to the reporting to University administration of assessment activities and results. Assessment information will be shared on an ongoing basis within the faculty of particular department/division and with the appropriate dean.

Under this assessment plan, a benchmarking report will be submitted in the fall of 2006 by ALL departments/divisions, and the first set of bi-annual reports will be submitted in September 2007. See item #7 for an overview, by department/division, of the assessment reporting schedule.

The reporting cycle is based on the established program review cycle.

1. July/August/September: Departments/divisions examine results of assessments completed in their areas during the previous academic year.
2. September: Results of assessment activities within each department/division are reported on an bi-annual basis in for the previously-completed academic year (including summer school).
 - a. Each department/division will submit its report using a standard template.
 - b. Each assessment report will receive a written response regarding content, goals, etc.
3. October: An annual assessment report is written by the administrative liaison for student learning assessment.
 - a. The report is distributed via hard-copy and website.
4. October: Assessment results are reviewed by the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group, the Institutional Assessment Committee, the Deans' Council, and the President's Cabinet.
 - a. This timing allows consideration within the existing budget and planning process, both for the immediately upcoming budget (to be presented to the Maryland Legislature in the following January for the following July, the beginning of the fiscal year) and for the budget two fiscal years' out.
5. May-June: Report, as compiled by the administrative liaison for student learning assessment, is submitted regarding actions taken in response to assessment results collected in September.

6. Individual departments/divisions will develop timelines and procedures to coincide with the collection of information on an established schedule as outlined below.
7. The following assessment cycle will be used for reporting of student learning assessment results by departments/divisions:

Spring 2006: Submittal of five-year program review, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accounting 2. Business Administration (including Bachelor's in Management, Marketing/Finance, and Health Science Administration, and MBA) 3. Computer Science 4. Dance 5. Economics 6. Education: Early Childhood/Elementary Education 7. Education: Elementary/Middle School Education 8. Education: Health and Physical Education 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Education: M.Ed. 10. Exercise and Sport Science 11. International Studies 12. Law and Society 13. Liberal Studies 14. Political Science 15. Sociology 16. Social Work

December 2006: Baseline report submitted by all departments/divisions that completed program review during years 2003-2004. The Library's cumulative accomplishments in assessment of information literacy will also be reported at this time.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Art and Design 2. Biology 3. Biology: Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology (Master's) 4. Biology: Wildlife/Fisheries (both Bachelor's and Master's) 5. Communication Studies 6. Counseling Psychology (Master's) 7. Earth Science 8. English 9. Environmental Analysis and Planning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Geography 11. History 12. Mass Communication 13. Music 14. Philosophy 15. Psychology 16. Social Science 17. Theatre 18. Lewis J. Ort Library

Spring 2007: Submittal of five-year program review, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Athletic Training 2. Chemistry 3. Computer Science (Bachelor's) 4. Interpretive Biology and Natural History 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mathematics 6. Physics 7. Urban and Regional Planning 8. Secondary Teaching (MAT)

December 2007: 2.5-year report submitted by all departments/divisions that completed program review in 2005.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern Foreign Languages 2. Human Performance (Master's) 3. Park and Recreation Resource Management (Master's) 4. Recreation and Parks Management 	

Spring 2008: Submittal of five-year program review, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Biology</i> 2. <i>Biology: Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology (Master's)</i> 3. <i>Biology: Wildlife/Fisheries (both Bachelor's and Master's)</i> 4. <i>Criminal Justice (BTPS)</i> 5. <i>Counseling Psychology (Master's)</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>English</i> 7. <i>Information Technology Management (BTPS)</i> 8. <i>History</i> 9. <i>Psychology</i> 10. <i>Social Science</i>

December 2008: 2.5-year report submitted by all departments/divisions that completed program review in 2006.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Accounting</i> 2. <i>Business Administration (including Bachelor's in Management, Marketing/Finance, and Health Science Administration, and MBA)</i> 3. <i>Computer Science</i> 4. <i>Dance</i> 5. <i>Economics</i> 6. <i>Education: Early Childhood/Elementary Education</i> 7. <i>Education: Elementary/Middle School Education</i> 8. <i>Education: Health and Physical Education</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. <i>Education: M.Ed.</i> 10. <i>Exercise and Sport Science</i> 11. <i>International Studies</i> 12. <i>Law and Society</i> 13. <i>Liberal Studies</i> 14. <i>Political Science</i> 15. <i>Sociology</i> 16. <i>Social Work</i>

Spring 2009: Submittal of five-year program review, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Art and Design</i> 2. <i>Communication Studies</i> 3. <i>Earth Science</i> 4. <i>Environmental Analysis and Planning</i> 5. <i>Geography</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>Mass Communication</i> 7. <i>Music</i> 8. <i>Philosophy</i> 9. <i>Theatre</i> 10. <i>Library (2.5 year update)</i>

December 2009: 2.5-year report submitted by all departments/divisions that completed program review in 2007.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Athletic Training</i> 2. <i>Chemistry</i> 3. <i>Computer Science (Bachelor's)</i> 4. <i>Interpretive Biology and Natural History</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. <i>Mathematics</i> 6. <i>Physics</i> 7. <i>Urban and Regional Planning</i> 8. <i>Secondary Teaching (MAT)</i>

Spring 2010: Submittal of five-year program review materials, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Modern Foreign Languages</i> 2. <i>Human Performance (Master's)</i> 3. <i>Park and Recreation Resource Management (Master's)</i> 4. <i>Recreation and Parks Management</i> 	

December 2010: 2.5-year report submitted by all departments/divisions that completed program review in 2008.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Biology</i> 2. <i>Biology: Wildlife/Fisheries (both Bachelor's and Master's)</i> 3. <i>Biology: Applied Ecology and Conservation Biology (Master's)</i> 4. <i>Criminal Justice (BTPS)</i> 5. <i>Counseling Psychology (Master's)</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. <i>English</i> 7. <i>Information Technology Management (BTPS)</i> 8. <i>History</i> 9. <i>Psychology</i> 10. <i>Social Science</i> |
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Spring 2011: Submittal of five-year program review materials, reflecting increased focus on assessment of student learning.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Accounting</i> 2. <i>Business Administration (including Bachelor's in Management, Marketing/Finance, and Health Science Administration, and MBA)</i> 3. <i>Computer Science</i> 4. <i>Dance</i> 5. <i>Economics</i> 6. <i>Education: Early Childhood/Elementary Education</i> 7. <i>Education: Elementary/Middle School Education</i> 8. <i>Education: Health and Physical Education</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. <i>Education: M.Ed.</i> 10. <i>Exercise and Sport Science</i> 11. <i>International Studies</i> 12. <i>Law and Society</i> 13. <i>Liberal Studies</i> 14. <i>Political Science</i> 15. <i>Sociology</i> 16. <i>Social Work</i> |
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APPENDIX C

These suggested guidelines can be modified and revised as necessary and appropriate by the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group. They are presented here as an example of the type of consideration each department/division might give to its approach to assessment.

Suggestions for Department/Division Assessment Plans

- I. All undergraduate departments/divisions should have three to six learning goals that link clearly back to the Undergraduate Institutional Learning Goals.
 - a. There is no expectation that every department/division will develop goals to support every one of the Undergraduate Institutional Learning Goals. However, a clearly articulated linkage should exist regarding the connections between the Institutional Learning Goals, program goals, and individual course goals for student learning.
 - b. Said goals should be clearly evident in all department/division plans and course syllabi.
2. Each department/division will develop its own assessment plan.
 - a. Plans should show steps that ensure that all students in their respective programs have the opportunity to achieve each goal.
 - b. Plans should include the following components:
 - i) Department/division student learning goals (stated in clear, assessable terms);
 - ii) A statement of the relationship between department/division learning goals and Undergraduate Institutional Learning Goals.
 - iii) A timeline which shows the assessment cycle (i.e., what goals are assessed when).
 - iv) An explanation of the department/division assessment structure established for collecting and evaluating results (e.g., department/division assessment committee, specific faculty assignments as “assessment coordinator,” etc.).
 - c. Assessments of selected goals should be completed on a cycle as established by the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Group.
 - d. On each goal reported, the department/division should answer the following questions:
 - i) To what Undergraduate Institutional Learning Goal is this particular department/division goal linked?
 - ii) How does the program ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve this goal?
 - iii) What method/s is/are being used to assess this goal?
 - iv) What did the findings of the assessment reveal regarding student learning related to this goal?
 - v) How are the findings of the assessment being used in order to affect positively the future learning of students?