



HENDERSON
S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y

University Assessment Plan

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University Assessment Plan

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In March 2003, Henderson State University demonstrated a strong commitment to assessment through the establishment of the office of assessment and research. A director of assessment was hired and a budgetary commitment for assessment from the university was established for operations and travel. The university assessment team was formed in August 2003 in order to assist the director of assessment with the university-wide assessment process. During the summer 2003, the director of assessment drafted a broad University Assessment Plan which was adopted by the university assessment team. This plan was distributed to all faculty during the “Back to School” workshop in fall 2003.

The university assessment team has since developed a significantly more comprehensive University Assessment Plan, which underwent substantial revision during spring 2011. This document was developed by the director of assessment and the university assessment team. The document was used as a resource to guide faculty through the beginning of an assessment process. The current plan focuses on the use of benchmark data to address the goals of the university. The plan also takes into account the current university strategic plan. The assessment process has been a campus-wide movement which has centered on student learning and improvement. Increasingly, influential stakeholders, accrediting agencies, and other constituencies are focusing on assessment. Henderson State University must continue to foster an aggressive and efficient university-wide assessment program.

The assessment program at Henderson State University has made remarkable progress over the past eight years and there are still additional tasks to be accomplished. The TracDat system has offered a way for the faculty and staff to take ownership in the assessment process. The director of assessment and the university assessment team have worked diligently to communicate to all areas of the university about assessment and the progress each area has made. There are policies and procedures in place to assist in the assessment process and review. The administration has shown total commitment by providing the resources needed to purchase TracDat, SNAP, and iWebfolio as well as various training and process enhancement tools.

The academic and administrative departments have worked diligently to develop assessment plans and close the loop. There has been a true commitment to see Henderson successfully implement an assessment program over the past eight years.

Progress Update

The one area from the previous Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit that remains a continual challenge is student outcomes assessment. Henderson's administration has taken great strides toward addressing the substantial assessment needs at the university. In fact, in its current rendition, we believe that our campus culture of assessment and our assessment of student outcomes, is comparable to other institutions. The reasons for this are explained in the paragraphs that follow.

Henderson State University underwent its last comprehensive HLC visit November 12-14, 2001. At that time, the evaluation visiting team noted that it "found evidence that Henderson State University was in compliance with each of these [24 General Institutional Requirements] foundational principles for institutions of higher education." Further, the visiting team noted that each institution of higher education accredited by the HLC "must demonstrate that it fulfills five Criteria for Accreditation." Once it had finished its comprehensive visit at HSU, the visiting team concluded "that Henderson State University fulfills these five criteria." The visiting team recommendation was that the accreditation of HSU be continued through 2011/2012. However, the team further recommended that "a focused visit on assessment be conducted during the spring semester 2007."

The focused visit evaluation team reviewed the university's 2007 Assessment Plan, a wide variety of academic and administrative assessment plans, university assessment team minutes, the university assessment team handbook, the university undergraduate/graduate catalog(s), and other materials. Additionally, the HLC focused visit evaluation team spoke with members of the university community regarding the university's culture of assessment. Its final recommendation was "No Commission follow-up recommended," and so Henderson State University maintained its unblemished record with the HLC.

The university community has since continued its stellar work on assessment, building on input from the focused visit evaluation team and increased education pertaining to the latest developments on assessment. Each academic and administrative unit has now been asked to establish goals for itself, to link those goals to the larger unit goals (to college/school goals and academic affairs goals for academic programs, for instance) and to the university's goals; each unit has also been asked to establish outcomes/objectives from those goals, to relate those outcomes to specific courses in its curriculum (academic units only), and to establish multiple means of assessing those outcomes. Each unit either logs all of this directly into the TracDat system or submits materials to the assessment office, or sometimes both. Virtually every unit at the university has completed this portion of planning implementation, and nearly all have data/information resulting from the implementation of assessment plans. Units are using this information/data to make and document changes to their curricula, offerings, and services, and in some cases, to revise or add goals that the information indicates should be revisited or reformed in some way. All changes and improvements are logged into TracDat and monitored by the director of assessment, who regularly reports

this information to the university assessment team, which is composed of faculty and staff members from across most areas of the university.

An indication of the seriousness with which the HSU community takes assessment can be gleaned from the activities of the university assessment team over the 2009/2010 academic year. The first example of the commitment of the university assessment team and the HSU community is revealed in the fact that in late summer 2009 the university assessment team membership chose to begin to meet every two weeks all year. That is the level of dedication the university is applying to its assessment endeavors. Moreover, during spring and summer of 2009, the university assessment team collected the newly-updated assessment plans for each unit on campus, both academic and administrative. The university assessment team divided into working groups of two or three members each, and each group reviewed all plans over the summer and fall 2009. In brief, each working group looked at each plan to ensure that there was a succinct mission for each unit, that the mission produced goals, that outcomes reflected those goals, that the outcomes were connected to courses in the curriculum (academic units only), and that outcomes were assessed by at least two (if not more) different means. Further, the group made specific recommendations as to clarity of mission and difficulty of assessing certain outcomes. This analysis of each unit was logged into the assessment office's data system for review by future HLC visiting committee members. The university assessment team members then met to go over their findings for each academic and administrative unit; this occurred in fall 2009 and spring 2010. Finally, during spring 2010, members of the university assessment team, along with the director of assessment and (usually) the provost, met with the personnel of each academic and administrative unit at the university to discuss the university assessment team's analysis of its assessment plan. These meetings usually included at least two members of the university assessment team and most of the unit's faculty or staff. It might be interesting to note that the final unit meeting with the university assessment team was at 4:00 p.m. the last day of classes.

The regular review of assessment plans has continued into the 2010/2011 academic year. This year, for example, the university assessment team has begun the systematic review and revision of the University Assessment Plan, the University Assessment Team Handbook, and the Assessment Team Assessment Plan. This work will be completed by spring 2011. Another new initiative of the university assessment team has been the institution of an academic and administrative unit Assessment Excellence Award. This award is given annually to an academic and/or administrative unit that excels in developing its mission, drafting outcomes based on the mission, assessing those outcomes, and using that assessment information to improve unit/student performance. In fall 2010, the university assessment team chose to bestow the academic award to the Computer Science Program and to present the administrative award to the Department of Athletics. Both groups were honored and presented with the awards at a formal luncheon hosted by the president, the provost, the director of assessment, and the entire university assessment team.

Many constituencies of Henderson State University have dedicated much personal and professional time and attention to the details of creating and sustaining a culture of

assessment and improvement campus-wide, from presentations on assessment to the faculty senate, to countless meetings with individual program faculty and staff, to revising our own Assessment Team Assessment Plan, to garnering the support of assessment awards. It is the university assessment team's resolve to involve the entire campus community in the assessment of student learning, academic programs, and enhanced service to our students so that Henderson can continually improve the fulfillment of stewardship to the community, the state of Arkansas, and our region.

Henderson State University

Accreditation

Henderson offers a wide range of undergraduate programs in liberal arts, sciences, business, and teacher education, as well as graduate programs in education, counseling, business, and liberal arts. Henderson awards over 500 degrees annually.

Henderson's academic programs are currently accredited by nine regional and national agencies.

- The Higher Learning Commission, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
- National Association of Schools of Music
- AACSB International-The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
- American Dietetic Association
- Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
- Federal Aviation Administration (recognition only, not accreditation)

Henderson was invited to become a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) in 1998. The Council's mission is to identify and support high quality public liberal arts and sciences institutions. The institutions that are a part of this selective group have distinguished themselves by their commitment to provide superior liberal arts education to undergraduate students. This organization holds true to the mission of Henderson State University.

Mission Statement

Henderson State University is Arkansas's public liberal arts university. True to the century-long tradition that has distinguished Henderson since its founding; the university remains dedicated to providing excellent undergraduate curricula and graduate programs. Henderson, a southern regional institution with a diverse student body, advocates a program based on the liberal arts, regardless of specific educational interests. Through a common core of courses in arts and sciences, as well as through the more specialized curricula, the university fosters the maximum growth and development of each student. More specifically, Henderson endeavors to provide an education that will nurture in each student the capacity:

- To think logically and critically;
- To speak and write effectively;
- To appreciate the complexity and diversity of world cultures;
- To understand the physical universe;
- To participate as a concerned, intelligent citizen;
- To acquire mastery of a particular field of study;
- To mature intellectually, emotionally, and physically; and
- To discern appropriate uses of technology.

Henderson's primary mission is to excel in undergraduate education, always striving to enrich the quality of learning and teaching. In pursuit of this goal, the university seeks a culturally rich and diverse student community, actively recruiting, challenging, supporting, and motivating students to achieve academic success. Quality in education is fostered not only by a positively motivated student body, but also by a faculty and staff distinguished for their continuing commitment to excellence. University care and concern, positive student response, small class sizes, and a personal friendly atmosphere- these characteristics are the heart of Henderson.

The university encourages excellence and supports scholarly and creative endeavors on the part of both its faculty and students. These endeavors form the foundation upon which Henderson builds appropriate programs in response to the needs of various communities that it serves. In close concert with these communities, Henderson applies its expertise to develop those programs that will promote the preservation and improvement of the quality of life in Arkansas.

Mission Summary

Henderson State University, “The School with a Heart,” offers quality undergraduate and graduate education to a diverse student body. As Arkansas’s public liberal arts university, we empower each student to excel in a complex and changing world.

The following is a statement taken from the Higher Learning Commission Criterion 1 report explaining why the mission summary was developed:

Arising from the strategic thinking that began with the 2007 presidential search and continued through initiation of the self-study process came the recognition that when the University Mission Statement was adopted in 1988, it was common for university missions to include elements of history as well as statements of general goals, vision, and specific objectives. However, in the decades since the current mission statement was adopted, there has been a national trend to simplify and clarify college mission statements to a concise core. While it is likely that the Strategic Planning Committee will begin to take a such a step with the University Mission Statement in the near future, during spring of 2010 a series of campus-wide surveys and focus group meetings led to the development of a University Mission Summary, a simple statement that is intended to summarize the core mission of the university as lived and practiced by current stakeholders.

Outcomes Assessment Statement

Henderson is committed to a continuous process of improving all areas of the institution, particularly student academic achievement. Faculty regularly assess the extent to which students have developed skills, knowledge bases, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are required of the specific profession and/or applicable accreditation standards. Faculty and staff also evaluate student perceptions of coursework, teaching, advising, and other important services provided to support student learning. This allows students to have a voice in improving not only the quality of their own educational experience, but also the experiences of future Henderson students.

This assessment and evaluation process occurs at the individual, class, course, program, department, and university levels. Results of this assessment process are used to help make decisions to enhance the quality of student learning and the learning environment at Henderson. Students should anticipate participating in a wide array of evaluation and assessment procedures throughout their educational careers. All those who participate in this assessment and evaluation process, including students, faculty, staff, and administration are expected to enter into these procedures openly and honestly in an effort to assist HSU in this ongoing and cyclic improvement process.

Learning and Strategic Goals

Henderson State University has established both student learning and strategic institutional goals. The student learning goals have been derived from the University Mission Statement and the strategic goals have been developed from the revised university strategic plan.

The following are the institutional learning goals:

- Students should acquire a mastery of a particular field of study;
- Students should appreciate the complexity and diversity of world cultures;
- Students should discern appropriate uses of technology;
- Students should mature intellectually, emotionally, and physically;
- Students should participate as concerned, intelligent citizens;
- Students should speak and write effectively;
- Students should think logically and critically; and
- Students should understand the physical universe.

Below are the strategic goals for the university:

- A culture of commitment to the mission will permeate the university.
- The mission will be examined to determine its vitality and responsiveness to the changing needs of the University and the constituents it serves.
- Henderson and its mission will be well known throughout the region and state.
- The University will operate with integrity.
- University committees will be strengthened and mission oriented.
- The University will establish a regular and thorough plan for preparing the university budget.
- The University will undertake steps to increase grant funding.
- A master plan of major facilities and physical plant updates and improvements will be kept current and accessible.
- The University will assess the usefulness of its curricula to students.
- The University will expand its efforts to increase the retention rate of freshmen and sophomores.
- The University demonstrates that it values and supports student learning and effective teaching.
- Henderson will support the professional development of faculty, staff, and students for 21st century career preparation.
- An educational environment to enhance and support the classroom experience will be provided by the university.
- The University will enhance its recruitment strategies and efforts by 2012.
- Henderson will increase community awareness and involvement by 2012.
- The University will engage the local community to enhance the benefits for students to come to the Arkadelphia area.
- Henderson will serve as a model of environmental responsibility to the community.

University Assessment Team

The university assessment team was established to provide leadership and assistance in developing and overseeing an institutionally effective assessment program. This program will provide continuous self-evaluation and improvement across all academic and administrative units at Henderson State University. The university assessment team's primary function is to serve in an advisory capacity. The objectives for the team are:

- To promote a university image that values assessment and continuous quality improvement;
- To promote assessment through training and education;
- To develop assessment criteria;
- To determine the assessment cycle;
- To design the institutional review process;
- To communicate the assessment goals of the university to all areas (academic/administrative);
- To assist with the submission of assessment plans and process results;
- To conduct the review process of plans and results; and
- To make recommendations regarding the results submitted.

The team consists of representatives from the following divisions/areas:

- School of Business faculty member;
- Ellis College of Arts and Sciences faculty members;
- Teachers College, Henderson faculty member;
- Academic Affairs representative;
- External Affairs representative;
- Student Services representative;
- Administration and Finance representative;
- President's Office representative;
- Director of Assessment (ex-officio);
- Institutional Research Associate (ex-officio);
- Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (ex-officio);
- SGA representative; and
- Graduate student.

The university assessment team will provide leadership and assistance in the development and supervision of an institutional assessment program. The purpose of the team is to solicit continuous self-evaluation and improvement across all academic and administrative units at Henderson State University. The university assessment team will serve in an advisory capacity to all units to insure perpetual development of goals and desired outcomes and assessment plans to monitor progress and report results.

The university assessment team has developed and implemented the University Assessment Plan. The University Assessment Plan will focus on the overall performance of the university, as well as any and all units that contribute to the fulfillment of the university's mission. The goals of the University Assessment Plan are to:

1. To evaluate the sum of all the parts to determine if the university is meeting the mission;
2. To develop measures of success;
3. Provide guidelines and action plans for improvement; and
4. Provide results and improvements in the university –wide assessment program to the leadership of Henderson State University.

Unit Assessment Plans

Assessment plans will be developed for all units, academic and administrative. Each plan will be linked to the university mission. Each unit should involve the entire faculty and/or staff in the area for input in the development of the assessment plan.

The university assessment team has developed rubrics to be used in the review process for each assessment plan and end of the year results. A schedule has been developed stating when the assessment plans are due into TracDat and when the data and changes are to be entered into TracDat.

The university assessment team will work diligently in the development of an assessment process congruent with Henderson State University's mission. The process will change over time to fit the university's needs.

The university purchased the TracDat system in summer 2005. TracDat is an assessment management tool designed to meet the assessment and planning needs of both the academic and administrative units. TracDat allows for institution-wide viewing of assessment plans and uniform reporting across departments. It provides a user-friendly tool for managing assessment processes such as planning, data storage, data analysis, change implementation, and follow-up. Data can be organized into reports for faculty, staff, and administrators to support formative and summative evaluations of unit progress each year.

Henderson uses TracDat to store all academic and administrative unit assessment plans. Each unit is responsible for summarizing the results collected and attaching the data as well as creating action plans to improve its unit. Once the action plans are implemented, follow-ups are recorded to monitor the success of the action plans. The unit is asked to share all results and action plans with its entire area. This is to assure continuous improvement is happening across entire area.

Assessment Overview

Definition

Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance. When it is embedded effectively within larger institutional systems, assessment can help focus collective attention, examine assumptions, and create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education (Thomas A. Angelo, *AAHE Bulletin*, November 1995, p.7).

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to indicate the extent to which a program achieves its objectives and outcomes so that the program can use the findings to:

- Inform program planning;
- Inform decision-making to improve the program;
- Compare a program's quality or value to the program's previously defined principles (summative);
- Improve program and/or performance (formative)
- Revise program objectives;
- Assist in the request for additional funds from the university and external community;
- Assist in the re-allocation of resources;
- Assist in meeting accreditation requirements, models of best practices, and national benchmarks.

The purpose of assessment is to report program progress and results to audiences such, as faculty, deans, administration, university assessment team, external accrediting bodies, colleagues in other programs and at other institutions, and current and prospective students.

It also allows a program to:

- State its mission;
- Evaluate program, not personnel;
- Celebrate successes;
- Reflect on the attitudes and approaches taken in improving teaching and learning;
- Create a culture of continuous improvement – a culture of accountability, of learning, and of improvement.

The four main purposes of assessment should be:

1. To improve – The assessment process should provide feedback to determine how each academic and administrative unit can be improved.
2. To inform – The assessment process should inform department heads and other decision makers of the contributions and impact of the unit to the development and growth of students.
3. To prove – The assessment process should encapsulate and demonstrate what the unit is accomplishing to students, faculty, staff, and outsiders. (Adapted from WEAVE and Wisconsin).
4. To support – The assessment process should provide support for campus decision making activities such as unit review and strategic planning, as well as external accountability activities for accreditation.
(Adapted from University of Central Florida)

Benefits of an Assessment Plan

Henderson's main objective for developing an assessment process is for improvement. Each unit's assessment plan will show its strengths and weaknesses. This allows the unit to find ways to make changes for improvement purposes.

- State Mandated Program Reviews – The state review provides evaluation data on program outcomes.
- Accreditation – Agencies look for program effectiveness based on student outcomes, including Higher Learning Commission and COPLAC.
- Grants – Grant agencies require an evaluation section in each application and data to support the success of a program.

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

The following principles were developed under the auspices of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) Assessment Forum with support from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education with additional support for publication and dissemination from the Exxon Education Foundation. The authors are Alexander W. Astin, Trudy W. Banta, K. Patricia Cross, Elaine El-Khawas, Peter T. Ewell, Pat Hutchings, Theodore J. Marchese, Kay M. McClenney, Marcia Mentkowski, Margaret A. Miller, E. Thomas Moran, and Barbara D. Wright.

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.**
Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only *what* we choose to assess but also *how* we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.
2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.**
Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.
4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.
5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.** Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.
6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty plays an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.
7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care

about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.
9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the public that supports or depends on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.



Signs of Institutional Commitment to Assessment at HSU

- Hiring of a full-time director of assessment in 2003; having the director of assessment as a direct report to the provost
- Professional development/travel support for director of assessment
- Formation and continual support of university assessment team; representation of diverse areas of campus on university assessment team
- Provost's regular attendance at university assessment team meetings and involvement with university assessment team initiatives
- Regular support of publication of assessment newsletter; columns written by diverse members of the assessment team and others
- Securing of the Tracdat assessment data management system
- Institutional commitment to sending HSU Higher Learning Steering Committee members to the HLC Annual Meeting in Chicago in 2010 and 2011
- President's endorsement of aligning of HSU's 2010 strategic plan with Higher Learning Commission criteria for accreditation; President's recognition of assessment efforts of HSU community
- Instituting two annual assessment excellence awards

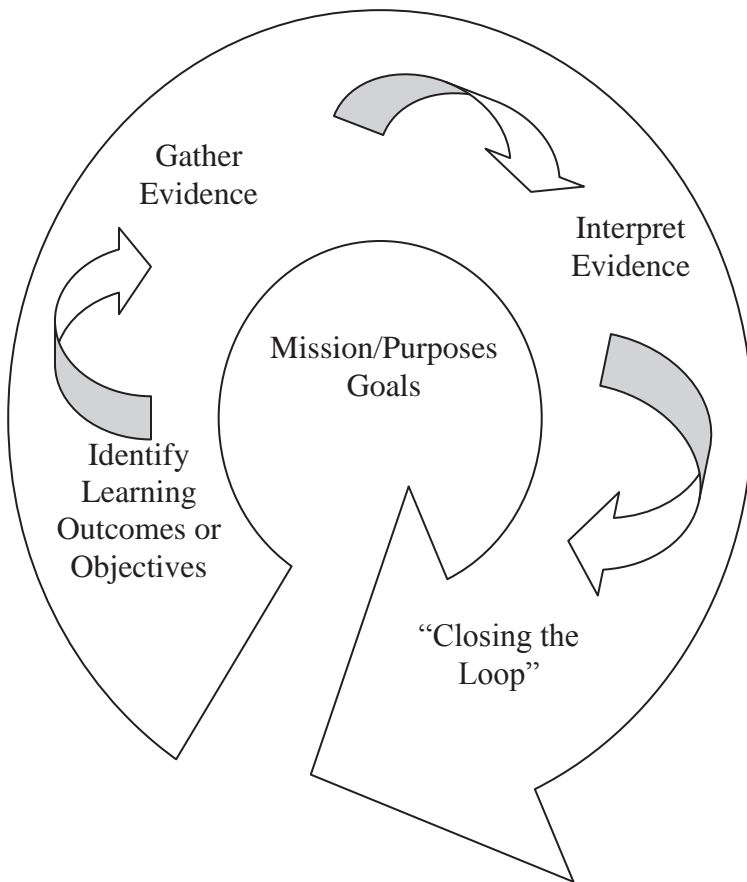
Assessment Challenges HSU is Addressing

- Incorporation of responsibility for assessment into the position description of the provost, and assignment of the authority and resources sufficient to be effective;
- Integration of the assessment process into the planning and budgeting processes of the institution so that academic units' approved plans for measuring student learning, costs associated with carrying them out, and subsequent changes the academic units wish to test to determine if they would increase student academic achievement, are routinely incorporated into academic units' plans and budget requests;
- Establishment of a line item for assessment costs in the annual educational and general (E & G) operating budget.

Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Plan

Cycle

Adapted from Peggy Maki, Ph.D



- Mission
- Goals
- Outcomes/Objectives
 - Methods
 - Criteria for each method
 - Schedule
 - Use of data
- Results
- “Closing the Loop”
 - Decisions
 - Recommendations

University Assessment Initiative

The office of assessment and research conducts several assessment initiatives for the university. The initiatives are positioned at various points in a student’s career at Henderson. The office of assessment and research has worked to develop a clear picture of what is being administered and what data is being gathered at the undergraduate level. One of the director’s goals is to unify, track, and monitor what is being assessed. It was discovered that several departments were collecting very similar data using different methods. To better utilize the resources it was decided that the director would develop a library of resources to share the results to the campus community.

Henderson has taken part in various assessment tools to gather data regarding its students and to improve student learning and the quality of expectations of its future students.

Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis (CSRDE)

Henderson has been a part of this consortium for several years. The data gathered allows for the exchange of student retention and graduation data for the purpose of benchmarking.

Graduate Student Questionnaire

This instrument was locally developed during the 2005 academic year. The data has been distributed to the necessary departments for action taken by the director of assessment and alumni services coordinator. The data collected is transferred to a database in POISE.

Graduate School Exit Survey

This survey was locally developed in 2004 and is administered online. The instrument was built by the director of assessment and graduate council. It has been administered each semester since it was developed. The counselor education department added questions during the fall 2006 semester for those majors completing the survey. The data is distributed to the graduate council for action to be taken.

Survey of Graduates

The Survey of Graduates was locally developed over 10 years ago. The survey results were reviewed and then filed until last year. The office of assessment and research spent the fall 2010 and spring 2011 semesters manually entering the data into the survey software. The results are currently being aggregated and will be distributed to the necessary departments for action to be taken to improve on student learning and experiences.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Henderson has taken part in administering the NSSE to freshman and seniors in 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, and the current administration for 2012. During 2006, 2008, and 2010 Henderson took part in the COPLAC consortium. It was decided that Henderson would continue utilizing this survey every other year in order to gather comparison data. The NSSE is used to better understand what extent students and institutions are engaging in student learning and outside the classroom experiences. The results are used to implement changes.

ETS Proficiency Profile

Henderson is going to begin administering the ETS Proficiency Profile during the fall 2011 semester to freshman and seniors will be tested during the spring 2012 semester. This test measures proficiency in critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics in the context of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The collected data will be used by the general education committee to assist in the development of additional measurement tools for the Liberal Arts Core Assessment Plan. The ETS Proficiency Profile will be given to freshman and seniors.

Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)

This assessment method was used by Henderson for several years. This tool allowed Henderson to see the quality of instruction through the general education courses. Students did not try because there were no incentives. However, this changed during the 2005 academic year when the general education committee and the university academic council added an additional junior level English course which would be required if you did not score at least a 3.0 on the essay component and a 60 or higher on the writing skills.

Non-Returner Survey

This survey was developed in fall 2006 to gather evidence as to why students did not return to Henderson. The data were collected and disseminated to various areas to follow-up and make changes where necessary.

Non-Matriculated Survey

This survey was developed during the fall 2006 semester. The data gathered assisted various areas in understanding why students applied and were accepted but chose not to attend Henderson.

College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ)

This was administered for the first time on Henderson's campus during welcome week 2006 activities prior to the first day of class. The data collected assisted in gathering the expectations of new students. It assisted in the preparation of the first year experience and orientation, residence life, and student activities.

Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey

The survey has been administered in the past to all entering freshman during Henderson Seminar. Henderson participated in this survey for the years 2000, 2003, and 2004; however, the data gathered during each of the administrations was not used in the national norms because the data was deemed not to be a representative sample of our first-time full-time freshman class. The data collected can provide insight into student retention and various other assessment activities. If this survey is going to be used for university assessment in the future, then changes will need to be made to the way it is administered and information is disseminated. The whole university will need to be informed on how the data will be used and what the data can show faculty, staff, administration, and students.

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

The FSSE was administered only in the 2003 pilot study. The survey was developed to parallel the NSSE in order to compare the faculty perceptions to those of the students. It gauges several other areas (nature and frequency of student –faculty interactions, how faculty members manage their time in and out of the classroom) that can be compared to other data.

Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)

Henderson State University participated in the pilot study during 2006. The instrument allows the institution to measure the incoming first-year students' high school academic and co-curricular involvement, and also their expectations of their college experiences. These same students were then surveyed during the next semester using the NSSE to offer a comparison of the expectations in relation to what really happened.

Higher Education Research Institute HERI Faculty Survey

The HERI was administered to Henderson's faculty in 2004. The data gathered was presented in the national norms. The survey concentrates on faculty-student interaction, student learning, and other educational issues.

College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)

The survey was administered on Henderson's campus in spring 2007. The results gathered from this survey were used to improve the conditions that contribute to student learning and development and to the quality of the experience of future students.

General Education

The general education assessment program is in its beginning stages. The CAAP exam was used to assess general education until 2007. During the 2008 academic year, President Welch requested that the general education committee reevaluate the Liberal Arts Core. The review of the Liberal Arts Core assisted the general education committee in the development of the Liberal Arts Core mission statement that clearly defines the skills and learning outcomes. During the 2010 academic year the general education committee worked on defining learning goals, learning outcomes, and measures to assess the Liberal Arts Core. The current initiative being implemented to gather preliminary data is the ETS Proficiency Profile. The test will measure proficiency in critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics. The general education committee developed two rubrics during the fall 2010 semester to gather data on oral and written communication skills. The director of assessment will be working with the general education committee to develop additional markers throughout the Liberal Arts Core to gauge student knowledge at each level.

Characteristics of a Good Assessment Program

The following are a comprehensive list of characteristics exhibited by a good and properly functioning assessment program (*Palomba & Banta, 1999, p.16*).

- Asks important questions
- Reflects institutional mission
- Reflects programmatic goals and objectives for learning
- Contains a thoughtful approach to assessment planning
- Links to decision making about the curriculum
- Links to processes such as planning and budgeting
- Encourages involvement of individuals from on and off campus
- Contains relevant assessment techniques
- Includes direct evidence of learning
- Reflects what is known about how students learn
- Shares information with multiple audiences
- Leads to reflections and action by faculty, staff, and students
- Allows for continuity, flexibility, and improvement in assessment



Assessment Terms

Approaches are the procedures used to gather the information needed to assess how well students have met the learning objectives. They are the courses of action through which evidence about courses, programs, majors, and the like will be gathered. To provide quality information, multiple approaches should be used.

Assessment refers to a continuous process instituted to understand and improve student learning. While academic units may find alternative pathways to arrive at this goal, this process needs to begin with articulation of educational goals for all programs and courses. These goals should be expressed as measurable objectives followed by the selection of reliable and valid methods and measures. After collecting, interpreting, and sharing findings, the aim is to use these learning outcomes to better understand how and what students learn, how well students are meeting expected objectives, as well as to develop strategies to improve the teaching and learning processes.

Benchmark is the actual measurement of group performance against an established standard or performance, often external.

Criterion is the standard of performance established as the passing score for a performance or other measures such as a test. The performance is compared to an expected level of mastery in an area rather than to other students' scores.

Cross-Sectional Studies provide information about a group of students at one point in time.

Evaluate and Evaluation are terms used to indicate the interpretation of findings and are used as synonyms to the terms assess and assessment. Many make a distinction between *evaluation* and *assessment* with the difference that assessment is a process predicated on knowledge of intended goals or objectives while, in contrast, evaluation is a process concerned with outcomes without prior concern or knowledge about goals.

Goals are statements about the general academic aims or ideals to which an educational unit aspires. Goal statements allow us to share with others our hopes in regard to the learning achievements of our students. Further, goals at the unit level should align with the mission of the university. Goal statements are not amenable, as stated, to measurement.

Longitudinal studies provide information from the same group of students at several different points in time.

Measures are the specific instruments or performances used to provide data about learning. They are the tools that are to provide information as to the level of achieved results or outcomes. To avoid systematic bias in findings, multiple measures are required. There are two types of measures. **Baseline measure** is where a department is currently performing and **target measure** is where the department wishes to perform.

Methods - see approaches.

Objectives are the redefinition of learning goals in a way that permits their measurement. Objectives express the intended results or outcomes of student learning and clearly specify the criteria by which student knowledge, performance, or values will be evaluated.

Process is a method generally involving steps or operations that are ordered and/or interdependent.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research describe two research methods. Both are valuable as a means to assess student learning outcomes. In a practical and somewhat philosophical sense the difference is that quantitative research tries to make use of objective measures to test hypotheses and to allow for controlling and predicting learning. Qualitative research makes use of more subjective observations of learning.

Reliability is the extent to which studies or findings can be replicated.

Sampling consists of obtaining information from a portion of a larger group or population. When the selection of a sample is randomly chosen there is greater likelihood that the findings from the sample will be representative of the larger group.

Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Validity has three components:

- relevance - the option measures your educational objective as directly as possible
- accuracy - the option measures your educational objective as precisely as possible
- utility - the option provides formative and summative results with clear implications for educational program evaluation and improvement

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