



# Assessment Brief

Volume 4, Issue 2

February 2011

## Inside this issue:

Assessment Awards	1-3
From the Chair	3
From the desk of.... Wrenette Tedder	4
Assessment Award Rubric	4

## Need Assessment Training.....

Need help in revising your assessment plan.....Need help in entering your data.....Need help in using TracDat.....

Contact Wrenette Tedder at 230-5270 or email [tedderw@hsu.edu](mailto:tedderw@hsu.edu).

She will be glad to schedule a one-on-one training session or a session for an entire department.

## Assessment Awards

Pam Ligon

Last semester, the Assessment Team voted to select and annually identify both an academic and non-academic unit who had excelled in their assessment endeavors. Using an electronic rubric, the Team critiqued the units in the areas of the assessment plan, growth, observations, action and follow-up. Five out of a possible 42 plans were selected. The first annual academic unit recipient was awarded to Computer Science under Jimmie Harper's leadership. Athletics received the non-academic unit award under Dr. David Thigpen's direction. Both of these units were honored at a luncheon earlier this year. Both units will be formally recognized at their respective awards ceremony.

As the University's first assessment honorees, the Assessment Team wanted to share their stories with the campus. Both Jimmie Harper and David Thigpen were asked the following questions. Their responses follow.

What was involved in your assessment process – setting goals, collecting data, determining what to measure, instruments to use, etc.?

How did you involve your faculty and staff?

What challenges did you have to overcome?

What have you learned from the assessment process?

Any advice to those who are afraid of the assessment process or do not know how to begin?

Mr. Jimmie Harper, Associate Professor of Computer Science, Computer Science Coordinator, stated "as they began the assessment process and to formalize the program's mission, objectives, and outcomes, it became clear that more than just developing a few goals and measuring outcomes would be needed. In fact, as we reviewed the program it was evident that a major restructuring of the entire degree would need to occur if we were to continue to produce competitive graduates. Although specific changes to the computer science curriculum had occurred over the years, an analysis of how those changes affected the overall program and contributed to a successful computer science graduate had not taken place."

"With our task of assessment now compounded by the need to perform a self-study we set out to work. During the fall term of 2005 we began to analyze the requirements for a computer science program as specified by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). As part of the study we identified the ACM Body of Knowledge Areas and coordinated them with the associated topics in our courses. In numerous instances we found duplication of program content, lack of content, elective coverage that should be required, and in some cases, no coverage at all."

"In addition to the ACM guidelines we also considered the degree requirements at the other four-year universities in Arkansas. Again, we found that our program was greatly lacking in content. While the BS degree at HSU only required 34 and 11 hours of computer science and mathematics, respectively, similar degrees at the other schools required anywhere

continued on page 2

***Continued from page one—Assessment Awards***

from 42 to 57 and 17 to 20 hours in these areas.”

“As if the above two results were not enough to promote change within the program, we also began to consult with employers of our graduates as to what skills and abilities they desire in a new recruit. In all instances we again found that more technical knowledge than what we were currently providing was needed. In addition, it was noted that improved communication skills, both written and verbal, could provide our graduates with an advantage over others in the field.”

“Upon assimilating all of this information we began to put forward a greatly modified degree program containing both restructured and new courses to fulfill the perceived need. This new degree plan reflected the need for additional content hours by increasing the computer science and mathematics requirements to 49 and 19 hours, respectively. Also, six additional communication hours were incorporated into the program to enhance the graduates’ abilities. As a result of the increased major hour requirement along with Henderson’s numerous hours in the liberal arts core, the computer science degree plan contains no elective hours.”

“The revised degree plan along with an implementation scheme requiring no additional resources was presented to and approved by the University Academic Council during the spring term of 2006. Students entering the program with the start of the 2006 fall semester would be required to follow the new plan.”

“While the new program was being developed, the subject of assessment was still in the forefront of our minds. After all, it was assessment that started us down this path. As we decided upon the goals and objectives of the overall program, we tied these back to the individual courses and identified methods for their measurement, not only at the course level, but, when applicable, at the program level as well. Overall, we feel the assessment and self-study process has greatly enhanced the program. We believe that these changes along with the increased emphasis we are placing on recruitment will help our program to grow and meet the challenges that lie ahead.”

Dr. David Thigpen, Associate Athletic Director/Compliance Officer, commented that his supervisor charged him with preparing the Athletic Assessment. Fully overwhelmed, he went a full academic semester feeling the burden of assessment was his sole responsibility. He was introduced to the Assessment Team. Through the Team’s guidance and training he finally understood that it was the Athletic Department’s Assessment Plan and not David Thigpen’s. David scheduled meetings with each Head Coach, current Student-Athletes, and Alumni. He began asking them about the history of the department, where they felt the program was today, and the direction they felt the department should take to move the program forward.

As the assessment process began, David served as the “motivator” of the athletic department. He kept the department informed of the assessment process, deadlines, requirements and the direction to take. He asked specific questions of the individual areas to include in his report. This approach allowed for buy in by involving each Head Coach, Alumni and Student-Athlete.

One challenge David faced was creating a tool that actually “helped” direct the department and benefit the philosophy of the department as well as benefit the student-athletes they are serving. SAAC, the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, was established in an attempt to accomplish this. With input from this student leadership body the department now fully engaged the entire athletic department. The staff began using their objectives in written statements. Over the past three years David saw how their Henderson objectives could tie into those outlined at the national level with the NCAA in relationship to academic accomplishments, community engagement and service.

David stated he learned several things throughout his departmental assessment process. First, if you put forth the effort to development a plan, ensure that it is one that will benefit you and the students in the long run. Second, you must communicate with each other, listen to the students, allow for outside contacts to come in and review your assessment plan and critique the direction you have mapped. Third, don’t be so determined to move your assessment plan in one direction until it has withstood several review sessions. At that point, an agreed upon assessment plan can be written that has been discussed and agreed upon that will involve all members of your department and those it serves.

continued on page 3

**Continued from page two—Assessment Awards**

As far as advice to give, David remarked that Henderson employees are blessed to have support with their assessment efforts. He complimented Wrenette Tedder for her outstanding leadership as the Director of Assessment. He extended his compliments to include the Assessment Team and its chairperson, Phillip Schroeder. David described the Team as strong, involved, and well-informed. He acknowledged Dr. Schroeder's commitment to the university's assessment endeavors. David said that although TracDat, the assessment management tool, allows for ease in recording your assessment data, there is no magic formula. "Get started, ask questions and don't feel you are alone with this undertaking. What you will find is that it is a valuable tool to strengthen your program for the students who are here today and those you will serve in the future."

### From the Chair Dr. Phillip Schroeder

A few individuals within any organization tend to exhibit an ability to "get things done" and they are called upon most often to take care of a group responsibility. I have long been impressed by the choice of the many who, given an opportunity, will readily allow others to fulfill their responsibilities.

While teaching at Sam Houston State University I chaired a committee that was charged with revising the School of Music faculty evaluation, tenure, and promotion process. After a very productive two-hour meeting, I headed upstairs to my office along with another member of the committee. As we walked, the colleague began to talk about what needed to be done: editing, drafting portions of the document, research, investigating what other schools were doing, and so on. What was being said about these tasks, however, began to sound as if the *identification* of what needed to be done was all that was necessary (or would fulfill

his responsibility). After listening for several minutes and trying to figure out what was being suggested, I looked at him and asked: "Now, let me get this straight. Is what you are saying: 'Just let me know what *I* can do to help *you* do the work?'" He looked at me, surprised by the directness, paused, smiled, and said: "Well . . . , actually . . . , yes!"

Please, honestly consider your responsibility to the department or area and help to fulfill all assessment obligations. Do not expect others to take care of it for you.

## Update on Activities and Projects

Wrenette Tedder

The Assessment Team has been committed to improving the assessment process. Most of our units have come into compliance with the annual process, and many have worked diligently to improve their assessment plans over the past year. The Assessment Award was developed to acknowledge the hard work involved in producing an exceptional assessment plan. Last semester, the Assessment Team created a rubric to be used in selecting the units to receive the assessment award. In the future we look forward to having a difficult time giving out these awards. We hope that all of our units will have exceptional plans!

This semester, the team has developed subcommittees to work on revising three key documents. They are the University Assessment Plan, the Assessment Team Handbook, and the Assessment Team Assessment Plan. "Living," "growing," and "maturing" documents are necessary for any assessment program to be successful. The Assessment Team feels that as our program matures and improves, the guiding documents must change to reflect both the current level of assessment on the HSU campus and current or future requirements of constituencies to which we serve and report.

The Office of Assessment has been working alongside Teachers College in preparing for its NCATE accreditation visit. Our office has provided data reports from each of the assessment databases as well as the reports from TracDat. Most of the departments in Teachers College have revised their assessment plans in TracDat to reflect their SPA standards.

In less than a year, HSU will have a visit from the Higher Learning Commission. The entire Henderson community has worked very hard to create and sustain a culture of assessment over the past seven years. Please take time to read the Criterion 3 report in the Higher Learning Commission document. This document discusses our successes in the area of assessment and student learning as well as the challenges we face. You can access the reports for each HLC criterion at <http://www.hsu.edu/interior2.aspx?id=5188>.

Please let me know how my office and the Team can assist you in the area of assessment. We have come a long way and need to continue moving forward. I will be glad to schedule training sessions for developing an assessment plan and using TracDat for your unit.

## Assessment Award Rubric

Dr. Brett Serviss

Three members of the University Committee on Assessment (Assessment Team), Pam Ligon, Wrenette Tedder, and Brett Serviss, were charged with the development of a rubric that would be used to assess the overall development, quality, and efficacy of the assessment process implemented by each university department (program/unit), both academic and nonacademic. The rubric has since been successfully developed, and is divided into five basic categories of evaluation: 1. Mission and Development; 2. Outcomes (Objectives) and Methods; 3. Observations, Actions, and Follow Up; 4. Temporal Improvement; and 5. Overall Program (Unit) Quality.

Each category pertains to a principle criterion (or closely related set of criteria) of the assessment process, and is used to determine how effectively a given department has developed and implemented their respective program of assessment. Subsequent to evaluation by members of the committee, each category is scored as "Unacceptable" (0 points); "Insufficient" (5 points); "Adequate" (10 points); or "Exemplary" (20 points), based on a 100 point rubric.

Each of the five categories is scored independently of the others, and a cumulative total out of 100 is calculated and used to determine the current level of assessment efficacy of that department. Departmental evaluations will be conducted annually with a multifaceted award presented to the highest scoring academic and nonacademic department, respectively. Additionally, the committee is considering implementation of the rubric as the principle assessment instrument for all departments.

The assessment award rubric has been included as an individual sheet in the center of the newsletter.