



Point of Interest

- ◇ HLC Self-Study website is www.hsu.edu/hlc

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.

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Assessment Brief

Volume 5, Issue 2

February 2012

Assessment and Our Higher Learning Commission Visit

Dr. Vernon Miles

As we anticipate our upcoming Higher Learning Commission visit—**mark your calendars for February 20-22, 2012!**—we should especially note Criteria One, "Mission and Integrity," and Criteria Three, "Student Learning and Effective Teaching." These two, taken together, form the heart and soul of institutional student outcomes assessment, and it is important that they be seen as working together as you mull over how you will approach the topic of assessment in your upcoming conversations with our Peer Review Team members.

The central questions of Criterion One are basic assessment questions: What is our mission? How do our "mission documents" (a phrase used eight times in subparts) define the institution? What processes do we use to evaluate our "structures and processes regularly"? How do we use that knowledge to enhance those structures and processes to better fulfill our mission? In what ways can we ensure that our structures and processes continue to nurture personal, professional, and institutional integrity?

In a corollary way, Criterion Three has four subparts, each one building on the previous:

- 3a. The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.
- 3b. The organization values and supports effective teaching.
- 3c. The organization creates effective learning environments.
- 3d. The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Criterion Three essentially boils down to *four* primary components of the assessment process for each department, unit, or major at the university. Of course, you already know these, as you have used them to develop and implement your own plans. I mention them here simply as a discussion prompt:

- ◆ developing a unit or department or major mission aligned with the university's mission;
- ◆ drafting or developing student outcomes based on that mission;
- ◆ assessing those outcomes to determine the degree to which each has been met; and,

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(Continued)**

- ◆ using that assessment information to improve unit performance or student learning.

As we think about our mission in relation to our institutional assessment/self-examination process, we should think about key questions that will make conversing positively with HLC Peer Reviewers a breeze. What is it we attempt to “nurture” in each student? How do we do that? How *well* do we do that? How do we continue to improve our ability or capacity to do that? These are the central questions the Higher Learning Commission will expect us to supply coherent answers to through our assessment processes.

Academic programs and non-academic units at HSU have done a remarkable job of overcoming our many past assessment shortcomings, and for that I applaud you. As you anticipate our upcoming HLC visit, please be confident that the Self-Study Steering Committee, the Assessment Team, the Assessment Office, Institutional Effectiveness, the Provost’s Office, and the entire Cabinet stand ready to assist you in any and all efforts to have a highly successful HLC visit. In that we stand united.

The Newcomer’s Perspective of Assessment

Lenette Jones

This semester marks the beginning of my second year serving on the Assessment Team. Prior to joining the committee, I of course had a basic understanding of assessment. I had been familiar with the assessment process; working in the non-academic unit of HSU’s Athletic Department with Dr. Thigpen (who had previously served on the Assessment Team) with our department having the responsibility of assessing our programs and services provided. The Office of Assessment and Research, as well as the Assessment Team met with our department on occasion to provide guidance and give constructive feedback. Initially as a new member of the Assessment Team I did feel a bit overwhelmed, as during my first meeting the team began to discuss plans for the academic and non-academic units, the Assessment of the University Assessment plan, as well as evaluation rubrics for each unit.

The entire team was helpful in their thorough explanation to questions I had, guiding me through the process as a new team member. During my first year as a member of the team I was able to take part in the evaluation of the 2009-2010 assessment awards. Settling into my second year with the team I have become much more knowledgeable of the various units/ programs at HSU, and I am better prepared to evaluate respective plans.

The Assessment Team has worked diligently in making a concrete effort in assisting students, faculty and staff in the increased cooperation and coordination of assessment on the campus. The Higher Learning visit to campus is quickly approaching in perpetration for the visit; the Assessment Team will continue its effort in ensuring that all programs and units, faculty, staff and students have a working knowledge of assessment on HSU’s campus.

Higher Learning Commission Self-Study Report

Jennifer Holbrook

The Higher Learning Commission Self-Study Report has been completed! It was sent to the team of reviewers on December 21st and to the printer in early January. You can view the report on the web at <http://www.hsu.edu/hlc> in two formats. Choose the full report to view in a double-page book form. Choose each section individually to see a more magnified single-page view. Kudos go to David Stoddard for the design and layout of the report. It is so impressive.

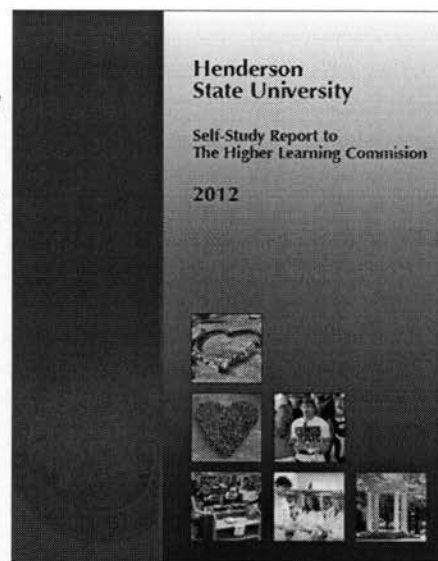
The content of the report is a collection of information that was gathered by and contributed to by so many of you. Writers formed those contributions into sections that Dr. Angela Boswell took and cohesively rewrote last summer into this wonderful and comprehensive report.

The HLC report consists of seven sections. If you view the full-report version on the web, you will see some text in red that refers to documentation for that particular topic, but all links have been disabled in this version. Very soon there will be CDs available for those of you interested in the many documents that were used as references for the content. Each of the 1,071 red words or phrases will send you to one of the 705 referenced documents when clicked on the CD version of the report. The documents gathered and used for this report could be a resource for your area. We would like to make them available to you all. Each academic program and administrative unit will receive a CD. Anyone else interested can purchase one for \$1.00 at the MultiMedia Learning Center.

The second phase and equally important part of the reaccreditation process has begun, the preparation for the arrival of the HLC review team and their visit. The visit will take place February 19-22. Student groups have already been contacted and are scheduling members of the Self-Study Steering Committee to talk with their organizations about what to expect during the visit and what they should know and think about beforehand. I have spoken with the Staff Senate, and Angela will be speaking with the Faculty Senate very soon. We hope that every student and employee of Henderson will know about the visit and its purpose and be able to answer questions that the team of reviewers might ask.

The reviewers will want us to schedule meetings with particular groups on campus, but they are also likely to pop into your office or stop you on campus to ask questions about Henderson and most probably your specific area. What do you need to know as a faculty or staff member?

- ◆ You should be familiar with our condensed mission.
 - ◇ *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.*
- ◆ You should be familiar with your program or department mission, how it relates to the university mission and how your job within your program or department reflects that mission.



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- ◆ Whether you are faculty or staff, you should understand the meaning of a liberal arts education. The two quotes below should help clarify.
 - ◇ Dr. Vernon Miles – “Perhaps the most powerful facet of a liberal arts education is the ‘lifelong learning’ component of it; students with a true liberal arts education are able to better tackle the many ambiguities they are likely to face as they adapt to the multiple career changes in store for this generation of students.”
 - ◇ Albert Einstein – “The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.”
- ◆ How has your program or department improved in the past 10 years?
- ◆ What are the strengths and weaknesses of your program or department?

Lastly, in preparation of the visit, please tidy up your areas. If you are the web editor for your area, please make sure it is updated. If you have information on My Henderson, ensure that it is correct. And please clean up your physical space. I know this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. At the moment, my office can at best be described as semi-organized chaos. I could list some very good excuses for the state of my office, but regardless, it needs to and will be picked up and cleaned.

This self-study process has been an extraordinary experience. I have learned so much about the university and even more about the people here. Angela and I know there have been multiple requests for duplicate information, yet you delivered and redelivered. There have been many long nights and weeks spent by those working on the report while still trying to perform their regular duties. There have been many others taking up the slack of our regular jobs while we worked on the report. If we tried to count the number of people who have directly and indirectly contributed to the self-study process, we know we could not even come close. There are examples of people working during family crisis, others working weeks (including weekends) without days off, there have been eleventh hour requests for help with meeting deadlines. Angela and I have truly witnessed ‘The School with a Heart’ at work.

From the Desk of Wrenette Tedder, Director of Assessment

The University Assessment Team worked on several projects during the Fall 2011 semester. One of the main projects was developing a webpage that could serve both the assessment team members as well as the campus community. The website contains information on the assessment team members, assessment evaluation instruments, assessment newsletters, assessment award rubrics, history of assessment at Henderson with timeline, unit assessment plans, assessment documents for units, assessment planning guide, TracDat information, outcomes assessment statement, and the University Assessment Plan. Please take a few minutes and visit the new webpage (<http://www.hsu.edu/interior2.aspx?id=15496>). We would like to thank Dr. Brett Serviss for volunteering to serve as the University Assessment Team webmaster.

Assessment in the General Counsel Office

Elaine Kneebone

The Office of General Counsel is responsible for all institutional legal advice. Much of the work done by the university's legal counsel is behind the scenes. The legal counsel's role is a "supporting" one and often deals with confidential information concerning the university's students and employees.

Outside of academia, lawyers who are billing private clients keep detailed records of their daily activities (usually in increments of 6 minutes!) so that they can be paid for their work. I was very pleased to leave that kind of detailed record keeping behind when I joined Henderson. So I was a little dismayed to learn that the office of general counsel needed to provide assessment data. I was new to higher education and had a lot to learn about institutional assessment. Fortunately, I found out the assessment of the general counsel's office did not require detailed records of each minute of my work day. Unfortunately, I found it is difficult if not impossible to measure the most important work of the general counsel's office; it is hard to quantify reducing the university's legal risk and improving its practices.

I am fortunate to work with Karen Spradlin, Assistant to the Offices of External Programs and General Counsel, for many reasons, but I have really benefited from her expertise as a long-term member of the Assessment Committee. Karen and I figured out that the Office of General Counsel can measure, generally, the productivity of the office by the volume of work: number of contracts reviewed, number of complaints investigated, number of policies reviewed or drafted, and the number of training and education workshops conducted on various legal topics. Keeping up with the "output" of the General Counsel's office has led to at least three unexpected benefits. First, we created a log for all of the contracts that come through the office which prompted us to develop a more detailed system to track where documents are in the process of being approved by the university's leadership. By periodically reviewing the log, we can see what areas of the university are generating legal work. This review has also helped us identify trends in the university's needs and plan ahead for "rush" times. Second, as part of our assessment plan, we set a goal of providing a certain number of training workshops for faculty and staff. This prompted us to take a serious look at the time and resources of our office, determine the university's most pressing training needs and find the best times of the year to schedule training. Before the assessment process, we had been too preoccupied with the day-to-day legal needs of the university to do advance planning. Third, the assessment process has required us to create some quantifiable measures and goals which provided us with focus and a feeling of accomplishment.

Much of the work of the Office of General Counsel is ongoing and driven by the day-to-day needs of the campus community, so we had never stepped back to look at what we have accomplished. While we knew we had a busy year, the assessment process provided us with a snapshot of the volume and variety of legal work that comes through this office. Armed with that knowledge, we can work to steadily improve our services so that we can provide the best quality legal counsel and services for the university.

Emphasis on Assessment at Teachers College Henderson Retreat

Dr. Bernie Hellums

To emphasize the importance of assessment, Teachers College Henderson included a presentation on assessment by Dr. Bernie Hellums during its 2012 Administrative Team Spring Retreat. Dr. Hellums is Teachers College's representative on the HSU Assessment Team.

Dr. Hellums' presentation included a review of the Office of Assessment website which has recently been updated. The website has valuable information for faculty and staff for understanding the HSU assessment process, developing program assessment plans, and evaluation of assessment plans and assessment cycles. The site has a link to an Assessment Quick Reference Guide and an Assessment Planning Guide which contain information to guide faculty and staff in developing their plans.

In addition to reviewing the website, the presentation included discussion of the following topics: TracDat, assessment cycle, components of an assessment plan, and instruments used to evaluate assessment plans and assessment cycles. Dr. Hellums pointed out that each unit is responsible for entering and maintaining their action plans and assessment results in TracDat, a university wide assessment management tool which is used for reporting assessment plans.

During the presentation, a work session time was provided for faculty to evaluate their unit's assessment plans using the evaluation instruments developed by the HSU Assessment Team. Discussions during the work session centered on the importance of following the guidelines as set out in the Assessment Planning Guide when developing the unit's plan. For example, having a concise mission statement that listed stakeholders, stated the purpose of the unit, supported the university mission, and distinguished the program from other programs was stressed. Attention was called to the requirement of having three outcomes that are related to the program's mission, of having two measures for each outcome, and of the importance of including the assessment instrument and grading rubric for each assessment.

Teachers College is committed to having quality assessment and reporting of assessment not only for the upcoming comprehensive visit of the Higher Learning Commission next month, but for the overall improvement of all programs within Teachers College Henderson.

From the Chair

Dr. Phillip Schroeder

The Henderson State University Assessment Team is not perfect. Yet it is among the very best groups of people with whom I have ever worked. There are few immediate rewards for its individual members, yet they increasingly understand and apply the principle of the metaphor, "Put your oar in the water and row in the same direction." It is a diverse lot, representative of the entire campus-community by charge and personality.

During the 2½ years with the 'A-Team' I have witnessed significant changes and growth within the team, by those directly involved with implementation, and throughout the diverse campus communities. Adopting and bringing about such an all-encompassing evaluation process is challenging, complicated, and at times frustrating, all the more rewarding when fulfilled. I have been so impressed with how many individuals from all areas have stepped up and taken care of this new responsibility. It will continue to be a process that improves and becomes more efficient with experience, with an increasing focus to establish a quality evaluation system appropriate for HSU that is directly applicable to the success of our students. Thank you.