



Points of Interest

Congratulations to the Mathematics Department and the Academic Advising Center! These two programs were the recipients of the Assessment Awards for the 2013-2014 academic year. There is an article on page 3 highlighting the two programs.

Need help with TracDat? Schedule a meeting with Wrenette Tedder at 230-5270 or tedderw@hsu.edu.

If you have suggestions for items and/or information to be included in future editions of the *Assessment Brief*, send them to tedderw@hsu.edu.

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Assessment Brief

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CHANGES IN HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION ACCREDITATION PROCESS

HSU ASSURANCE REVIEW DUE 2015

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) has made changes in the reaffirmation of accreditation. The HLC has created three pathways: Standard, Open, and AQIP. Henderson State has elected the Open Pathway. The Open Pathway focuses on quality assurance and institutional improvement. This pathway allows Henderson to choose improvement projects that fits our needs.

The Open Pathway follows a 10-year cycle that includes the following institutional reviews:

- Institutions submit annual Institutional Updates, which are reviewed by the Commission to monitor organizational health, comply with certain federal requirements, and identify any changes that may require Commission follow-up.
- In Year 4 (**HSU Year 4 is September 2015**), institutions complete Assurance Reviews to ensure they are continuing to meet the Commission's Criteria of Accreditation. The institution provides documentation demonstrating how it fulfills each Criterion and Core Component. A peer-review team electronically evaluates these materials and recommends whether the institution should continue in the cycle or whether additional monitoring is required. This information is sent to the Commission's Institutional Actions Council, which

Master Chart of the Open Pathway Ten-Year Cycle

This chart outlines the cycle for the major components of the Open Pathway—Assurance and Improvement.¹ The chart does not reflect any monitoring that may be required by some component of the Assurance Review, by Commission policy, or by institutional change requests. To create a personalized chart, enter the date of the institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation in the Year 10 column, then enter each preceding year in the previous columns. Use academic years.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Enter Years				September 2015						
Assurance Process	Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File		Assurance Filing (Assurance Argument and Evidence File) ²		Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File				Assurance Filing (Assurance Argument and Evidence File); Federal Compliance Requirements ³	
				Assurance Review (no visit) ⁴					Assurance Review and Comprehensive Evaluation (with visit)	
Improvement: The Quality Initiative					Quality Initiative Proposal Filed (window of opportunity to submit)					
					Quality Initiative Proposal Reviewed				Quality Initiative Report Filed	
								Quality Initiative Report Reviewed		
Commission Decision-Making				Action to Accept Assurance Review ⁵					Action on Comprehensive Evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation ⁵	
Other Monitoring	The Commission will continue to review data submitted by affiliated institutions through the Institutional Update, will apply change processes as appropriate to planned institutional developments, and will monitor institutions through reports, visits, and other means as it deems appropriate.									

Key

	Documents filed electronically by the institution
	Review does not include a visit
	Review includes a visit
	Commission actions

- Notes**
- ¹ the chart applies to institutions eligible for the Open Pathway (see page 3)
 - ² some institutions will also file materials for multi-campus review
 - ³ team may require a visit to explore uncertainties in evidence that cannot be resolved at a distance
 - ⁴ certain team recommendations may require IAC action
 - ⁵ action on the Year 10 review will also determine the institution's future Pathway eligibility

Source: <http://ncahlc.org/Pathways/open-pathway.html>

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reviews and takes official action on the recommendation. The Year 4 Review may also include a site visit by the peer-review team.

- Between Years 5 and 9, institutions undertake a Quality Initiative project. This project is designed by the institution to meet its current needs or aspirations. Before starting the a Quality Initiative, the institution submits a project proposal to be reviewed and approved by peer-reviewers. At the end of the Quality Initiative (no later than Year 9), the institution submits a report on its outcomes. Peer-reviewers evaluate the report and make a recommendation as to whether the institution made a genuine effort to achieve the goals of the Quality Initiative. This recommendation is included in the materials sent to the Institutional Actions Council for the institution's Year 10 comprehensive evaluation.
- In Year 10, institutions undergo a comprehensive evaluation, conducted by a team of peer-reviewers. The comprehensive evaluation includes an Assurance Review, a review of federal compliance requirements, and a site visit. The peer-review team evaluates each component and makes a recommendation as to whether the institution's accreditation should be reaffirmed. The Institutional Actions Council reviews the materials and the peer- review team's recommendation, takes action regarding the institution's reaffirmation, and determines its future pathway eligibility.

THE REWARDS OF PROPER ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Development and implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan, one that is both thorough and precise, requires a considerable investment of both time and effort; however, the immediate and long-term rewards of such assessment endeavors are well worth the effort. Well-executed assessment practices require faculty and staff who are dedicated to, and knowledgeable about, the assessment process. Departmental/program assessment should, when possible, always be an inclusive process, involving as many people as possible and not restricted to one or a few individuals. Appropriate, clearly defined, and measurable departmental/program goals, objectives, and methods are also essential for truly effectual assessment.

Major benefits of a rigorous, well-executed, and effectual assessment plan — the following can only be fully achieved with a true, long-term commitment to the assessment process:

- Demonstrate that a program is actually accomplishing what it claims in its mission
- Identify areas of weakness in a program, allowing for tailored adjustments to be implemented that will result in subsequent improvement
- Identify program strengths and allow for enhancement in those areas
- Demonstrate, based on data, specific program needs
- Acquisition of funds and resources
- Assist in satisfying successful accreditation endeavors; maintain accreditation status, including general accreditation requirements mandated for the university by the Higher Learning Commission
- Both short-term and long-term comprehensive program improvement and development
- Provide insight for future direction

Consistent and precise, data-driven assessment practices, along with the timely collection, analysis, and submission of pertinent assessment data, are crucial for obtaining detailed feedback that is meaningful and able to be used for critical program evaluation. Assessment procedures, when conducted properly over the long-term, offer the potential for substantial enhancement, improvement, and development of programs, not to mention the comprehensive value that rigorous, long-term assessment can provide regarding the quality-control of academic and administrative functions of the university on a holistic basis.

I would like to strongly encourage anyone with assessment-related questions or needs to contact a member of the Assessment Team or the Office of Assessment directly for assistance.

Brett E. Serviss
Professor of Biology and Curator (HEND)
University Assessment Team Co-chair

ASSESSMENT AWARDS

The Mathematics Department and the Academic Advising Center have been announced as the recipients of the Assessment Awards for the 2013--2014 academic year, and received official recognition for their efforts at the assessment awards luncheon on April 24, 2014.

The Department of Mathematics is the assessment award recipient for academic programs. Dr. Debra Coventry, Dr. Carolyn Eoff, Dr. Michael Lloyd, and Dr. Fred Worth are responsible for assessment. The five areas that were assessed by Mathematics were:

- **Fluency**....students developing vocabulary and problem solving skills in mathematics
- **Problem Solving**....students modeling and solving practical problems in the sciences
- **Proof**....students being able to abstract and prove mathematical ideas
- **Pedagogy**....students being able to plan mathematics instruction
- **Content Pedagogy**....pre-service teachers being able to incorporate research-based mathematical experiences and multiple strategies in their teaching



The Academic Advising Center is the assessment award recipient for administrative programs. Ms. Pam Ligon, Ms. Anna Espinoza, and Ms. Chanda Hooten are responsible for assessment. The seven areas that were assessed by the Academic Advising Center were:

- **Staffing**....provide sufficient training for Academic Advising Center staff
- **Professional Development**....advisors participate in ongoing professional development and advising education
- **Student Learning**....ensuring that students are knowledgeable of academic regulations, policies, and procedures
- **Collaboration**....identifying at-risk students in a timely manner
- **Supplemental Instruction**....improving overall student performance in all targeted classes
- **Mentor Program**...retain a higher percentage of first-generation, first-time freshmen
- **Textbook Loan Program**....provide a free textbook to academically promising students

The Department of Mathematics and the Academic Advising Center have worked diligently to produce precise and meaningful assessment plans that are truly useful for obtaining data and drawing inferences that will ultimately lead to continued development, refinement, and enhancement of their respective programs. The Department of Mathematics and the Academic Advising Center must be recognized and unequivocally commended for their outstanding efforts in outcomes-based assessment.

Bob Yehl
 Director of Huie Library
 University Assessment Team Member



MYTHS ABOUT ASSESSMENT

Myth: Assessment must be completed once a year.

Reality: Assessment should be a routine part of work rather than an interruption. Effective professionals must continually reflect and analyze on practice in order to improve.

Myth: Assessment is a fad.

Reality: The Outcomes Assessment Movement developed in response to four reports issued in 1984 and 1985 calling for higher education to become learner centered. The reports stated that learners, faculty, and institutions needed feedback in order to improve (Huba & Freed 2000; *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses*). Since that time the Outcomes Assessment Movement has only gained momentum.

Myth: One individual manages assessment for each area.

Reality: Data should not be collected nor analyzed in isolation. The purpose of data is to stimulate meaningful conversation and provide a basis for change.

Myth: Assessment is about assessing my effectiveness as an employee.

Reality: Assessment is about finding opportunities for program and self-improvement, not for finger pointing or comparing individuals or programs.

Myth: Programs with an accrediting agency do not need to do institutional program assessment.

Reality: The Higher Learning Commission is the university accrediting organization. In order to respond to the conditions and requirements for accreditation, the university must be able to produce documentation of assessment practices for all academic and administrative units. TracDat is the data warehouse that allows the Office of Assessment access to these assessment documents.

Myth: Institutional program assessments must be different than accreditation assessments.

Reality: Programs with accreditation processes may use TracDat to document and hold assessments used for accreditation. The Director of the Office of Assessment or a member of the Assessment Team would be happy to help any area develop an effective TracDat assessment plan based on accreditation assessments.

Debra Coventry
Professor of Mathematics
University Assessment Team Co-chair

NEED HELP...CALL THE OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

The Office of Assessment supports the University's efforts in planning, assessing, and making changes to the programs and/or departments. The office is available to consult on any part of the assessment process. TracDat training will be scheduled early in the spring semester; however, if you need assistance prior to the training session contact Wrenette Tedder at 230-5270 or tedderw@hsu.edu.