

NSSE Survey Coming!

Wrenette Tedder

In February 2012, the Office of Assessment will begin the administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE is a college student survey that assesses the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development. The NSSE was piloted in 1999 with 70 institutions taking part and last year 751 institutions administered the NSSE 2011. Henderson State University has taken part in this survey every other year since 2002.

All students classified as a freshman or senior will be asked to participate. The data collected will show undergraduate experiences, Henderson’s preserved strengths and weaknesses, identify potential areas of improvement, and pinpoint aspects not in line with our mission. Henderson State University will develop an action plan to address each of the challenges.

Assessment Team for 2011-2012

Feel free to contact your representative on the Assessment Team. They are willing to assist you in the assessment	
Phillip Schroeder, Chair	Ellis College
Debra Coventry	Ellis College
Brett Serviss	Ellis College
Joyce Shepherd	Ellis College
Margaret Hoskins	School of Business
Bernie Hellums	Teacher’s College
Lecia Franklin	Finance and Administration
Lenette Bailey	President’s Office
Pam Ligon	Provost’s Office
Bob Yehl	Provost’s Office
Karen Spradlin	External Affairs
Chad Fielding	Student Services
Keri Burkman	Graduate School
Blake Smith	Student Government Association
Are you interested in joining the Assessment Team? Please email Wrenette Tedder (tedderw@hsu.edu).	



Special Points of Interest

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

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Assessment Brief

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A Conversation with Dr. Angela Boswell

Dr. Angela Boswell
 Professor of History/Co-Chair of HLC Steering Committee

Every ten years, the Higher Learning Commission visits with the colleges and universities that it accredits (in the north central portion of the United States). Prior to that visit, it asks that the university engage in an honest and thorough self-study which usually takes about two years. At the first HLC Conference in Chicago that I attended, one of the presenters cautioned us “If all you get at the end of the two years of self-study is the permission to remain in business another ten years, then you have wasted a lot of time and effort.”

Now that Henderson is nearing the end of that two-year self-study process as we prepare for the HLC visit in February, I truly understand what those words meant. What a process this has been!

Overall, sixty-seven members of the campus community served on five different “criterion” subcommittees. Those members had further subdivided into smaller subcommittees to seek evidence to show that Henderson fulfills the criteria for reaccreditation. Each of these people and subcommittees brought with them knowledge that no one person at the university had. Together they provided a comprehensive look at who we are, what we say we do, whether we do what we say, and how well we do it.

This summer, I had the opportunity – or onerous task, depending on which day you caught me – of turning the many pieces and great reports that made up the self-study into one document. Narrative and evidence had to be rearranged, revised, and/or rewritten to make sure we responded as directly to the criteria as we could. Sections were moved from one criterion report to another in order to remove as much duplication as possible. Duplication, however, remained because none of our programs actually exist in a bubble separate from the rest of the university. And duplication also remained because not everyone, not even every member of the visiting team, will read the entire report, so that if we needed the same piece of information to show that we were meeting more than one criterion then that information appeared in more than one chapter.

After finishing the rough draft and sending it to the campus for feedback, Jennifer Holbrook, with the assistance of the HLC Graduate Assistant, Arsala Khan, has been going through each and every line of the report to make sure that we have the evidence to back up all our claims (and that the evidence matches what is said in the report). This has been painstaking and sometimes just painful. However, HLC has put increased emphasis on evidence. This emphasis on evidence, and on assessment, has come as a result of the multiplying voices – the public, taxpayers, and legislators, among others – who have been calling for greater public accountability. Like it or not, universities across the nation must increasingly justify and explain what they do and why.

As we near the end of the preparation of the report, however, I have come to

A Conversation with Dr. Angela Boswell

(Continued)

believe that we really have done more than just produce a report that will allow us to stay in business for another ten years. The self-study process has shined a light on the many things that Henderson does well and brought to the surface some things we could do better. Even things we already “knew” about the university, we understand better. For instance, one administrator knew how well we supported a certain student program, but when he was asked to provide numbers he was pleasantly surprised that we spent much more money per year on the program than he thought. When it comes to classroom space, we all know that there are no classrooms free at the peak hours of the day. The self-study forced us to gain a better understanding of that by doing an analysis to find that during the peak hours of the day our classrooms are, indeed, 81 percent occupied. Clearly, these are tiny examples of the larger “whole” that our university has discovered in the process of this self-study.

Something else, though, that Jennifer and I discovered in this process is the cooperative spirit of our campus (perhaps the Reddie spirit?). Almost everyone that we, or the many members of the committees and subcommittees, have asked for information has been very helpful and very responsive. When we asked for feedback from the campus on the report, I was pleasantly surprised at the large number of faculty and staff from all over the campus who read the report and offered suggestions and corrections. (I am in the process of making all those changes right now.) This process really has been inclusive, not just because Jennifer and I tried to make it so, but because the people of Henderson have volunteered their efforts to make it so. I think Henderson can be proud of the report, not just because it is thorough and not just because it proves that we are a wonderful university but because it was the collective spirit of Henderson that produced it.

From the Chair

Dr. Phillip Schroeder

Wow, sometimes when I think that a situation will provide no benefits or results, time spent without purpose or fulfillment, it just proves me wrong. After two and a half years of serving as Chair of the Assessment Team I have come to realize that I have the unusual advantage of working with more than a dozen committed individuals representing every area of HSU. Many members of the Team have much more experience with assessment than I, some have far less. There are representatives from all of the Colleges, university finance, the President’s office, student services, the Office of Assessment, as well as undergraduate and graduate members. The reality of the situation is that I have a wealth of information with easy access, diverse experience, and a willingness to help that is rare and unusual. I can ask direct questions or request that someone meet with me to go through my own assessment materials for the Department of Music. This diverse team of individuals is a priceless resource. Boy, I must be something special.

Well, maybe I am not so special. The truth is that anyone across campus, any member of the HSU community (and anyone from off campus) – faculty members, students and administrators - has access to exactly the same professional, patient, and good spirited assistance that is available to me. All you need to do is ask.

The Student’s Perspective of Assessment

Blake Smith

First of all, greetings! My name is Blake Smith, and I am a junior music major from Melbourne, Arkansas. This is my second semester serving on the University Assessment Team and I was asked to write an article to offer a student’s view of how assessment works and what we do as a team. Now, I will be the first to tell you that I am still getting accustomed to all the different activities we do, and that I joined the team right in the middle of some pretty big projects, but I have quickly figured out several different aspects of what we do, and exactly what our goals are.

The primary goal for this year is the university-wide preparation for the on-campus visit from the Higher Learning Commission. Obviously, this visit is of the utmost importance to our university community: accreditation for the next ten years. Would as many students want to attend a school or work at a university without the endorsement of one of the primary organizations of accreditation? I would not think so. We on the assessment team want to make sure all of our “ducks are in a row” so that this visit will go very smoothly! For it to go well, we need your help, from each and every department, academic and administrative/nonacademic. It’s like the old saying, “you’re only as strong as your weakest link.” If each and every unit of Henderson State University can get all their assessment affairs in order, and we all prepare for this very important visit, it will go smoothly, and everyone’s lives will be easier. That, in a nutshell, is my view of assessment, and the important things we focus on for the betterment of the university.

From the Desk of Wrenette Tedder, Director of Assessment

Assessment Update

The Assessment Team has worked extremely hard this past year in revising three key documents. The Assessment Team Assessment Plan has been revised and entered into TracDat. The Team has worked to revise the University Assessment Plan, which is in the process of being endorsed by the Faculty Senate. It will be finalized once all recommended changes have been made. Currently, the Team is working on an online Assessment Team Handbook and those resources need to be shared with others outside of the Team. This project should be completed before the end of the fall semester.

The Assessment Team has reviewed the progress made in the assessment cycle for 2010-2011. During this cycle we had a few new units added to TracDat. There were a total of 83 units that needed to enter an assessment plan into the system as well as report the results that were collected for the 2010-2011 assessment cycle. The progress report showed that of the 83 units in TracDat (95%) had assessment plans in the system for 2010-2011. The four units without assessment plans are currently working to develop plans for the 2011-2012 assessment cycle. The report showed there was an increase in the number of units completing the cycle by entering the data that was collected and making recommendations compared to 2009-2010; however, we are only at 87%. Several of the units did not have their data by the deadline and they are currently entering that information in TracDat.

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.