Fostering student learning through a collaborative and evidence-based assessment process.

Closing the LOOP

University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate intellectual preparedness for success in professional life, bolstered by integrative experiences and technological competence.
2. Demonstrate effective written and oral communication, including use of appropriate technology.
3. Apply critical thinking skills in deliberative decision-making and problem solving.
4. Demonstrate civic awareness and responsibility, both locally and globally.
5. Negotiate ethical relationships with people who have different backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, beliefs, and values.
6. Demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and the self-awareness to sustain the life of ongoing, independent learning.

About this Newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep faculty and staff informed about assessment activities underway at MSUM. These activities encourage us to reflect upon student learning and prepare us for our 2017 reaffirmation visit from the Higher Learning Commission.

To the right, you will see two important items:

- The assessment feedback loop, which shows the process for collecting, interpreting, reflecting upon and making changes based on assessment evidence. When curricular changes have been made based upon assessment data, we have successfully closed the loop.
- The six University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes that were recently adopted by MSUM and state the outcomes we expect our students to have met upon graduation. We are developing methods of measuring these outcomes to show our campus’s successes as well as become more aware of areas that need improvement.

This monthly newsletter will report on work of the University Assessment Committee, on data gathered through assessment, on different assessment strategies used on this campus, and on curricular and co-curricular changes inspired by assessment data. We want you to know that the hard work that goes into assessing our students’ learning does matter and does lead to palpable results.
Assessment Activities Update

Co-curricular Assessment

In addition to academic program assessment, MSUM is now assessing student learning in co-curricular areas—everything done by students outside the classroom. The co-curricular areas are making good progress in identifying student learning outcomes and crafting assessment plans. The Enrollment Management and Student Affairs division Directors held a half-day retreat this month to work on tying assessment activities to strategic planning. Some departments will be ready to submit their outcomes and plans right after spring break.

Guiding their work are standards for each area developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). These standards identify the relationship between the curricular and co-curricular areas of a university as it relates to student learning and development. Consistent with the institutional mission, programs and services must:

- Assess relevant and desirable student learning and development;
- Provide evidence of impact on outcomes;
- Articulate contributions to or support of student learning and development;
- Articulate contributions to our support of student persistence and success;
- Use evidence gathered through this process to create strategies for improvement of programs and services.

These principles were also considered as the Assessment Committee formulated the University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes.

To support the assessment planning in co-curricular areas, there will be a series of brown bag discussion groups as well as sessions on specific topics, such as writing effective outcomes, using information you are already collecting, direct vs. indirect measures, and so on. For more information about any of these sessions, or to schedule a visit from the Assessment Committee with your department, please contact Diane Wolter at wolterdi@mnstate.edu.

Approaches to LASC Assessment

How do you assess across multiple sections and instructors? Multiple departments find solutions!

The Psychology Department created a pool of multiple choice items for PSYCH 113 that aligned with the student learning outcomes. Instructors could choose questions that would work best for their section, retaining academic freedom on the remainder of each exam. Common guidelines were used for interpreting and reporting the results so that faculty could pinpoint where students had less success.

The Department of Economics, Law and Politics benefited from some instructors who completed the LASC assessment forms early. These were then shared with other instructors in the department for use as a template when completing their own forms.

The Mathematics Department used course coordinators to manage the process of gathering evidence for their LASC courses. The Department Chair also shared her reports with the department to make explicit her rationale for evaluating the students. For the future, course coordinators are exploring the use of signature assignments.

The University Assessment Committee hopes that sharing of LASC assessments within departments will expand as the process continues. Innovations such as these will be shared and celebrated in future editions of Closing the Loop.

Did You Know?

This spring, MSUM will administer the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to our first-year and senior students. In 2013 we learned:

- Our first-year students report significantly higher rates of participating in a learning community than students at our peer institutions but they report lower rates of giving a course presentation.
- Our seniors reported higher levels of satisfaction with their advising than students at our peer institutions, though they reported lower rates of working collaboratively with other students on assignments.

To learn more about MSUM’s NSSE results, go to mnstate.edu/assess.