CS 3.3.1.1 (Institutional Effectiveness: educational programs, to include student learning outcomes), Recommendation   2

Provide the results of the assessments of the undergraduate and the graduate student learning outcomes, and document the use of these results of assessment to improve the educational programs. Document completion of the action plans that the University described in its last report as "next steps" for future undergraduate assessments and "future steps" for graduate program assessments.

Results of Student Learning Outcomes Assessments, AY 2005-06 through AY 2008-09

At the closing of the AY 2007-08, the primary issue for Georgia State University's student learning outcome assessments was clarity. Over the past year, Georgia State has instituted several changes in committee structure and assessment processes in order to facilitate best practices in assessment. In addition, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, through the Director of Academic Assessment,[1] has enhanced communication with assessment faculty and department chairs by presenting information sessions and workshops focused on the assessment of student learning. This report documents the University's "next steps" and "future steps" as they were described in last year's response, and then highlights the results of the assessment inventories of the undergraduate and the graduate student learning outcomes, including evidence that assessment results have been used to improve educational programs..[2]

Next Steps: Undergraduate Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

---

[1] The title of the Senior Faculty Associate for Assessment has changed to the Director of Academic Assessment, which more accurately defines the full-time nature and responsibilities of the position as it has developed.

[2] Attachment 1 provides a summary of the inventory for our general education learning outcomes as they are associated within undergraduate degree programs and Core assessments.   Attachment 2 presents detailed findings of the inventory by College within the University, from AY 2006-06 through AY 2008-09.

In the fall semester, 2008, the Undergraduate Assessment Committee and the Director of Academic Assessment provided written feedback to each Assessment Coordinator for their general education assessments in the Undergraduate major. In order to facilitate improvement in assessment and reporting, the Chair of UAC, Committee members, and the Director of Academic Assessment conducted eight workshops in October and November, 2008. Samples of excellent assessment reports were highlighted to inform the process and products of student learning assessments for those departments whose assessments were less than adequate. Every one of the assessment coordinators from the Undergraduate degree majors attended one of the workshops (n=71).

During the Assessment Workshops, all issues addressed in last year's report to SACS as "Next Steps" were discussed. The following demonstrates completion of these action plans (next steps):

1. Course grades or "grade" language that is ambiguous in the measures and findings have been revised for future reporting cycles. The number of departments that reported grades, particularly course grades over the last few years has decreased from 10 out of 46 departments reporting in AY 2006-07 to 3 out of the 47 departments reporting in AY 2008-2009. This conversation regarding best practices for measures and findings continues.

2. Questionable targets were addressed and encouragement for clarification and updated targets discussed. We assured the assessment coordinators that the targets are determined by departments and no penalties for failure to achieve a target exist for the assessment process. Rather, the focus of targets should be reasonable for the situation and the students involved. Targets provide a way for the department to "set the bar" that makes sense for them. For all departments reporting in the AY 2008-2009 cycle, targets set were reasonable for the student learning outcome expectations.

3. Discussion about the need for course-embedded student learning assessment and a request that the names and numbers of courses be included in the next cycle.   Many Undergraduate programs had already begun to use course embedded evidence in the AY 2007-2008 assessment cycle; however, the number of departments stating courses where evidence was gathered increased from 30 of 46 departments reporting in AY 2006-2007 to 34 of 44 reports in AY 2008-2009. In addition, several departments mentioned in general ways that the outcomes were measured through course tests, projects, papers, etc., without identifying the specific course(s) within which they were measured.   Although we observed more significant increases for this aspect of the assessment process within the graduate programs (see below), the undergraduate programs also are moving in a positive direction in terms of best practices. We continue to work with departments to identify specifically where evidence of student learning is gathered within their curriculum.

4. Departments that were missing action plans or whose action plans did not address future improvements in student learning outcomes. Each year we find more programs that understand the purpose of Action Plans and follow through with them. Typical examples of these plans include statements such as: "Students will be given different sets of hypothetical data and be asked to interpret the results and formulate hypothesis and experiments;" "Incorporate more real-world examples in teaching allowing better student comprehension in hardware systems and computer organization;" "Revise textbook choices for these courses since they do not contain sufficient number of examples." These recent examples of Action Plans are directly linked to the courses taught and to the student learning outcomes within the degree program. We will highlight these best practices during workshops and conversations this year.

   The issue of Action Plans elicited interesting discussions among the coordinators during the Workshops in 2008. Many of the Coordinators reported that they sometimes

developed Action Plans independent of department input. Assessment reports are most commonly due the end of spring semester or the beginning of summer semester, and many faculty are on leave or out of touch. According to the Coordinators, this due date provided no opportunity to meet with a committee or the department to share assessment findings, and then create a coherent plan from a department perspective. Therefore, for AY 2008-09, the Undergraduate Assessment Committee approved reporting in two phases: Mission through the Findings sections in WEAVEonline by Mid-June, and, after meeting with their faculty in early fall, report Action Plans and Analyses by October 1, 2009. This plan is more in line with the workings of the university, but it did not allow for a complete report of Action Plans for the AY 2008-09 reporting cycle in this report..

5. Written feedback to each department regarding student learning outcomes assessment is provided each year. In the fall of each academic year, the Undergraduate Assessment Committee, in conjunction with the Director of Academic Assessment, provides written responses to each assessment report. These responses and an overall summary report are submitted to department Assessment Coordinators, their Chairs, and the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness (see Attachment 4 for samples of these reports).   These reports are the focus of the Assessment Workshops.

6. Expanding the role of the existing GEAC of the University Senate required an amendment to the original motion within the Committee on Academic Programs. During AY 2008-09, Georgia State revised and developed committees to oversee the undergraduate and graduate learning outcome assessments reported in WEAVEonline[3] among the departments. The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) was re-named the Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC) in the fall semester, 2008,

---

[3] WEAVEonline is the assessment software Georgia State uses to capture student learning outcomes. It was developed by Virginia Commonwealth University.

to more accurately describe this committee's responsibilities for undergraduate assessment. In the spring semester, 2009, the University Senate passed a motion to create a Graduate Assessment Committee, a committee that will focus on graduate degree programs and the student learning outcomes associated with them, beginning AY 2009-10. These two Senate committees, then, provide peer feedback for assessments of student learning in the Core, the Undergraduate degree majors, the QEP initiative (Critical Thinking though Writing), and the Graduate degree majors. Their written feedback will be provided to all assessment coordinators, their respective department chairs, the Director of Academic Assessment, and the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness. The Director of Academic Assessment oversees the duties of these committees.

7. Eight small group workshops for undergraduate assessment coordinators were held in the fall semester, 2008. These small group sessions focused on feedback from the assessment committee as well as defining terms, encouraging course-embedded outcomes and measures, and discussion of action plans.

8. Assessment inventory/overview (Attachment 3): This Undergraduate Assessment inventory includes a careful look at Mission Statements and their connections to student learning (Mission with SLO), Course Embedded Outcomes and Measures (Embedded Outcomes), Types of Measures (both direct and indirect), Action Plans, and Evidence of Faculty Involvement. We will continue to monitor and refine this information in order to more clearly inform best practice and training for faculty.

<u>Future Steps: Graduate Assessments of Student Learning Outcomes</u>

The former Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning provided feedback to graduate assessment coordinators in the fall semester, 2008, for their student learning outcomes assessment for AY 2007-08. This feedback consisted of an email to each program that pointed out best practices and suggestions for the next assessment cycle.

With the advent of the upgraded software from WEAVEonline during the academic year, 2008-2009, and in an effort toward greater clarity in assessment reporting, the Director of Academic Assessment wrote a Guide for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (20 pages) which was disseminated to all department Chairs and Assessment Coordinators in January, 2009. In February, 2009, all Department Chairs and Assessment Coordinators (n=175), for both Undergraduate and Graduate programs, were then invited to attend one of 14 information sessions (Assessment Conversations) offered over a two-day time period. Ninety-three invitees responded "yes; to the invitation; 90 attended, including 16 Chairs, 2 Deans, and 72 Assessment Coordinators The hour-long discussions focused on the assessment reports from previous years, the language of assessment, and the upgraded software from WEAVEonline. The majority of questions and comments from faculty and administrators, however, concerned the graduate programs and their reports: stating Missions with a Student Learning Outcome focus, specifying courses where evidence of student learning may be identified, and the purpose and usefulness of well-stated Action Plans.

As a result of these conversations, several departments/programs sent an updated list of graduate degree offerings and eight departments invited the Director of Academic Assessment to meet with their department and/or Assessment Coordinators to further explain student learning outcomes assessment and the software, WEAVEonline. During the spring and summer semesters, 2009, an inventory of Graduate degree program assessment information, as reported in WEAVEonline, was completed (See Attachment 3).

<u>Assessment Inventory</u>

A summary of the assessment inventories for both the Graduate and Undergraduate degree programs is presented in Attachment 2 with descriptions of

continuous improvement data described below. Following is an executive summary of the Assessment Inventory.

Mission Statements

From AY 2005-2006 through AY 2007-2008, Mission statements reflected both the departmental goals in general, as well as their goals for their students' learning.[4] Attachment 2 describes the number of reports for both undergraduate and graduate programs that included a Mission statement with student learning outcomes generally defined (Mission with SLO). When departments first began considering student learning assessment in 2004, they were asked to develop a departmental plan. Therefore, many described only their departments' general disciplinary foci and numbers of students in their programs. Over the span of the inventory, we find an increase in the number of mission statements that clearly include a student learning focus among the Undergraduate reports (from 26 of 46 reports to 34 of 47 reports), and a more dramatic increase among the graduate reports (from 53 of 112 reports to 80 of 99 reports).

Student Learning Outcomes Mapped to Courses

We continue to encourage faculty to consider carefully embedding outcomes and measures within specific courses as the course(s) allows for a concrete location for changes to occur that affect student learning. Many courses are utilized by departments for assessment. Although some fluctuation exists, from AY 2005-06 to AY 2008-09, we observed a steady increase in the number of programs that are consciously embedding their assessments within their courses. (Undergraduate: from 22 to 34; Graduate: from 38 to 55).

Direct and Indirect Measures

---

[4] When the software was upgraded, an additional column was added to distinguish goals individually. As coordinators make the shift to describe goals as a separate element, we will begin to track these for both number and clarity over the next few years.

Both direct and indirect assessment takes place each academic year. While most undergraduate programs used some form of direct assessment in terms of measuring content knowledge and skills within their discipline through written work, test items, and portfolios, as well as tests specific to their fields, departments also included indirect assessment in the form of surveys of faculty, students, clients, and alumni. For the Graduate Programs, most of the assessment reports include comprehensive exams and thesis/dissertation as the unit of measurement, as well as the kinds of indirect measures like surveys and faculty judgment of projects, theses and dissertations. Faculty are encouraged to continue to use these and to develop descriptive rubrics through which to measure student learning in comprehensive exams and theses/dissertations. Faculty were also encouraged to consider front-end measures of student learning drawn from the program's curriculum where evidence of learning toward these culminating tasks takes place. We are finding that the number of graduate programs incorporating rubrics to measure theses and dissertations is gradually increasing by three or four per year.

Action Plans

Action plans are crucial for continuous improvement. The upgrade in the WEAVEonline software allows for Action Plan Tracking, which will aid tremendously in tracking Action Plans over time, as well as enhancing their time to completion and success. Over the past few years, 94% of the Undergraduate Programs identified Action Plans, half of which Acted Upon them. For the Graduate Programs, nearly 80% identified Action Plans, while a little over 25% Acted Upon them.

Conclusions

Several trends in assessment appear from the comprehensive assessment inventory. Over the last four years, faculty more clearly report Mission Statements that are student learning-based, particularly in the last reporting cycle. Graduate Programs

are more consistently reporting evidence of student learning embedded in courses. Workshops and Conversations during AY 2008-09 appeared to affect understanding and reporting of student learning outcomes assessments in positive ways.

The descriptions of direct and indirect measures are becoming clearer and more carefully measured with rubrics and criteria. A steady increase in the use of portfolios for assessment is also evident. As a result of many consultations and the Assessment Conversation, faculty are gradually adding student learning outcomes with evidence embedded within graduate courses (methods courses and professional development courses primarily). They are also developing criteria (most often rubrics) through which they assess both comprehensive exams and, particularly, dissertations. This criteria-based assessment appears to be replacing grades as a way to report student learning. We are very encouraged by this shift.

The Director of Academic Assessment, along with the Chairs of the Undergraduate and Graduate Assessment Committees, will continue the Assessment Workshops and Conversations for all Assessment Coordinators and their Department Chairs during AY 2009-10, including the Graduate Assessment Coordinators. The immediate responses from those who participated in these activities last year were extremely positive. These efforts are contributing to a positive and collegial atmosphere of academic assessment as we highlight best practices of peers, clarify purposes and processes, and encourage faculty and administration to embrace the value of continuous improvement in student learning outcomes assessment.

Attachment 1

Undergraduate Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
General Education Associations, AY 2005-2009

General Education Learning Outcomes   2005-06[5]

	Written Com	Oral Com	Collab	Critical Thinking	Contemp Issues	Qual Skills	Tech
Undergrad # of Associations	132	106	86	196	124	84	90

General Education Learning Outcomes   2006-07

	Written Com	Oral Com	Collab	Critical Thinking	Contemp Issues	Qual Skills	Tech
Undergrad # of Associations	134	113	78	201	132	80	96

General Education Learning Outcomes   2007-08

	Written Com	Oral Com	Collab	Critical Thinking	Contemp Issues	Qual Skills	Tech
Undergrad # of Associations	160	127	85	217	148	89	105

General Education Learning Outcomes   2008-09[6]

	Written Com	Oral Com	Collab	Critical Thinking	Contemp Issues	Qual Skills	Tech
Undergrad # of Associations	104	84	64	145	97	50	49

---

[5] Data includes some undergraduate information in the Core as faculty originally defined Core as undergraduate gateway in some cases
[6] During this cycle, the software update interfered with reporting associations

Attachment 2

Summary of Assessment Inventory, AY 2005-06 through AY 2008-09

FY 2005-2006   46 of 46 Undergraduate Programs Reported
                      112 of 113 Graduate Programs Reported

	Mission with SLO	Outcomes Embedded	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures	Action Plans
Undergrad	26	22	111	14	43
Graduate	53	39	101	71	93

AY 2006-2007   46 of 48 Undergraduate Programs Reported
                       112 of 113 Graduate Programs Reported

	Mission with SLO	Outcomes Embedded	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures	Action Plans	Acted Upon
Undergrad	34	30	127	46	44	23
Graduate	52	38	101	72	96	26

AY 2007-2008 47 of 48 Undergraduate Programs Reported
             114 of 123 Graduate Programs Reported

	Mission with SLO	Outcomes Embedded	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures	Action Plans	Acted Upon
Undergrad	30	25	128	16	42	25
Graduate	50	55	184	53	89	22

AY 2008-2009[7]   44 of 51 Undergraduate Programs Reported (7 w/missing elements)
                  99 of 137 Graduate Programs Reported (3 w/missing elements)

	Mission with SLO	Outcomes Embedded	Direct Measures	Indirect Measures	Action Plans	Acted Upon[8]
Undergrad	33	34	111	41		
Graduate	80	47	237	93		

---

[7] The 2008-2009 cycle produced fewer completed reports compared to previous years (per number of programs); however, the number of times the mission included references to student learning outcomes actually increased during AY 2008-09.

[8] Action Plan information will be reported by October 1, 2009

Attachment 3

Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Inventory

Graduate Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Inventory

2005-06 through AY 2008-09