

Report to Senate from IUSB Campus Assessment Committee 2001-02

Introduction:

The IUSB Campus Assessment Committee has been very active this year with its mission of monitoring, evaluating and improving academic assessment activities. The Committee has been particularly interested in 2001/2 with responding to the assessment concerns listed in the final Higher Learning Commission (NCA) accreditation report. The primary concern listed in the Challenges section of the report addressed by the Campus Assessment Committee was, “. . . The assessment of student learning outcomes for purposeful modification and enhancement of the curriculum remains a challenge.”

The Committee has responded to this concern of outcomes and program modification in a number of different ways. The Assessment Committee has been educating members of the Committee and the wider campus in the latest assessment philosophy and techniques through attendance at conferences and the collection of written resources. The Assessment Committee evaluated currently collected information in annual and third year reports specifically for outcomes and feedback information, and has modified and improved current information collection to emphasize outcomes and program improvements through assessment. The Assessment Committee has also awarded a number of grants to academic programs for improvement and enhancement of their assessment programs.

2000/01 Departmental Third Year Review Summary:

The IUSB Assessment Committee asks each degree granting department at IUSB to summarize assessment activities every three years and present the Committee with a brief written and oral report. For the 2000-2001 academic year seventeen departments were scheduled to give reviews, sixteen were done. The presentations were made in April and May of 2001. The following departments gave reports: Special Education- Graduate and Undergraduate, Women=s Studies, Secondary Education - Graduate and Undergraduate, Psychology, Political Science, Foreign Language, School Administration, Fine Arts, Business - Graduate, Mass Communications, Elementary Education - Graduate, History, Master of Liberal Studies and Biology.

The committee reported that of the sixteen departments giving reviews, eleven were quite positive. The Committee found these departments doing an adequate job of assessing and monitoring their programs, and using the results of assessment to make positive changes in the program. No, or minor, suggestions were made to these departments for changes in their assessment activities.

Three departments were given less positive feedback on their presentations. In all of these cases, the assessment program was new, had lapsed, or there had been major reorganization in the department. These programs struggled with writing or substantially re-writing assessment plans. These departments were unable to give assessment results or indications of how assessment was being used to improve the program.

Two programs were asked to give an assessment update by next January because the Committee felt that by then the programs would have more information. Two programs did not submit a written report and are not included in this summary.

A wide range of activities is being used to assess student achievement in the five Educational Objectives identified in the IUSB Assessment Plan. These Objectives are: Higher order thinking skills; Basic academic success skills, Discipline specific knowledge and skills; Liberal arts and academic values; and Personal development with work and career preparation. Most departments use some sort of comprehensive evaluation of students which includes techniques such as: capstone course, portfolio or standardized exam. Other types of activities include focus groups, surveys, faculty discussions and faculty evaluations.

The data collected from these assessment activities is being used to make changes in the programs. For example, one of ten issues identified and addressed in a Business Graduate focus group evaluation was a lack of emphasis on International Business. The faculty responded by requiring a particular course on this topic. Several departments have made improvements in individualized advising for students. Many departments have also made changes in particular curriculum, changed the course schedule or offered a study seminar in response to needs identified by assessment activities.

Assessment, and documentation of assessment activities, is beginning to be accepted at IUSB as a routine and important part of maintaining academic excellence. The majority of departments have established assessment activities and data collection. These results are being used to make changes in curriculum and other aspects of the program.

However, there are still a few programs that have not established assessment as an important monitor of program quality. In some instances assessment activities are being done, but informally. Or, data is being collected, but not analyzed or used to make changes in the program.

The biggest challenge for many of these departments is maintaining some continuity of faculty responsible for assessment activities and evaluation. Assessment needs to evolve with, and inform changes in the program. Having an up-to-date, and useful assessment program requires constant revision and vigilance. The departmental assessment programs need to be robust enough to adapt to changes in the program and personnel. They also need to provide some continuity of data.

The challenge for the Assessment Committee will be to encourage and support those programs with excellent assessment activities, and to assist programs that are struggling with new or unimplemented plans to establish assessment as a priority.

IUSB Faculty Attendance at the Assessment Institute:

The 2001 Assessment Institute in Indianapolis featured a number of highly respected assessment scholars and experts, and included in-depth sessions with individuals with successful assessment initiatives. The members of the IUSB community who attended this event, sponsored by the Assessment Committee, brought back many valuable ideas and inspirations from the conference.

The five IUSB attendees at the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis were unanimously enthusiastic about the experience. They found the sessions and interactions with other participants to be valuable and enriching. The conference was well attended with over 500 participants from 40 states and three countries. Linda Fisher, Alec Hosterman, Paul Newcomb, Barbara Peat and Marcia Sheridan from IUSB took part.

Marcia Sheridan presented a session on the use of metacognitive journals and portfolio assessment in a graduate Education course for teachers. Her analysis dealt with the major problems set for education by the pluralistic culture of American society. With the use of these techniques the graduate students she studied showed increased use of metaphorical language to describe the internal development of both their perceptual and conceptual worlds.

Linda Fisher found the session on "Doing Assessment as if Learning Matters Most," by Thomas Angelo to be particularly helpful. He honed in on the type of information and statistics that should be collected by Assessment Committees, and how that information should feed back into improving assessment and student learning. Angelo's comments on how Assessment Committees should function will be very useful to Linda in her role as Chair of the IUSB Assessment Committee.

Linda also described a pre-conference session led by John Taylor, Associate Director of the Higher Learning Commission of the NCA. He outlined the assessment expectations of the NCA when they do accreditation visits. The NCA is particularly interested in documentation of student learning. This information will be very helpful as the Assessment Committee collects, analyses and reports on assessment data over the next several years before the next NCA accreditation visit.

Alec Hosterman, as a newcomer to the assessment discipline, praised the sessions he attended, and the chance to interact with the presenters and other attendees informally. He specifically mentioned the session on “Assessment Essentials: Planning and implementing assessment programs,” by Trudy Banta and Douglas Edler as one that presented a good overview of assessment basics. He came back with many ideas and plans that can be adapted to his own department’s assessment program.

All of the IUSB participants in the Assessment Institute came back with a fresh perspective and new enthusiasm for assessment work at IUSB.

Assessment Grants:

The members of the Campus Assessment Committee were pleased to announce that they received a number of excellent applications for Assessment Grants. The Committee awarded grants to the following departments:

Computer and Information Sciences – This proposal, submitted by David Surma and James Wolfer, will fund the development of a comprehensive test for assessing student knowledge of topics from the IEEE/ACM 2001 program standards.

Dental Education (Dental Hygiene) – This proposal, submitted by Jennifer Klein and Judith Shafer, will fund the purchase of video-recording equipment to help in the assessment of students’ clinical and communication skills.

Dental Education (Dental Assisting) – This proposal, submitted by Barbara MacMillan, will allow the Dental Assisting program to develop a mock exam of the Dental Assisting National Board.

Elementary Education – This proposal, submitted by Michael Pickle, will allow the Elementary Education department to do a sophisticated analysis of assessment data already collected, and to improve the surveys which are currently being used.

School of Education – This proposal, submitted by Karen Clark, funds the analysis of a number of surveys related to the Teacher Education programs. This information will help the department to conform to new IPSB standards.

English – The English department will use their grant for a survey of their graduates. This survey will provide valuable information for program reviewers.

English – This proposal, submitted by Ken Smith, will allow for an in-depth analysis of final course portfolios of students in W130. The analysis will help the department in improving this fundamental course.

Fine Arts – This proposal, submitted by Alan Larkin, will fund a conversion of the Fine Arts advising documents from a word processing template to a database template. The new templates will allow for more accurate and efficient advising of Visual Arts students.

Congratulations to all of the successful applicants. These projects should help in the important work of excellent assessment of student learning at IUSB. The Assessment Committee hopes to offer Assessment Grants in future years when funds are available.

New Assessment Resources:

The IUSB Assessment Committee has selected a number of new resources on Assessment which should be very valuable to campus departments as they plan and implement assessment programs. Copies of these books are available at the Schurz Library, or by contacting a member of the Assessment Committee.

Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: shifting the focus from Teaching to Learning by Mary E. Huba and Jann E. Freed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines; pioneering approaches to assessment in higher education. Edited by Catherina A. Palomba and Trudy W. Banta. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2001.

Student Assessment in Higher Education; a handbook for assessing performance. Allen H. Miller, Bradford W. Imrie and Kevin Cox. London: Kogan Page, 1998.

Classroom Assessment Techniques; A handbook for college teachers. Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. Second edition. San Francisco: Josey Bass, 1993.

Student Learning: A Central Focus for Institutions of Higher Education. Edited by Austin Doherty, Tim Riordan and James Roth. Milwaukee, WI: Alverno College Institute, 2002.

Assessment Third Year Reviews 2002/3:

Because academic programs are the fundamental unit for student education at IUSB, the primary tool the Campus Assessment Committee uses for monitoring, evaluating and improving assessment is the Third Year Review. On a rotating basis, each academic program presents to the Campus Assessment Committee an evaluation of results of assessment activities, and an overview of ways in which assessment will progress in the coming years.

This year, in response to the Higher Learning Commission (NCA) report, the Assessment Committee is asking departments to particularly emphasize the outcomes of assessment activities, and the ways in which assessment has been used to change and improve programs.

The following departments are scheduled to present Assessment Third Year Reviews this spring: Undergraduate Business, Chemistry, Counseling and Human Services, Criminal Justice, Dental Assisting, Dental Hygiene, English, General Studies, Music, Physics and Astronomy, Social Work, Sociology and Theatre.

Based on these Reviews, the Assessment Committee will compile a report on Assessment at IUSB to be presented to the Academic Senate next fall.

Future Directions:

The IUSB Campus Assessment Committee has a number of important projects and goals for the coming year.

An Assessment Website is in development. This should be an extraordinarily valuable resource to the campus. It will have the reports of and information about the Committee. It will have blank forms and examples of the standard Assessment Committee activities, grants, Annual and Third Year Reports. It will also have a web and print bibliography of assessment resources.

The Assessment Committee also plans to evaluate and improve on the new annual data collection forms tested this year.

The Assessment Committee also plans to maintain its accountability to the Academic Senate and to the Administration by continuing to regularly report on the results of assessment activities and data collection while maintaining the confidentiality of academic programs.

The Assessment Committee plans to offer a round of grants each fall, and to continue to sponsor attendance at conferences and collection of resources as funds allow.

Finally, the Assessment Committee wishes to encourage interested members of the IUSB community to consider becoming a part of the important work of assessing student learning by being a member of the Committee next year. The Committee strives to maintain a balance of disciplines and tenured and untenured faculty. The work of monitoring, evaluating and improving assessment at IUSB can only be accomplished by a balanced and effective Committee.

2001-02 IUSB ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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