Progress Report to The Higher Learning Commission North Central Association

A Plan for Student Academic Achievement

Introduction

In October 1999, a team of consultant evaluators visited NWACC regarding its request for 10 years accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Learning. While the team recommended continued accreditation, it also recommended that the college prepare a progress report on assessment of student learning. The visiting team found that the faculty had developed a sound plan, but much of its implementation was in the beginning stages. This report will first address some of the specific concerns cited in the team report, then provide additional evidence of the progress made in assessment of student academic achievement since the team's visit.

Item: Developmental Education and the Learning lab.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

• There is a need for further data to document the effectiveness of developmental coursework and the services provided in the Learning Lab. Such data need to be collected on a systematic, longitudinal basis in order to determine the impact these programs are having so as to address whether or not they are a worthwhile investment.

Since 1999, NWACC has made tremendous progress in student learning assessment for both the learning lab and the developmental education programs. This progress has been accomplished in large part due to establishing two positions charged with helping to develop this area: the Learning Lab Director and the Developmental Education Assessment Coordinator.

Developmental Education

At NWACC, developmental education encompasses reading, writing, and mathematics, and most recently, the College Intensive English Program for students whose first language is not English. The primary outcome for the program is to prepare students to be successful in college level courses. While some students voluntarily elect to take these courses, most students are required to take developmental courses based on testing at admission (COMPASS, ACT). This program is housed within its own division, Academic Skills and General Studies. The academic skills division has implemented and is currently refining an impressive plan for assessing developmental education. The division dean has provided leadership and resources to the plan. The Developmental Education Assessment Coordinator works closely with Academic Skills faculty to collect, analyze and report student performance data and coordinate the overall assessment effort. The academic skills faculty, both full and part-time, have been active in developing a process that provides information that is useful for documenting and improving student learning at the program level. The Developmental Education Assessment Plan has two parts, the performance report and the diagnostic test results analysis.

<u>Developmental Education Performance Report</u>

Since the learning outcome for developmental education is to prepare students to be successful in college level courses, the assessment plan calls for tracking the performance of developmental students in college level courses compared to students whose test scores place them in the college level course directly. There are three disciplines in academic

skills; therefore, three different comparisons are performed. The table below provides an example of how student performance is presented using Spring 1999 and 2000 data. To date, three analyses have been performed. Overall, the developmental faculty have found that developmental student performance in college level classes has been comparable to students who enter directly.

	Reading	English	Math
Percent Success	Reading Intensive courses:	English	College
in: (Success means earning a C or better in the class. Withdrawals not considered in the study.)	Western Civilization; Psychology, Sociology, Biology, History, Accounting	Composition I	Algebra
Developmental Students	84%	71%	78%
Direct Entry students	74%	77%	72%

Diagnostic Test Analysis

For many years, Academic Skills faculty have given pre and post tests to assess student ability. As the faculty developed their assessment plans, they began to incorporate these test results. In conjunction with developing assessment measures, the faculty developed standard course outlines that identified primary learning outcomes for students in each developmental course. The faculty has been aligning the diagnostic test questions with the outcomes and refining the whole process of collecting, analyzing and responding to student performance results. Because there are three distinctly different sets of curricula, the developmental math, writing and reading faculty groups have each developed separate sets of plans and reports.

Math faculty use post-test results as measures of exit competencies. Like the college level math assessment, the post-test questions are embedded in the final exam for each instructor (as opposed to having a departmental final exam where all questions are the same across sections). The math faculty have set a performance criteria for these common questions.

Developmental writing faculty use both an objective type of exam (Comprehensive Workshop Evaluation) and an essay assessment. Essays are scored with a holistic rubric similar to the one college-level writing faculty use, but with different levels of expectations. For developmental students, a score of 3 means they demonstrate the skills the college level faculty expect them to have when they enter English Composition I.

Each semester, reading faculty give pre and post tests in each of the two levels of developmental reading. They compare student performance on the pre to the post diagnostic test. This comparison provides a growth measure that faculty expect from the students successfully completing the curriculum.

Learning Lab

At NWACC, the learning lab is composed of an open computer lab for general use and tutoring services. Additional tutoring services are provided at an east campus location called, "The Math Café." Assessment of learning support services such as these is particularly challenging. Typically, student acceptance and use of these services are

sporadic and criteria for successful service delivery are less available than is the case for classroom achievement. To meet this challenge, the Learning Lab staff has implemented a multi-method, multi-measure model of service usage, student satisfaction with services, and value-added educational impact on students using these services. The evaluation model has four components:

- 1. Services usage data from our electronic log-in system, EARL;
- 2. Qualitative survey data from students, tutors, faculty, and alumni;
- 3. A comparison group study;
- 4. Process assessment of staff training and development.

Services usage data

Students entering and exiting our open computer lab and our tutoring rooms log-in and log-out on a computer dedicated to that purpose. The software, developed at NWACC, Electronic Addressable Roster Log-in (EARL), keeps track of users by student number. EARL contains the full databases of all courses taught at the college during the current term and all enrolled students. Reports can be generated by EARL based on all student information from Banner 2000, the college-wide student records database management system, and from course information databases. In addition, EARL contains the specific course(s) for which the student is seeking support services, the student's current intentions as to degree, transfer, or other educational goal, and a record of tutoring services received on that particular day and time. Individual tutors record more detailed data in logbooks. The tutors' logbooks contain the tutored student's name and student identification number, the specific course tutored on that day and time, the time tutoring began and ended, and comment notes on the nature of the tutoring session. Data from the tutors' logs are later entered into a tutoring database and analyzed in several ways.

Survey Data

Survey data are generated by directing questionnaires to student users of learning lab services, assessing satisfaction with services, awareness of additional services offered, and suggestions for improvements. Tutors, faculty, and alumni are surveyed for collection of similar affective data.

Comparison Group Study

The comparison group study involves forming a parallel comparison group, comparable to tutored students on criterion related variables. In other words, students who have received tutoring services are matched with comparable students who have not elected to receive tutoring services. Students in the two groups are matched on gender, age, ethnic self-identification, ACT, ASSET, or COMPASS scores, and, in some cases, other relevant variables. Group and subgroup statistical comparisons yield an assessment of the value-added contribution of our services to performance in particular courses, to study skills assessment, and, in a later phase of the project, to performance on the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP).

Process Assessment of Staff Training and Development

Learning Lab and Math Café tutors participate in a systematic training and assessment program certified by the College Reading and Learning Association, an internationally recognized organization. All tutors are required to train to certification as a part of their employment. The requirements for CRLA certification for a tutor include: (1) Six hours of face-to-face tutor training in a seminar format, or four hours of face-to-face training and two hours of equivalent training in other venues; (2) four hours of online tutor training with essay examinations; and twenty-five hours of supervised tutoring practice. Additionally, all tutors participate in an initial and an annual developmental evaluation. The tutor completes a tutor self-evaluation and then meets to discuss her/his performance, growth, and any

concerns with the Learning Lab Director. As of Spring 2003, 67 percent of all tutors held CRLA certification.

Item: Measures for Institutional Outcomes.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

Not all institutional outcomes have an identified tool for measuring learning.

At NWACC, faculty have developed eight outcomes for general education, which are called institutional outcomes. In 1999, the assessment committee had not identified appropriate measures for each of these outcomes. Since that time, the assessment committee has not only identified at least one measure for each outcome, but has also adjusted or added additional measures for some of the other outcomes. In the process, the committee found that the outcome wording needed to be refined. The faculty votes to accept any changes in wording proposed by the committee. In fact, the committee has had to go back and rework wording based on faculty input. The following table summarizes the progress made in general education assessment since 1999.

Outcome

Critical Thinking Skills

- Students can analyze what they read or hear for logical fallacies and propaganda.
- Students can analyze a variety of problems and select or create solutions.

Writing Skills

- Students can write a clear, coherent, well-organized essay, which is substantially free of errors.
- Students can produce a researchbased document.
- Students can write practical documents such as letters, memos and reports.

Reading Abilities

Students can read selections at the appropriate level of education and describe the main

1999 Assessment **Measures**

Critical thinking & science Reasoning components of the CAAP test

Progress since 1999

Rephrased outcome-- now called Higher Order Thinking Skills; began an effort to develop rotating discipline specific course-embedded assessments.

CAAP writing test, percent of students who pass English comp with a C or better, pre and post English class assessment.

Eliminated grades in English Composition as a measure; expanded English pre-post testing into assessment of sample student papers in the English Comp sequence to determine growth and adequate performance; added COMPASS/ACT-CAAP comparison; moved "research-based document" element into another outcome.

CAAP reading test, Nelson Denny test.

Replaced Nelson Denny test with a faculty developed pre and post testing in developmental reading courses; added a faculty survey of student reading

ideas and supporting details.

 Students can evaluate written materials objectively. abilities; added COMPASS/ACT-CAAP comparison.

Oral Communication

 Students can present their ideas orally in a well organized, effective manner. Completion of a speech course, employer surveys.

Rephrased outcome; dropped completion rates for speech courses; added pre and post evaluation of sample student speeches as measure.

Math Skills

- Students can perform basic computational skills.
- Students can use algebraic skills to simplify expressions and solve equations.
- Students can apply computational skills to problems in science, business and tech areas.

CAAP math test, pre & post math tests, employer surveys, percent of students who pass math courses with a C or higher.

Dropped percent passing math courses as a measure; expanded pre/post testing; added compass/ACT to CAAP comparison; dropped using employer surveys; added using graduate surveys.

Computer Proficiency

 Students can demonstrate proficiency in using computers. Completion of Intro. To Computers

Dropped completion rates for computer classes as a measure; added pre/post test in computer class; refined outcome wording. Information Literacy

 Students can analyze their research needs and then evaluate synthesize information. Completion of English Comp I.

Refined outcome wording; dropped completion of English Comp I as a measure; added a courseembedded evaluation of the research process.

Cultural Awareness

 Students have gained knowledge and greater respect for ethical, cultural, political, economic, historical and social aspects of life. State required assessment of humanities and social sciences, summative evaluations, employer surveys Rephrased outcome; dropped assessment of humanities and social sciences and employer surveys; added graduation survey.

This table illustrates the dynamic nature of the assessment process. Each time a general education outcome is evaluated, the assessment committee considers making adjustments to the measures and outcomes as well as adjustments to instruction and support services. The committee's goal is to identify multiple measures for each outcome including a direct measure for each outcome. This goal has not yet been achieved, but the systematic process that has been set in place will allow NWACC to gradually reach maturing stages of continuous improvement.

Item: Assessing Writing.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

The process of assessing writing is not clearly defined.

NWACC faculty have made substantial progress in defining the process of writing assessment. In 1999, the self-study recommended expanding the assessment of student writing beyond use of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (standardized test) and English composition class grades. The assessment committee has continued to use standardized tests as one of the multiple measures of student writing abilities. The standardized test scores help the faculty see if NWACC's students are comparable to their peers. To the CAAP, the assessment committee has added the ACT-CAAP comparison to give a sense of growth through similar beginning point and end point measures. But the most useful progress has come from evaluating student writing samples-- a process developed and operated by the English composition faculty.

During the summer, a small group of composition faculty read a random sample of essays collected during the school year from composition classes. These essays represent student work early in Composition I, late in Composition I and late in Composition II. The essays are read by multiple readers who rate the essays using the CAAP 6 point rubric system. The results of the assessment are presented to the composition faculty each fall. The faculty expects growth in student writing and that students as a group are writing at the adequate level (average of 3.0 or higher) by the end of Composition II. The composition faculty pass both the results of the scoring and their response to the findings on to the assessment committee.

The assessment process has provided opportunity for composition faculty to look at student writing in terms of how students as a group are performing - a different perspective than looking at individual students in a class. The results from the essay analysis and other assessment measures have provided information to supplement what individual faculty experience in the classroom. The assessment process has prompted discussions among composition faculty about student writing. In 2000, the composition faculty participated in an extensive survey to gather input about teaching and learning the complex skill of writing. The discussions encompassed both challenges and solutions. The interaction has generated the idea of a writing program guide to help define departmental goals and expectations. Since then, a writing guide was actually developed. In conjunction with the standard course outline, the writing guide is used to orient new faculty to the writing instruction philosophy at NWACC and has helped ensure consistency among the many different faculty teaching English composition. The guide includes a description of the goals of the composition curriculum and the curriculum itself; guides on surviving the semester, creating a syllabus, handling plagiarism, and assessing both students and instruction; a description of the Writing Center philosophy and guidelines for working in the Center; and an explanation of the peer mentoring program.

The peer-mentoring program, begun in the Fall of 2001, is yet another way the composition program has attempted to both bring more uniformity to the program and to improve communication and instruction. The program groups two associate faculty members with one full-time faculty member, and group members do both portfolio evaluations and peer observation reports about one another; these evaluations are then included in each faculty member's yearly faculty evaluation. In addition, in the Fall of 2001, the department funded and created a campus-wide Writing Center staffed by the full-time faculty. The Center not only helps students and faculty directly with their writing, it also gives the composition program the ability to identify and respond to problematical instructional issues more directly. Finally, in the Spring of 2002, the English faculty began meeting three times a semester in brown bag lunch meetings. These meetings include presentations about composition pedagogy, offer the faculty members the opportunity to share both ideas and challenges; and are used once a year for group departmental norming of graded essays.

Item: Tracking Graduates.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

Not all programs track students, which may limit indirect measures of learning.

To address this concern, NWACC has implemented a plan to follow-up with graduates from each of the vocational oriented degree programs (Associate of Applied Science) as well as students graduating with the transfer-oriented degrees (Associate of Science or Associate of Arts). Assuming that students would more likely respond to follow-up from someone they were acquainted with rather than a "stranger" from institutional research, each program coordinator is charged with following up with their own graduates. In addition to being more personal, the program-oriented approach allows coordinators to ask graduates questions that are specific and relevant to the curriculum rather than a "one-size fits all" survey. Because each program coordinator has responsibility for follow-up, the method of follow-up used is one that is most effective for each particular program.

Because the curriculum of the transfer program is dispersed across several divisions, and because there are no true majors within it, the follow-up for this program is performed by the Learning Assessment Coordinator. The Vice President of Learning, who acts as the coordinator for the transfer curriculum, writes the letter to the students that accompanies

the surveys and receives, along with the assessment and Enrollment Management committees, reports on the results. Brief summaries of the reports are also shared with the faculty, board or trustees and other elements of the college community. Each of these groups can then make responses based on their role in the college. Efforts have been made to track student performance at transfer institutions as an indicator of achievement. Current FERPA interpretations by the state and transfer institutions has prevented NWACC from having access to this information.

While giving the responsibility of follow-up to the departments requires more effort to gather and report uniform results for the institution as a whole, NWACC feels this approach best fits its needs, providing better response rates and better information actually useful to the program faculty and advisory boards. To implement this approach, extra effort was needed to help those program coordinators who were not already following up with graduates to begin doing so. Extra coordination was needed to make sure all programs followed up on some common items (like placement and continued education). Since 2001, every program has made the effort to contact their graduates within six months of graduation and formally reported this information. Some programs go the extra step (which has been encouraged) to identify students who may not actually earn a degree but either transfer their coursework or use their training to get a job or advance in their profession.

Item: "Closing the Loop".

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

• It is the recommendation that NWACC develop and implement a <u>specific plan for</u> <u>annually making changes</u> in pedagogy, curriculum and /or academic support services as a result of assessment data with the implemented changes documented and placed into subsequent assessment cycles for review.

NWACC recognizes the futility of collecting information about student performance without using the information to improve student learning. Using the results to not only document, but improve student learning is the point of the process. A number of steps have been taken to make sure programs are "closing the loop."

Educating the faculty about the necessity of closing the loop has been a priority. For some faculty, realizing that student performance data is a tool for them to use, rather than for the administrators, the Board, the State, or even North Central, is somewhat of a revelation. The simple concept of the assessment loop – establish outcomes, measure performance, analyze results and make adjustments – has been the central message in the efforts to educate faculty about learning assessment. These educational efforts include program specific workshops, one-on-one meetings with the program coordinators, assessment handbook, faculty handbook, newsletters, presentations and reports. The assessment committee looks for the response element when it reviews program assessment plans, and this element is included in the assessment element of program reviews.

This concept of "closing the loop" is perhaps reinforced most effectively by the format of assessment report forms. The report forms require a response section. Each year in this section of the report, faculty indicate if they recommend making changes in one of three areas. They consider if they need to change or refine the learning outcome. This often happens early in the process as faculty work through just what they consider the key program level learning expectations they have for graduates of the program. A second area for changes is the assessment procedure. Faculty commonly make adjustments in the measure or analysis in order to get a more accurate picture of how well students are accomplishing the learning outcomes. The final area is changes to instruction. It is in this

part of the report faculty recommend changes to pedagogy, curriculum and /or academic support services. Sometimes faculty are satisfied with the results and simply decide to "continue to monitor student performance" another year. In other circumstances the measures are not precise enough to indicate exactly what should be changed so more investigation is needed before altering instruction. Examples of using data to make changes may be found in following sections (improving student learning and efficacy).

Progress on the previous year's recommendations is another element of good assessment practice that is encouraged in annual reports. Prompting this component encourages implementation and provides an opportunity to determine if changes are actually improving student learning.

Item: Linking Entrance and Exit Tests.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

 College must follow through with the plan to link CAAP to COMPASS and ASSET to measure growth of student knowledge.

In August of 2000, NWACC had ACT complete an analysis of student performance on college entrance/ placement tests (the ACT, ASSET and COMPASS) to their performance on the "exit" test (CAAP). The ACT, ASSET, COMPASS and CAAP exams are all ACT products. Even though they are not the same tests, ACT has been able to link these exams because they assess the same skills-- reading, writing and mathematics. The linkage reports, as they are called, showed that students did grow in each of these areas of general education and that this growth was consistent with (in some cases slightly better than) the reference group. Because this general benchmark report was positive, the assessment committee recommended no changes to instruction or academic support. Because the college had to go back three years in records to find enough students with matched entrance and exit tests, the committee decided to only do the analysis every three to four years. Another linkage report is scheduled to be completed fall 2003.

Item: Assessment and the Master Plan.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

 Work with faculty to address how to implement a feedback loop for data and to document the cycle as stated in their Master Plan for 2000-2005.

The Master Plan for 2000-2005 identified strengths and weakness of the assessment process. The document described eight specific steps (action plans) to make progress in assessment. The table below shows how faculty and administration have worked to follow through with the action plans for assessment as identified in the Master Plan document.

Action Plan	Progress to date
Continue the faculty position of Learning Assessment Coordinator as an individual who will work with his/her peers to implement and expand the assessment program.	The Learning Assessment Coordinator has continued to work as a 12 month faculty, teaching half time and working as a peer with the assessment committee and program coordinators to develop and implement an ongoing learning assessment process for program and general education learning outcomes.
 Provide needed resources in terms of both time and financial support for assessment. Specifically, Provide release time to program faculty to focus on developing the program-level assessment. Allied Health and Nursing already have program coordinators who are involved in this process. We recommend assigning assessment responsibilities to individuals within each degree/ curriculum area. For example, an individual may be designated as program coordinator, as in Allied Health and Nursing. These individuals would make up the assessment committee. 	• The instructional directors have taken steps to make sure each AAS degree program coordinator has assessment responsibilities as part of their job descriptions. Severe budget restrictions have prevented giving as much release time to all program coordinators as recommended. This has slowed but not stopped progress in developing assessment plans. The assessment committee focuses on general education and has a member with some expertise and interest in six of the eight general education outcomes.
 Provide a budget for assessment in several areas: copies, printing, mailings, meetings, training, and conferences. 	While this budget has been reduced due to funding cutbacks, it has provided minimum funds to all the needs listed.
Once program assessment plans are in place, begin an annual program-level "report card" on the different programs. This would be part of the responsibility of the assessment team.	This report card form has been developed and every degree program has been through this review one time. The report card is now part of regular program review.
The results of annual reports of assessment results and responses at the institutional and program-levels need to	Initially annual reports were made to faculty in a spring faculty business meetings. Presently faculty are informed

be made formally to faculty and staff in a meeting.	about assessment results and recommendations through an electronic newsletter distributed 6 times a year. Assessment recommendations that need faculty action are brought to the business meeting. This approach seems much more effective.
Establish a connection between program feedback and faculty development.	The assessment committee and faculty development committee share several members which helps keep each informed of what the other is doing. The assessment committee has regularly made suggestions to the faculty development committee as a response to assessment data.
Produce an assessment handbook that explains the hows and whys of assessment as a reference for both existing and new faculty, and include assessment as part of new faculty orientation.	Initially hard copies of this handbook were distributed to program coordinators and division chairs. Now an electronic version is available on the college shared K-drive. An assessment section has been added to faculty handbook to help orient new faculty to the assessment process.
Fully implement all of the Banner modules, including recruitment and alumni, so that students can be effectively tracked.	Budget and manpower limits have prevented implementation of the alumni module. CAAP exam results have been added to the Banner database to aid in analyzing the results based on student curriculum patterns.
As a long-term goal, include assessment information as part of the new curriculum application that is presented to the curriculum committee.	A suggestion of requiring standard course outlines as part of the committee's evaluation was rejected by the committee. They felt that preparing course outlines would be too much to ask at the early stages of course development.

<u>Item: Faculty Training</u>
The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

Faculty would benefit from attendance at conferences to expand their knowledge and appreciation for assessment.

A number of efforts have been made to expand the understanding of the assessment process through attending conferences. The majority of the learning assessment coordinator budget is intended to fund training. The coordinator has most strongly promoted conference opportunities to members of the assessment team and program coordinators (teaching faculty who are the key leaders of degree programs). While the 9-11 tragedy and severe budget cuts (including a college-wide moratorium on out of state travel) has limited the faculty participation in assessment conferences, NWACC faculty and instructional staff have been able to attend assessment conferences such as:

Date	Conference	Attendees
Spring	Consortium of Assessment and	Learning Assessment Coordinator
1999	Planning Support (CAPS) annual	
	conference, Monroe, LA	
Spring	NCTLA Assessment Institute	Learning Assessment Coordinator
2000	Providence, RI	and 2 Assessment Committee
		members
Spring	Annual CAPS Conference,	Developmental Education
2000	Terre Haute, IN	Assessment Coordinator
Summer	AAHE Assessment Conference,	Learning Assessment Coordinator
2000	Charlotte, NC.	and VP of Learning
Spring	Annual CAPS conference,	Learning Assessment Coordinator
2001	Ft. Mitchell, KY	
Summer	AAHE Assessment Conference,	Developmental Education
2001	Denver, CO	Assessment Coordinator
Spring	North Central Association annual	Learning Assessment Coordinator
2002	conference, Chicago, IL	-
Spring	Course Embedded Assessment	VP of Learning and 7 members of
2003	Workshop, Springfield, Mo.	the Assessment Committee

Item: Linking Assessment and Planning.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

• The plan to assess student academic achievement needs to be included as a part of an organized and cohesive strategy for planning for institutional effectiveness.

Recommendations alone are not sufficient to improve student learning. While many recommendations that faculty make in the assessment process can be implemented with no cost, others require allocating in funds and/or personnel to accomplish. To ensure that resources are secured for these improvements, recommendations from assessment feed into the planning and budgeting process (including master planning) from three different directions.

1. Program Coordinators

Each AAS degree program has a coordinator who teaches in the program and plays the key role in managing the program. This is the individual who prepares the annual assessment report. In the transfer program, the faculty from each knowledge domain review student performance data and make recommendations. These individuals also play a key role in working with the division Deans or VP of Learning in preparing annual budgets. These individuals are the most fundamental in helping ensure assessment recommendations are provided resources for implementation.

2. Instructional Directors

Instructional Directors, in most cases, directly supervise the program coordinators and see the annual assessment reports prepared by the program coordinators. The Instructional Directors are usually the individuals who prepare the annual budgets, which are then reviewed by the VP of Learning. The Learning Assessment Coordinator also participates in Instructional Director meetings. The Learning Assessment Coordinator informs the other Instructional Directors of the priorities arising from the assessment processes for both degree programs and general education. Therefore, the central individuals who prioritize, plan, and budget for instruction receive assessment recommendations from both program coordinators and the assessment coordinator. This arrangement is a little redundant but helps ensure that the Instructional Directors are aware of the needs.

3. Master Planning

The master planning process at NWACC strives to be inclusive. The master planning committee is made up of a number of individuals from across the campus community at a number of levels. Several program coordinators and Instructional Directors serve on the committee in addition to the Learning Assessment Coordinator. The Learning division representatives on the committee are able to keep assessment recommendations in front of the master planning committee's attention.

Item: Improving instruction and support.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

No evidence exists that <u>data have been utilized to improve instruction and learning</u>. Implementation of Assessment needs to move to Level-three: On-going implementation which specifies clearly that "changes in pedagogy, curriculum, and/or academic support services made as a result of assessment data are documented."

All credit academic programs (which have been in place long enough to have graduates) have developed formal assessment plans. These programs measure student learning and report these results annually. Each of these programs has completed at least one annual assessment cycle. All annual assessment reports include a response section. This section prompts faculty to, based on student performance data, recommend changes in any or all of three areas: 1) adjustments to the learning outcome, 2) adjustment to the assessment procedure or 3) adjustments to instruction and/or support services. If the students have met the performance criteria of a particular measure, faculty are not compelled to make any adjustments to instruction. It is not uncommon, though, for faculty to make some recommendations even if students performed as expected. The table below provides some examples of recommendations made by faculty in the general education assessment process. These recommendations come from formal assessment reports.

Date	Learning Outcome	Recommendation (degree of implementation)
3/200 0	Information research	Ask Faculty to adopt a practice of sharing written instructions for library research assignments with the library staff so they can help facilitate the research experience. (Implemented)
10/20	Higher order thinking skills	Begin an initiative to assess higher order thinking skills with discipline specific course embedded activities. Develop a faculty development activity to promote discussions about this skill among faculty within a discipline (example: natural science) and facilitate developing a rubric that could be used across courses within the discipline. (In progress)
12/20 00	Writing	A writing center would be a big help for students writing both in composition and non-composition courses. A writing center may be of particular help for students who need help with mechanics. The learning lab is addressing this need to a degree with learning lab writing tutors and the writing foundations course. These options need to be promoted even more. The Arts & Communications division has plans for a writing center in the future. The committee would like to see at least a temporary center staffed soon, with in the next biennium, until a more permanent facility can be developed. (Implemented)
11/20 01	Computer Literacy	Computer skills, like the other general education outcomes, should be taught in a variety of courses. Faculty are encouraged to develop learning actives to help students develop their computer skills, particularly using the Internet to locate information. Faculty can utilize the following support structures to help their students learn these skills: • Learning lab • Writing center • Library

		Information Literacy Online Lab (Implemented)
9/200	Math	Rewrite Algebra Standard Course Outline with a more specific list of objectives. This is accompanied by a very specific Departmental Review Sheet with samples of the types of problems we feel students should master in the course. Hopefully, this will help with consistency of content among sections. (In progress)
11/20 02	Oral Communication	Communication faculty should adjust course curriculum to include additional instruction in the specific criteria areas of length of speech and using visual aids effectively. (In progress)
11/20 02	Reading	Support funding a learning specialist to work with faculty and students in developing general education and related learning skills across the curriculum. (In progress- being used as rationale in a grant proposal)
3/200	Awareness of Cultural diversity	The Professional Development Committee and/or Intercultural Resource Team should consider developing a "tool kit" of approaches to integrating learning about cultural perspectives in the curriculum. They should especially consider how this might be linked to technology to facilitate access to information. (Not yet implemented)

Item: Faculty Involvement.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

Aggressively move forward with active <u>involvement by the faculty</u> to implement
phase three of their plan for assessment of student academic achievement that clearly
identifies changes in pedagogy, curriculum and /or academic support services made as a
result of analysis of assessment data.

The following excerpt from the faculty handbook (also found in the administrative procedures manual) provides evidence of NWACC philosophy of faculty involvement in student learning assessment:

Each academic program has adopted at least one program-level learning outcome and a plan of assessing student achievement of that outcome. An academic program is defined as any Associate degree, academic skills curriculum or adult education curriculum.... The faculty who teach in these areas, under the leadership of the division chairs, lead faculty, and program coordinators, drive all aspects of assessment. Faculty craft the outcomes, choose the tools, and interpret the results, and formulate the response to the results.

A faculty committee initially developed the assessment plan. While the VP for Learning has the ultimate administrative responsibility to ensure that an assessment process is in place, the operation of the process is in the hands of the assessment committee and program coordinators (with direction and support from the learning assessment coordinator). Several steps have been taken to help insure that faculty own and operate the process.

- The assessment committee is primarily comprised of faculty (presently 11 of the 18 members are faculty).
- The Learning Assessment Coordinator is in a faculty position, teaching half time.

- Program coordinators, rather than division chairs or deans, have the direct responsibility
 of developing and administering program level assessment. The program coordinators
 are typically faculty who teach in the program and receive release time to administer the
 program.
- Assessment data are normally reviewed and responded to by both faculty and advisory boards.
- All faculty receive the Student Achievement Updates, an electronic newsletter that informs them about assessment activities outside the programs they teach in.
- Faculty initially adopted the general education outcomes and must approve any changes to the outcomes as proposed by the assessment committee.
- Current annual faculty self evaluations include a section about participation in learning assessment activities, including classroom, program level and general education.

Item: Moving to Phase Three.

The visiting team identified the following concern in their report:

Aggressively move forward with active involvement by the faculty to implement phase three of their plan for assessment of student academic achievement that clearly identifies changes in pedagogy, curriculum and /or academic support services made as a result of analysis of assessment data.

Previous sections of this report have detailed NWACC faculty's progress in developing a mature assessment process. On Campus, this goal has been referred to as "moving to level III." Level III refers to the "maturing stages of continuous improvement" level of implementation described in the addendum to the <u>Handbook of Accreditation</u>, 2nd Edition (March 2001). The college has moved forward in accomplishing this goal. Additional evidence of this progress since 1999 will be presented in the following four sections: institutional culture, shared responsibility, institutional support, and efficacy. The descriptions for these four areas come from a presentation, *Embedding Assessment in Institutional Culture: Levels of Implementation and their Patterns of Characteristics*, given by Cecilia Lopez and others at the June 2000 AAHE Assessment Conference.

• Institutional Culture.

The beliefs, values, and attitudes widely shared throughout all the constituents of a college and therefore characterize the institution as a whole. These values are expressed through its publicly stated mission, purposes, and goals as well as through its activities.

The following points provide evidence of the progress made since 1999 in the areas of collective values and mission.

- An understanding of the purposes and process of assessment has increased among NWACC faculty. In Spring 2003, a survey was given in a faulty business meeting on assessment awareness and participation. Ninety percent of the respondents indicated that they felt their awareness of and/or participation in general education assessment had significantly increased since 1999, and 95% indicated the same for program outcome assessment at NWACC.
- 2. The faculty have revised and further defined the expectations for student learning in general education. These outcomes are publicly stated, being located next to the mission of the college in the college catalog. The college catalog now includes a statement about how these learning expectations are measured, as well as providing recent student performance results on the measures.

- 3. Academic programs have worked to make sure program level learning outcomes and results are public by including program level outcomes and student performance results in both the college catalog and program brochures.
- 4. Since the 1999 visit, the Board of Trustees has adopted the Carver Model for oversight. This model advocates the development of "ends" statements for the major divisions of the college. Student learning outcomes comprises a significant portion of these end statements for the Learning division.
- 5. The ends statements and the reporting process forms the backbone of the institutional effectiveness process. Assessment of student learning is prominent in overall effectiveness, which is reported on annually to the Board of Trustees.
- 6. Increased information about the assessment process and student performance has been provided to the college community since 1999. These communications both promote and reflect the increasing value and use of ongoing assessment efforts across the campus. These sources of information include:
 - The <u>Student Achievement Update</u>, an electronic newsletter dedicated to sharing information on the campus assessment process;
 - Articles in the Eagle Aerie, the newsletter for college faculty and staff;
 - Articles in the <u>NWACC Monthly Times</u>, the newsletter to community members key in supporting the college;
 - Articles in Learner to Learner, the Faculty and Staff Development Newsletter;
 - News releases about student performance on learning measures;
 - Posters on campus promoting and celebrating strong student achievement;
 - <u>NWACC Fact Book</u>, and <u>NWACC Report Card</u>-- student performance results are included with other facts and figures about the college (produced by the Office of Institutional Research).
 - In addition to the assessment handbook, key college handbooks now contain significant statements about assessment of student learning: The English Composition Handbook, the Academic Skills Department (developmental education) Handbook, the Faculty Handbook, and the Administrative Procedures Manual.

Shared Responsibility

Faculty, administration, students, and governing board members have complementary, interdependent roles and shared responsibility for the progress and ultimate success of the assessment program.

The following list provides evidence of the progress made since 1999 in the shared responsibility of faculty, administration and students in the learning assessment process.

- 1. Faculty, with support from instructional directors, have taken the lead in developing key assessment structures: Standard Course Outlines and Program Assessment Plans. Standard Course Outlines link course objectives to program outcomes and general education outcomes. Faculty use these outlines as a guide to create the syllabi for the courses they teach. The standard course outlines also inform faculty of the course embedded learning measures that may be a part of the program or general education assessment plans. Program Assessment Plans list the link to mission, measure, criteria, and process for each program level outcome.
- 2. Every Assessment Plan developed includes input and participation of the program advisory board as well as the program faculty. Students (present and former) are typically included in advisory boards.
- 3. Faculty surveys collected in Spring 2003 provided the following feedback on awareness and participation in the learning assessment process. This provides evidence for the degree of faculty responsibility and institutional culture.

Aspect of Student Learning Assessment	Average Faculty Rating (1 low and 10 high)
I am aware of NWACC's eight student learning outcomes for general education.	7.0
I am aware of how the assessment committee measures: Higher order thinking skills Growth in cultural awareness Math skills Writing abilities Reading capabilities Oral communication skills Computer proficiency Ability to research information	5.8 5.6 7.0 7.2 6.4 6.0 5.9 6.0
I am familiar with the standard course outlines for the courses I teach.	8
For the program I teach in: I am familiar with the program learning outcomes I am aware of the program outcome assessment plans I have participated in reviewing and responding to student learning assessment results	8.6 9.1 8.5

4. The CAO, Vice President of Learning, has in word and deed supported the assessment process while allowing faculty to control it. She has attended assessment training and provided funding for the faculty to do also. In periods of budget shortfall, she has maintained funding for assessment. She also remains independent of the process by insisting that faculty, rather than administrators or staff, serve on the assessment committee.

Institutional Support

The institution has put the resources and structures in place to adequately sustain the assessment process.

The following list provides evidence of the progress made since 1999 in institutional support of the learning assessment process.

- Since 1999, cooperation between instructional assessment efforts and the Office of Institutional Research has increased. The IR office routinely provides reports used for learning assessment. The data collected from assessment processes is also provided to IR for institutional effectiveness, grant reporting, and analysis purposes. The NWACC Fact Book, annually produced by the IR office, includes collaborative data. The Learning Assessment Coordinator annually makes reports to the enrollment management committee about the efficacy of the developmental, transfer and occupational programs.
- 2. The Dean of Communication and Arts has set aside significant resources for writing assessment. The Dean has provided budgeted funds for writing assessment readers as well as established faculty leadership in this area. Professional development funding from the division has also strongly encouraged assessment training. Finally, the division leadership has encouraged regular meetings among the writing faculty to discuss improving student learning.
- 3. Efforts have been made to identify assessment leaders for each of the academic programs. Each occupational program has an individual who is responsible for

coordinating the assessment process. Most of the knowledge domains have an individual who serves as a faculty leader in these areas. Individuals with special insight and interest for each of the general education outcomes have been added to the assessment committee. This identification of faculty leadership in general education has provided partners to work with the LAC in developing and implementing the assessment processes.

- 4. The budget of the learning assessment coordinator is relatively small. Much of the human and financial resources to support assessment have been provided by academic departmental M&O budgets.
- 5. The Dean of Academic Skills and General Studies has set aside significant resources to strengthen assessment in the division. The commitment of funds for Developmental Education Assessment Coordinator (who also dedicates a significant portion of time assisting the Learning Assessment Coordinator) has been crucial in the progress made since 1999. She has encouraged regular meetings among developmental faculty to discuss assessment data. The Dean has made student learning assessment an important part of the job description of the Learning Lab Director.
- 6. Since 1999, faculty have developed standard course outlines. These outlines communicate the learning objectives for courses. The outcomes not only express the learning objectives for the course, but also are intended to communicate how each particular course supports general education and program level outcomes. Students, advisors and the general public may access these outlines on the college web site.
- 7. In 2001, the Learning Assessment Coordinator developed a master assessment calendar. This calendar identifies when the assessment meetings take place and the agenda. The overall performance of the occupational and transfer programs is reviewed annually. Each general education outcome is reviewed every other year (four are reviewed on even years and four are reviewed during odd years). The academic programs assessment plans are reviewed every three years. While the assessment committee does not annually review each outcome, general education and program assessment processes do occur on an yearly cycle.
- 8. CAAP scores are now entered into the college database. This has allowed these scores to be tied to curriculum patterns and programs. The Assessment Committee has used this information as part of their regular analysis of the general education outcomes.
- 9. Multiple means of communication have been used to inform the college community about student achievement of the educational outcomes and the assessment process. In surveys distributed in Spring 2003, faculty were asked to indicate their top three sources of information about student learning assessment. The table below shows the cumulative ranking for these sources of information. A rank of one indicates source of assessment information most often cited by faculty; rank of two indicates the second most often cited source, and so on.

Source of information about assessment results and processes	For General Education	For Academic Programs
Conversions with:		
Academic unit heads	2	1
VP of Learning	8	10
Learning Assessment Coordinator	6	6
Other faculty	9	8
Reading:		
Assessment committee reports*	7	7
Program (department) reports	5	4
Eagle Aerie newsletter	10	11
Local news articles (new since 1999)	13	none
Assessment Newsletter (new since 1999)	3	5
Annual Ends report*	12	12
Hearing presentations at:		
Department meetings	4	2
Committee meetings	11	9
Faculty meetings	1	3
Advisory board meetings	none	none

^{*}Since 2000, these reports have been placed on the college shared K drive to provide greater access.

Efficacy:

The degree to which academic programs are using results to discover where students could be learning more and better, and from discussion of those findings, recommend and make changes that result in documented improvements in student learning.

- 1. The use and dissemination of CAAP tests has increased since 1999. These standardized test scores are utilized five ways:
 - Scores, being standardized nationally, provide external benchmark to balance internal measures of student achievement;
 - Scores, collected annually, supply trend data to the assessment committee about general education;
 - Scores are compared to placement scores to furnish a sense of growth in general education:
 - Scores, sorted by program, allow the assessment committee to compare general education performance between programs with different general education curriculum requirements;
 - Scores have been linked to course history to determine relationships between student course history and performance.
- 2. Review of program level assessment process is now on a three year rotating review schedule. To date, the assessment committee has reviewed assessment plans of 2/3 of the academic programs. These discussions have in themselves served as productive discussions about student learning and have revealed the increased focus and student learning among faculty at the program level
- 3. Each academic program now has at least one educational outcome, identified a measure of student achievement of this outcome, has developed a formal assessment plan (on file with the assessment coordinator) and has completed one assessment cycle of assessing students, analyzing results, and making adjustments.

4. The assessment process calls for response in annual reports. The responses may include altering outcomes, performance measures, or instruction. Prompting these response options creates a dynamic process where adjustments to outcomes, measures, and instructional inputs can be made simultaneously. The table below provides examples of recommendations emerging from the program level assessment process.

Year	Program	Recommendation (degree of implementation)
2000	Developmental Education- writing	Developmental writing faculty should revise the course objectives for Intermediate composition. (Implemented)
2000	Transfer degrees- Science Knowledge domain	Make General Biology a prerequisite to Anatomy and Physiology I. Students may be allowed to waive this prerequisite by making a score of 23 on the Biological Concepts Proficiency Test. (Implemented)
2003	Business AAS	Accounting faculty should review standard course outlines with accounting faculty to address areas for weakness identified in the accounting assessments. (Implemented)
2001	Criminal Justice AAS	 In order to improve student response and to obtain more useful information, the following changes are being considered for the Spring 2002 survey: Surveying students who do not intend to return to NWACC at the conclusion of the Fall 2001 semester; Follow-up on the distribution of surveys by telephone; Add a survey question concerning graduation rates from the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy; Add a response to question 3 about entering the military; To save space, merge questions 6 and 7. (Implemented)
2002	Computer Information AAS	Change the program outcome to: Graduates of the AAS Computer Information Systems program will be qualified for mid-level computer information or related positions or prepared to continue their education in the field should they so desire. Entry-level [in old outcome] is an incorrect term, many of our students are not entering the workplace, they are there, often in jobs that use the skill sets being taught. (Implemented)
2003	Environmental and Regulatory Science AAS	Develop a certificate program to better match the technical training needs of students and the community. (Implemented)
2003	Early Childhood Education AAS	Change the criteria to 90% instead of 80% employment and credential success. (Implemented)
2001	Graphic Design AAS	Faculty should stress techniques to streamline work and give projects with shorter deadlines. (Implemented)
2002	Nursing AAS	Create a database on May 2001 graduates in an attempt to identify at-risk factors. (In progress)
2003	Fire Science and Administration AAS	This was a positive response. We will continue to send promotional survey forms to graduates and students to determine if the Fire Science Program is helping them prepare for promotion within their respective departments. (Implemented) Increase the number of lab scenarios on patient
2002	i arameuic	Therease the number of lab scenarios on patient

Certificate &	assessment/treatment. (Implemented)
AAS	

2002	Physical	All students demonstrated proficiency at a minimum level of
	Therapist	77 % or greater on the first examination or 85 % or greater
	Assistant AAS	on repeat examination. Two content areas appear to be
		deficient: vital signs and pathophysiology. Action plans are in place and will be monitored following the CCE next year. (Implemented)
2001	Respiratory Therapy AAS	New degree plan includes medical ethics and law. Continue to monitor and counsel students as needed on professional behavior. (Implemented)

Conclusions

NWACC has made progress in implementing its plan to assess student achievement of educational outcomes. The process in place documents student learning and furnishes a means to improve it. For all major academic programs, outcomes have been adopted, measures identified, data collected, and recommendations proposed. In many cases, the recommendations have been implemented. The progress that this report describes has occurred primarily through the commitment of human resources-- individuals (principally key faculty leaders) who have taken responsibility for the process. The regular evaluation of both student learning and the assessment process itself provides a mechanism of continuous improvement. With continued administrative support and faculty participation, the assessment process can be sustained and matured.

End - Plan for Student Academic Achievement