

Student Assessment in Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Seven Institutions



Research Program on Institutional
Support for Student Assessment
National Center for Postsecondary Improvement
University of Michigan
School of Education
610 E. University, Suite 2339
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259

©2001, The Regents of the University of Michigan

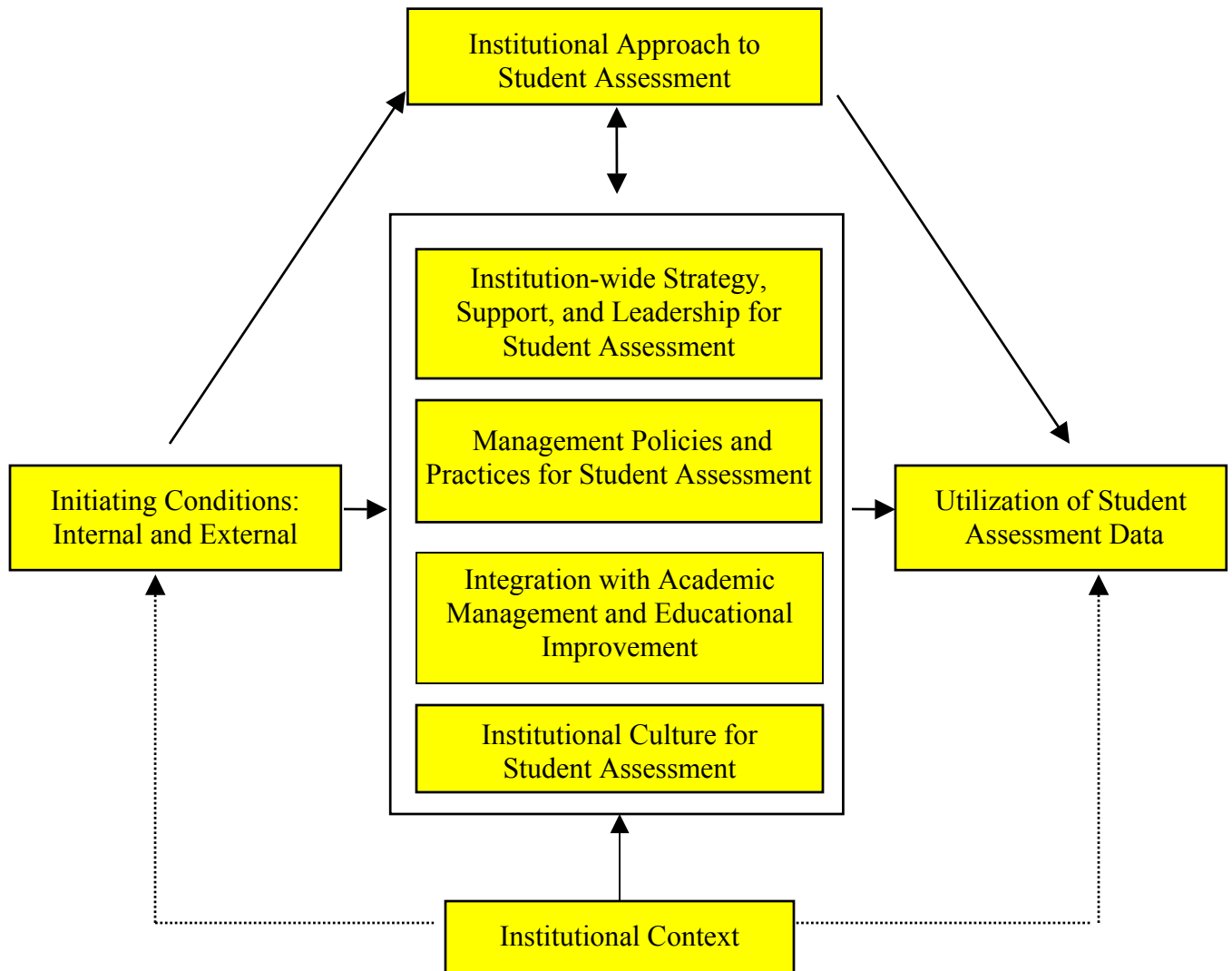
Chapter 1

Introduction

This comparative report presents the results from Phase III of the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) research program examining organizational and administrative support for student assessment in postsecondary institutions. Supported by a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education, Project 5.2 of NCPI has examined institutional support for student learning and assessment in a three-phase, five-year study. Phase I consisted of an extensive review of the student assessment literature Improving the Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment (1997). From this review, seven¹ domains emerged that were used in the creation of a conceptual framework¹ (Figure 1), which served as the basis for the second and third phases of the study. In Phase II, we developed a national survey instrument or inventory called Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA) (1999). The survey was sent to all two-year and four-year institutions (excluding proprietary schools) offering undergraduate education. Of the 2,524 surveys sent, we received responses from 1,394 for a 55 percent response rate. After analyzing the response data, a number of institutions were identified as having been actively engaged in student assessment. Phase III of our study involved comparative case studies of seven of these institutions; we collected documents, conducted interviews, and gathered other relevant information about the institutions' approach to, support for, management policies and practices for, and uses of student assessment. This report includes case summaries and a comparative analysis of those institutions.

¹ The original conceptual framework consisted of seven domains. For this study, and eighth domain, Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement, was added to capture the teaching and learning component of institutional assessment.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment



Purpose of the Report

Though assessment has been given considerable attention in the past two decades, there have been few systematic examinations of the ways in which institutions approach, support, and use student assessment. As a result, administrators and faculty leaders have little credible and

verifiable evidence to guide their efforts in the area of student assessment (Peterson, Einarson, Augustine, & Vaughan, 1999). Through a close examination of institutions identified as actively pursuing student assessment efforts, we hope to shed light on the types of approaches, support patterns, policies and practices, and uses of student assessment that will be useful to institutions looking for exemplary models against which to benchmark themselves or to use in directing their own assessment efforts.

The focus of this report is on the institutional dynamics related to student assessment activity identified by examining the observed day-to-day policies, practices, and uses of student assessment and student assessment information in a variety of institutional contexts. We have intentionally chosen institutions that are both public and private and include two-year community colleges, comprehensive institutions, and a large research university. It was the intent of the researchers to study several different types of institutions so that readers might find an institution that closely resembles their own for purposes of comparison.

In the following section of the report we summarize the conceptual framework developed earlier and used to guide the case studies. We then discuss briefly our methodology for this study. While the study has been a five-year project, we discuss mainly the aspects that deal directly with the Phase III case study institutions. Following the methodology section, we present summary descriptions of the seven case study institutions separately and examine the specific assessment strategies, approaches, institution-wide support patterns, management integration patterns, administrative and management policies and practices, academic and institutional culture for, and uses of student assessment. We continue with a section that compares and contrasts the seven institutions and across these aforementioned domains. We

conclude by characterizing the different models for practice, which have emerged from both the national survey and the seven case study institutions.

Framework

The case study framework (Figure 1), developed earlier and used to guide the case studies, consists of seven domains, which emerged from the literature and the national survey results from Phase II, and an additional domain “Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement,” which represents the teaching and learning component of the current study. These domains include 1) Institutional Context, 2) Initiating Conditions, 3) Institutional Approach, 4) Institution-wide Strategy, Support and Leadership, 5) Management Policies and Practices, 6) Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement, 7) Institutional Culture, and 8) Utilization of Student Assessment Data.

The Institutional Context domain includes dimensions about each institution such as size, control (public or private), and Carnegie classification. When the case study institutions were chosen, the context was varied in order to draw from across institutional types.

The domain of Initiating Conditions was included in the model to assess the conditions present for each institution at the time the institution initiated its current assessment effort. Some of the conditions were internally motivated by leadership within the institution, while others were externally motivated through state, accreditation or other outside mandates.

The Institutional Approach domain is used to determine the comprehensiveness of the institution’s assessment approach. This includes the content, type, and timing of assessment measures used by the institutions and the extent of analysis, reporting, and information flow of the data collected.

The Institution-wide Strategy, Support, and Leadership domain includes dimensions that examine the extensiveness of the institution's strategy such as its inclusion in the mission statement, whether a formal assessment plan or policy exists, the purpose identified for the institution's assessment effort and the organizational structure of the assessment effort. Also included are dimensions related to the amount and type of administrative and faculty support for the institution's assessment effort and the breadth and depth of the leadership support.

The domain of Management Policies and Practices is included to assess the various areas of institutional management that emphasize student assessment through formal policies and/or informal practices. There are eight such areas that are examined including budget decisions, computer support, access to information, distribution of reports, student involvement in assessment, student affairs training / involvement in assessment, professional development, faculty evaluation, and program planning and review.

The framework includes a domain for the Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement. This domain examines the links between the student assessment efforts and information collected and areas of academic management such as strategic planning, program review, budget, and quality as well as the links between student assessment data and areas of educational improvement such as instructional improvement, teaching and learning innovation and faculty/professional development.

The domain of Institutional Culture is included to identify and evaluate the formal and informal attitudes, rituals, and driving forces or beliefs behind the institution's student assessment efforts. The strength of the institution's culture is then rated on a scale ranging from high to low.

The final domain, Utilization of Student Assessment Data, is used to identify areas within the institution that use the information from student assessment in making decisions. The determination is made as to whether the information is used for academic decisions or faculty decisions and the importance placed on the information in making the decisions.

Methodology

The case study institutions discussed in this report were identified through a national survey. The ISSA survey was sent to all two-year and four-year institutions offering undergraduate education. We sent 2,524 surveys and received 1,394 completed surveys for a 55 percent response rate. The data from the national survey were first analyzed using several traditional methods including descriptive analysis and frequency distributions. Means and standard deviations for all survey items were reviewed to identify any inconsistencies among similar items or items for which there was little or no variation. The researchers used factor analysis to create indices for items thought to be related to common dimensions of the conceptual framework. Any items that did not load heavily were retained as individual items. Additionally, additive indices were created for items not subjected to factor analysis. This data reduction helped to reduce the overall number of variables and gave us an array of indices to examine dimensions within all the domains of the conceptual framework for each institution.

After having completed this comprehensive data analysis of the national sample, we used cluster analysis to identify institutions within each of the four collapsed Carnegie classifications (associate of arts, baccalaureate, comprehensive, and doctoral / research), which appeared to be involved actively in student assessment and to be promoting and supporting it within their institution. Letters were sent to the president (Chief Executive Officer) of each institution

explaining the project, requesting permission to use the institution in a case study, and asking for an institutional liaison to be appointed by the president.

We then selected a research coordinator for each institution. The coordinator was responsible for coordinating the details of the institutional site visit, which included contacting the president as a follow-up to our initial letter of invitation and working with the institutional liaison in collecting necessary information and arranging the institutional site visit. The coordinator was also responsible for tracking the questionnaires sent to each institution (see below). Separate site-visit teams were established for each institution. Each team was comprised of four researchers: a principal researcher, the coordinator, and two other researchers.

We created a research protocol that established interview questions, an interview lists, and documentation list (Appendix A). Within the interview protocol, we established sections, each of which were based on the domains from the conceptual framework (excluding institutional context). Various interviews and documents addressed specific domains from the framework. Table 1 shows the domains and corresponding sections of the interview protocol, interview list and document list.

Table 1. Conceptual Domains and Corresponding Protocol Sections, Interviews, and Documents.

Conceptual Domain	Interview Protocol Section	Interviews	Document
Initiating Conditions: Internal and External	Section IV	All Interviews	State Policies Guidelines; Accreditation Report;
Institutional Approach to SA	Section II	All Interviews	Performance Measures;
Institution-wide Strategy, Support, and Leadership for SA	Section III	All Interviews	Mission Statement; Purpose; SA Plan;
Management Policies and Practices for SA	Section V	All Interviews	Evaluation Plan/Report; Regular SA Reports;
Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement	Section VI	All Interviews	
Institutional Culture for SA	Section VIII	All Interviews	Various Documents
Utilization of SA Data	Section VII	All Interviews	Various Reports
Institutional Context	N/A	N/A	N/A

Prior to the actual site visit, a sample of students, faculty, and administrators were sent surveys related to the student assessment and teaching and learning efforts at the institution. (Data from these surveys are not a part of this report, but are being prepared in a separate report.) Each group was sent a different survey that was designed specifically for that group. The student sample was chosen randomly from all students enrolled in the Arts and Sciences Division (or local derivative) of the institution. Whenever possible, the number of students in the sample was 400. The faculty sample was drawn from faculty who teach at least half time in a tenure-track position within the Arts and Sciences Division and whenever possible included 200 faculty members. The administrator sample included all administrators who are involved in any part of the student assessment efforts of the institution.

At the conclusion of the site visit, the coordinator, together with team members, drafted an institutional case study using the domains from the conceptual framework. This was a synthesis of all the documentation collected from the institution, the recorded interviews, and the focus groups held during the site visits. The drafted case study was then sent to the institution's liaison for proofing the accuracy of detail and content. Once the institutional liaison returned the draft, the coordinator discussed the feedback with the team and incorporated the agreed upon changes into the final draft. Using the final institutional reports, we summarized the case studies based upon an outline developed from the conceptual framework. (See below) These summaries are presented in the next section.

Outline for Case Study Summaries

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| I. Introduction to Institution | VIII. Link to Academic Management |
| II. Initiating Conditions | IX. Link to Academic Improvement |
| III. Institutional Approach (Comprehensiveness) | X. Utilization |
| IV. Institutional Strategy | XI. Institutional Culture |
| V. Institution-wide Support (Extensiveness) | XII. Summary |
| VI. Institutional Leadership (Breadth and Depth) | |
| VII. Management Policies and Practices | |

Chapter 2

Case Studies

This chapter presents each of the seven case study institutions that were selected as part of Phase III of the project. The institutions were selected using five criteria: 1) the institution's participation in the national survey (Phase II), 2) an evaluation of the institution's current student assessment efforts, (based on an overall score from an analysis of the national survey results), 3) the institution's location (based on their state and accreditation region), 4) the Carnegie type, size and control of the institution (the design intended a cross section of type, size, and public/private institutions), and 5) the institution's willingness to participate. The seven institutions chosen include Western Washington University, Iowa State University, Santa Fe Community College, South Seattle Community College, Wake Forest University, Northwest Missouri State University, and Mercyhurst College.

The case studies are presented in chronological order of when each institution was visited. Each institution is introduced with a brief overview and some background information followed by a summary of each of the eight domains from the conceptual framework. The Institution-wide Strategy, Support, and Leadership domain has been divided into three subsections, and the Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement domain has been divided into two subsections for greater detail. Each case study is concluded with a brief summary of the institution's current assessment efforts.

Western Washington University

Western Washington University (Western) is a state-assisted, comprehensive liberal arts university in northwest Washington State located in Bellingham, a city of 62,000 overlooking Bellingham Bay and many of Puget Sound's 172 San Juan Islands. With a student population of

just over 11,600 and 542 full-time equivalent faculty, Western has a student-faculty ratio of near 21:1. While Western has students from 47 other states and 39 nations, approximately 92 percent of the students are from Washington State. Western is governed by a state-appointed board of trustees and is accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Accreditation Association (NASAC). The university is organized into a graduate school and six undergraduate colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business and Economics, the College of Fine and Performing Arts, Fairhaven College, Huxley College of Environmental Studies, and Woodridge College of Education.

The overarching story for Western is one that has a two-decade history. The university has seen the need for assessing educational effectiveness since the early eighties, long before the state began mandating the use of assessment as an accountability measure. Since Western has a culture that espouses faculty involvement and participation in university governance, this has set the overall tone for the adoption and acceptance of Western's assessment efforts. The central administration has, for various reasons, embraced an increased assessment effort, however, the actual adoption or implementation has been met with varying degrees of success among the departments. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The initial conditions that precipitated Western's current efforts in student assessment were initially internally driven with the early recognition of the importance of assessing educational effectiveness. These early efforts, however, have had little impact at the department level. In 1987, the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) conceived a master plan "to develop multi-dimensional program of performance evaluation" for each of its member institutions. The goal of the program was to use assessment to improve the quality of

undergraduate education and to provide needed information on student outcomes to the HEBC. As a result of this plan, several reports were produced focusing attention on “how students learn, how faculty/curricula/institutions help students learn, and what contribute to student learning.” The state has used these reports to document examples of how assessment has already been, and can continue to be an “aid to policy.”

Institutional Approach

Student assessment at Western uses a moderately comprehensive approach, collecting various types of performance data from their students in areas that include cognitive and affective learning as well some post college tracking. Though there is a high degree of influence from the state, most assessment is internally developed and specific to individual units. Some units have much more comprehensive approaches with various types of assessment including some innovative methods, while others feel no need to change the way they have been assessing student outcomes from previous years. The timing of assessment also varies by unit with a few institution-wide measures being collected at entry, exit and during the students’ academic career.

Institutional reporting on assessment covers a wide range of topics from academic programs, health attitudes, and student risk behavior, to time-to-degree studies, graduation rates and employer satisfaction. The reports are generally produced within the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing (OIAT) and have a wide range of constituencies from academic units to the administration. Overall the reporting and analysis of assessment information could be categorized as falling somewhere in the middle of extensive and limited efforts.

Institutional Strategy

While Western has no mention of assessment in its mission statement, it does mention and emphasize its role in providing a high quality undergraduate education experience.

Furthermore, Western's catalogue clearly indicates its support and commitment to assessment through statements indicating, "...as part of an ongoing effort to assure the quality of the education received by its students, Western Washington University has instituted a comprehensive assessment program designed to measure student learning outcomes." Additional statements indicate that the purpose for this program is to monitor the quality of Western's academic program.

Western's institutional strategy involves collecting needed information for state reporting requirements while at the same time collecting information that will be valuable in assessing the internal effectiveness of their undergraduate education programs. The central administration has embraced student outcomes assessment, but in an institution that has a high degree of faculty governance, the adoption of assessment efforts has been varied from department to department. As such, the structure of Western's assessment program can be classified as centrally guided, but decentralized in its authority system. The primary purpose of assessment can be categorized as both external accountability and internal improvement.

Institution-wide Support

Institution-wide mechanisms of support for student assessment at Western are quite irregular. While that administration generally supports the efforts of individual units and larger divisions, there is no real centralized effort to increase student assessment. This was recognized in the 1997 accreditation self-study and mentioned by the Western accreditation committee. Additionally, the support of faculty from individual units varies drastically from unit to unit. There are no formal assessment activities such as forums, workshops, or seminars that are sponsored or budgeted for by the central administration, and though there are available resources for student assessment efforts, these resources are not clearly made known. As for management

or technical support, the office of Institutional Research and the OIAT are available to assist in collection and analysis of assessment information, but again, the limited resources of these offices make it difficult to meet the needs of the entire institution.

Institutional Leadership

The leadership that supports and administers the student assessment efforts at Western resides in the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing, which reports to the Office of Institutional Research and Resource Planning. This office reports to the Office of University Planning and Analysis, which reports directly to the President. Thus the administrative leadership for student assessment resides in an office three levels below the President while academic leadership is at the division or college level. The faculty leadership is very fragmented. There are faculty groups in the faculty senate that address assessment issues, but apart from these tenuously powerless groups, the faculty within each unit have great discretion as to the type and amount of assessment they perform.

Management Policies and Practices

Western has several policies and/or practices that support the student assessment effort. While the institution does not allocate specific resources based on assessment efforts or results, the state does tie many of its allocations to performance standards. In the past Western has lost significant funds for under-performing in certain state mandated areas. Currently Western is in the process of coordinating a campus-wide information support systems that will allow faculty and administrators to access assessment data related to their departments. Additionally, there are currently four publications that provide varying degrees of information to various groups. These reports are generated and distributed from the Office of Information Assessment and Testing.

While there is no indication that policies or practices exist to include students in the process of developing or implementing student assessment, there are several professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. The Center for Instructional Innovation (CII) and the Center for Service-Learning (CSL) exist to facilitate ongoing conversation and professional development for faculty and staff on campus. CLS sponsors brown bag sessions to discuss service learning in various departments and an annual conference that brings together faculty and students to discuss service learning. Furthermore, Western provides some funding for faculty to attend national conferences and meetings that are related to student assessment.

Student assessment has been part of the Western culture for more than 10 years, yet faculty explain that assessment data used in planning has been slow to occur at the department level. There has been some indication recently that student assessment information is beginning to have an impact in planning within certain departments.

Link to Academic Management & Educational Improvement

The student assessment efforts at Western are not typically linked very closely to the academic management process. There is a brief mention of student outcomes assessment in the institution's strategic action plan, but this is limited to a very brief statement concerning the necessity for continuous assessment in order to achieve quality undergraduate education.

The nature of academic improvement at Western tends to be sporadic and occasional. The one area previously mentioned, the Center for Instructional Innovation, is available to faculty who wish to enhance their teaching and assessment skills. The Center promotes professional development through the hosting of conferences that address various initiatives in teaching and learning. In 1998, the Center was instrumental in getting Western into the national conversation on the scholarship of teaching sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation. Other

indications of more regular activities of academic improvement as a result of student assessment were not evident.

Utilization

The importance placed on the use of student assessment information is lacking at Western. The greatest use of information is for state accountability mandates. The departmental use of student assessment information varies from unit to unit with some units making extensive use of the information while others never use the information beyond traditional rating of student performance. At the institutional level, there is some dilemma concerning the best way to use student assessment information given the sporadic and inconsistent use of assessment at the department level.

Culture

Student assessment has been a part of the culture at Western for nearly 20 years with state involvement for over 10 years. Yet even with this history, the overall culture is one of moderate acceptance. The administration has followed state guidelines in the implementation of much of the institution's assessment efforts and it has promoted the role that student assessment should play within divisions and departments, but at the unit level, student assessment has met with varying degrees of acceptance. The administration embraces the view that assessment is essential to providing quality undergraduate education. The faculty governance at Western is very strong, however, and has not yet overwhelmingly accepted the role that assessment can play in the educational process.

Summary

Western Washington has a relatively long history of involvement with student assessment. In more recent years, the administration has supported and promoted student

assessment as a means to answering to state accountability measures as well as a means for internal improvement in its pursuit of quality undergraduate education. The faculty, however, have not fully accepted student assessment and its role in the institution. This has placed Western Washington in the midst of a transitional period, where student assessment has not fully taken hold but seems to be on the path to full acceptance.

Iowa State University

Iowa State University is a Research I institution and serves as the land-grant institution in the state. Given its location and land grant mission, its commitment to its agricultural heritage remains strong. Additionally, it has many strong professional schools and awards most of its Ph.D.s in the sciences. The institution is comprised of eight undergraduate colleges, each chartered separately by the state legislature, plus a Graduate School. ISU is governed by a Board of Regents, which also oversees other public institutions in the state. Enrollment is approximately 26, 100, with most students attending full-time and living on campus.

Iowa State engages in student assessment through the program review conducted by its academic departments. The process is decentralized, with departments taking the lead on their approaches. However, the Vice-Provost and Assistant Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Programs bring some leadership and coordination to this process. The overriding purpose for assessment is the improvement of instruction and programs, although these links are still being established. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The primary impetus for student assessment came from external agencies, although it does not appear that there was a legislative interest in requiring assessment. The first push came from the Board of Regents. In 1990, at the Board's request, ISU formulated its strategic plan,

which committed the institution to implementing formal program review the following year. Assessment also began in the professional schools in response to demands from their individual professional accrediting bodies. Thus, the policies originating assessment at ISU were a reaction to external requests and requirements. However, the institution has been moving towards making assessment a greater internal priority. During implementation in the mid-1990s, departments were required to create annual assessment reports, which were compiled into a larger report that was sent to the Regents. Also, the 1995 strategic plan initiated the use of assessment data to measure progress on goals, and its 2000-05 plan gives greater prominence to assessment for evaluative purposes.

Institutional Approach

The institutional approach to assessment includes some limited institutional efforts but is largely decentralized and centers on program review. The Office of Institutional Research knows ISU needs a regular, more extensive collection schedule for institutional data, but the nature of that schedule is still under discussion. The content of the information collected primarily concerns student satisfaction and experiences.

Departments interview their own students and alumni about the fit of majors and the appropriateness of skills taught in their coursework. Institution wide data is collected on entering surveys, CIRP and follow-ups, and student satisfaction surveys. Data is also collected on retention and graduation rates, enrollments in programs, and the number of senior faculty teaching introductory courses. Also, most studies are focused at the department level and on program goals. During data analysis, there are occasionally some breakouts by gender and ethnicity upon objective or quantitative measures, however, overall, there is little breakdown by subpopulations.

The Registrar and the OIR report basic student information to the departments who are then responsible for their own interpretation. Assessment information flows upwards through the administration via formal reports. Departments send annual reports to the Vice-Provost about how assessment is fostering improvement and also submit reports to the Regents as part of their program review.

The program review process is carried out annually, but is staggered so individual programs are only reviewed every seven years. The process places emphasis on two dimensions of the academic programs: 1) how an ISU program compares to the best programs in the nation, and 2) how the unit fits within and contributes to ISU. Departments are given the autonomy to design their own approaches and are free to conduct other assessment activities, and they work closely with their respective disciplinary accrediting bodies throughout the process. There is some differentiation among the approaches departments use and the level of engagement among them varies.

Institutional Strategy

Although ISU has no central or formal plan for conducting assessment at the institutional level, the Regents initially developed an overriding purpose for assessment. The primary focus is the improvement of instruction and the curricula. The section on scope in ISU's mission statement talks about the program review process and how it will be used to improve academic programs, and the formal policies developed in 1991 about assessment also mention the goal of academic improvement.

The central administration, in particular the Vice-Provost and the Assistant Vice-Provost, has played a primary role in stimulating assessment activity within the colleges and providing them with guidance. The process itself, reflecting the institutional structure, is quite

decentralized and is mainly housed within the separate colleges. Departments take the lead on assessment initiatives, such as program review and the annual reports that go to the Regents, although there is coordination from the Provost's office in this process. It is important to note that there is a distinction in the level of involvement between the Liberal Arts & Sciences colleges and those in the professional schools. Most assessment activity is currently within the professional schools and is heavily focused on the sciences. Assessment initiatives within departments in the Liberal Arts and Sciences have only started to emerge. However, the Vice-Provost and Assessment Coordinator are working to increase the activity level within these departments.

Institution-wide Support

Coordination of assessment activities occurs in several ways. The Provost and the VP for Undergraduate Programs retain responsibility for campus wide assessment, but the associate deans have primary responsibility for implementation. The Assistant Vice-Provost in the Office of the Vice-Provost stimulates interest in programs to promote assessment and helps departments develop their strategies. The office also regularly consults with faculty and departments regarding problems. The authority of the Outcomes Assessment Committee, which no longer meets now that the plan has been implemented, has been transferred to the associate deans. Through this diffuse arrangement, the associate deans coordinate departmental assessment efforts through regular meetings with the VP for Undergraduate Programs, and also send their annual outcomes assessment reports to him.

Given the decentralized structure of assessment, institutional support is concentrated on helping faculty and departments develop their own initiatives. There is an informal support network; administrative efforts include their involvement in the strategic planning activities and

speaking about assessment at faculty events. The annual faculty conferences are focusing more on teaching and learning activities, and assessment is receiving increased emphasis at these events. Each focuses on a different theme, such as tenure and promotion, technology, research, and internationalization. Throughout the year, administrators are free to avail themselves of professional development within the profession such as conferences on assessment, although few seem to do so. Another potential institutional support mechanism is ISU's tenure system. There is currently a campus-wide discussion of a new promotion and tenure system based on the Boyer model of Scholarship Reconsidered that might bring more attention to teaching, but it is not clear what role assessment would play in the new system.

Management support is another area limited at this time. In terms of resource allocation, no funds are allocated separately for student assessment. Departments are expected to conduct assessment activities, but must do so out of existing funds. The VP for Undergraduate Programs has raised the possibility of linking some reward funds to planning for assessment through a competitive process, but this has not yet been formalized. There is also the possibility that some future budget support will be linked to assessment. Another problem is that there has yet to be a formalized role for the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) in the assessment process. Currently, there is no coordinated effort to construct or maintain a central student database. Only a preliminary set of data is maintained, and this is mostly on retention rates. OIR keeps this information and sees its role as a provider to others upon request, but there is no effort to integrate it with the data collected by the departments.

Institutional Leadership

Leadership for assessment activity at ISU does come from the top, and the amount of visible leadership has increased significantly in the last few years. The Board of Regents initially

required that ISU undertake assessment, and it still presents an external source of leadership through the program review process for which departments submit reports. Campus administrators are attempting to foster a dialogue around assessment. The President is focusing more on teaching and learning in speeches to faculty conferences and meetings.

Leadership is also visible through two new positions created recently to provide a high degree of emphasis on the assessment initiative. The Vice President for Undergraduate Programs began work in August 1998 and was hired to increase the institutional focus on undergraduate experiences. He has been on the faculty at ISU since 1975 and originally began focusing on student learning by leading teaching and learning focus groups within his department. Currently, his emphasis is on fostering discussion of assessment within departments. Another faculty member took an appointment as the Student Outcomes Assessment Coordinator. This position has since been expanded from a 50% appointment to 75% and given a new title: the Assistant Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Programs. The expansion is intended to incorporate assessment and teaching/learning initiatives within a more formal administrative arrangement, which may be a sign of future interdisciplinary efforts. The Assistant VP initially provided leadership by chairing the Outcomes Assessment Committee, and now consults with faculty and administrators about assessment issues and techniques, makes presentations to faculty groups, and reports to the Regents. The overall goal of the leadership is to make assessment something faculty take seriously and make it part of their normal process for evaluating their programs.

Management Policies and Practices

The Faculty Senate initially developed its Policies and Procedures for Student Outcomes Assessment in 1991 in response to the Regencies requirement. The purpose then was established

as the improvement of instruction, the curriculum, and the academic enterprise. Since then it seems additional goals have become attached to assessment. One is to evaluate the strategic plan while another is to create a campus-wide dialogue about teaching, learning, and assessment.

Link to Academic Management

Despite the links to improve academic programs, it would appear that there is not a well-developed system for linking assessment activity to academic management. There are very few links between the data generated by departments during program review and the institutional data on students. There is more coordination now than before, mainly due to the Assistant Vice-Provost position, but there is still no systematic use of data at the institutional level. Assessment information does flow up the institution to the administration, but there is no evidence that it has any influence on major academic decisions. Reports are mostly internal summaries for administrators and committees; no external body views these summaries. The Provost also brings summaries and some institutional data to the attention of deans and department heads. And the Regents receive reports from the departments on their assessment efforts, but it is unclear what the Regents do with them.

Link to Educational Improvement

There are several ways in which ISU has attempted to link its assessment activity to academic improvement. The formal mechanism for improvement is long range planning and evaluation, while short-term issues are addressed through program review and revision. The 1995 and 2000 strategic plans emphasize the measurement of progress towards goals and evaluating the plan through the use of 15 performance indicators in a variety of areas. Program review is mentioned in the mission statement as a way to keep the institution vital. And beginning with the 1998 catalog revisions, faculty and departments have been required to

demonstrate how assessment data supports their curricular and program revisions. Also, the intended learning outcomes of each academic program are explicitly stated in the catalog. The combination of these efforts shows that there is an increased campus dialogue about assessment and more ideas to improve learning.

ISU has also adopted several innovative methods for faculty development that are contributing to academic improvement. The Center for Teaching Excellence allows faculty to improve their skills through workshops, faculty forums, seminars, and presentations on teaching and learning. It also provides a library of pedagogical resources and some funding for new projects and research. Project LEA/RN, which stands for Learning Enhancement Action/Resource Network, allows faculty members to work together as learning partners to provide feedback and resources for one another. ISU Comm is a collaboration between disciplines to improve student outcomes in written, oral and visual communication skills. The ISU Comm Committee surveys students and alumni to assess them in communication skills and then convenes a symposium of faculty to discuss ways of fostering communication skills within the curriculum. Another innovative program to increase learning is the formation of over 50 learning communities. These are groups of students sharing introductory courses and a living assignment. This program allows for greater faculty mentoring, a common experience for the students, and a more supportive learning environment.

Utilization

Utilization of assessment information is quite varied, with significant institutional improvements being recorded in only a few departments. There are some impacts, but these are not extensive and it is not clear if institutional changes have occurred. One of the professional departments has used results to raise awareness about issues such as communication and training.

Another used student feedback to create more co-op and internship experiences for students. The program review process has resulted in the adjustment of some departments' Intended Learning Outcomes, as well as some curricular changes. At the institutional level, assessment information has been used to evaluate the strategic plan and to assess technology needs.

Culture

A university wide goal is to encourage faculty to use more direct measures of learning, but the beliefs held by faculty regarding assessment seem to reflect the decentralized nature of the institution, as well as its type. Assessment is struggling to achieve universal acceptance. The departmentally based assessment program grants the authority to work with students to those who know them best. Thus, the departments are seen as uniquely qualified to judge their own. But some faculty view assessment as a mandate and not as something that can be productive. Many feel it takes too much time to complete reporting requirements and implement new initiatives. There is also a sense that the administration has not been consistent in its support for assessment. Still, some faculty admitted that assessment has caused them to think more about the skills students acquire while at the institution.

Summary

In short, the Office of the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Programs coordinates assessment at Iowa State, but the process is quite decentralized. Assessment activity is intended to stimulate the individual colleges into developing procedures to evaluate their own performance and improve student learning. Departments conduct their own program reviews to evaluate instruction and curricula, while long-range issues are addressed through the strategic planning process. To date, the utilization of assessment data is not extensive and assessment is not yet integrated into the faculty culture.

Santa Fe Community College

Santa Fe Community College (Santa Fe) is a state-supported community college in the north-central region of Florida. Santa Fe is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and is located in Gainesville, the home of the University of Florida, the states flagship four-year institution. The student population of Santa Fe is nearly 13,000 with a slightly higher female representation than male representation (52% versus 48%). The mission statement stresses, “adding value to the lives of our students and community.” Santa Fe is one of 28 public community colleges in Florida and is ranked among the top in its successful retention, preparation, and graduation of students.

The ongoing story of assessment for Santa Fe is one that has its roots in state accountability and assessing preparedness. Though it has been involved in assessment for over a decade, much of its assessment history revolves around testing incoming students for academic readiness and meeting state reporting requirements, which include retention and graduation rates, administering state required CLAST and student satisfaction surveys. As of early 2000, Santa Fe was not involved with student assessment much beyond the state required reporting measures, though they were in the process of redesigning their assessment strategy. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The conditions that initially lead to Santa Fe’s efforts in student assessment began in the mid 1980s with state mandates requiring common college-entry-placement tests to be used state wide. Prior to that, the tests varied from institution to institution and comparisons were difficult, if not impossible. Computerized Placement Tests (CPT) were introduced at a few institutions in 1995 and by 1996 were required at all institutions. Eventually CPT cut-off scores were also

raised by the state to increase uniformity across the state. The state's purpose for creating standardized testing and uniform cut-off scores was to compare and track high school programs and how well they were preparing graduates for college level academic work. In 2000, the first feedback reports were sent to districts and high schools based on the uniform statewide CPT cut-off scores.

Another initiating force that prompted Santa Fe's current assessment efforts was the regional accreditation association, SACS. In the 1992, the last institutional accreditation visit, the SACS report "encouraged the institution to use a variety of assessment methods and use the results in the planning and evaluation process for improving educational programs and support activities." Though no specific guidelines or types of assessment methods were suggested, the message was clear that Santa Fe should increase its student outcomes assessment efforts. Thus, the two most significant initiating forces for Santa Fe's current assessment efforts were from external forces.

Institutional Approach

Student assessment at Santa Fe encompasses the collection of data on entry-student skills and abilities, some student satisfaction, basic learning outcomes in English and math, and a post-graduate employer survey. These types of assessment generally measure cognitive, affective, and former student performance. The instruments used to assess these areas are both externally and internally developed depending upon the specific area to be measured. The college-level skills assessments are typically provided by the state, while several of the student satisfaction and employer surveys have been developed by Santa Fe staff. The CLAST, which tests basic college level academic skills, is developed externally and standardized across all state institutions. This instrument measures skill level in college-level communication and math.

The timing of the assessment efforts at Santa Fe are mostly front loaded with entry-skill tests occurring before or during admissions and registration. The CLAST and student satisfaction measures occur during the students' tenure and employer surveys occur after students graduate. The reporting of assessment information occurs to a limited extent, though if one includes state reporting requirements, then reporting would be classified as extensive. The type of data collected and reported, however, generally focuses on entry-level skills, retention and graduation. The one exception is the CLAST information, which reports student skill in college level communications and mathematics. Though the most of the information is available to department chairs and faculty, it is generally distributed to administrative units and used more as a managerial tool. To complicate its use, it is not broadly distributed in a form that is conducive to its use and it typically follows a top down flow. Furthermore, since much of the information is for state reporting requirements, the type of information collected and reported is of little use to most faculty at the course level.

Institutional Strategy

Santa Fe has no reference to student assessment in its mission statement, though it does mention it in its institutional statement of values. Additionally, Santa Fe has a set of seven defined goals, two of which—Delivery of Alternatives and Educational Programs—mention assessment as a key component. The mention of assessment in these contexts clearly indicates that Santa Fe's institutional strategy is focused on undergraduate education as opposed to student outcomes specifically. In early 2000, the institution had no formal plan that addressed student assessment, however, administrators and faculty leaders were in the process of creating a draft institutional effectiveness handbook, which was scheduled for publication later that year. The

handbook will describe the planning and assessment systems and processes along with step-by-step instructions for performing planning and assessment at the college and unit level.

The current system of assessment that addresses mainly college entry skills is very centralized with the Office of Academic Resources administering most of the testing. The assessment of student outcomes is quite decentralized and generally limited individual units and courses. The purpose for assessment has been limited to accountability to both state and accrediting association requirements. This has begun to change more recently with efforts to collect, analyze and use assessment data for internal improvement, but the resources at the administrative level have yet to increase in a magnitude that would allow this type of effort.

Institution-wide Support

Systems of institution-wide support for student assessment at Santa Fe include various sources of funding for on-campus training sessions, conferences, and workshops, though these funds are not targeted specifically for assessment activities, but rather as professional development funding in general. There are also resources such as technical support from the information technology division and broad support from the Vice-President of Educational Services. While these resources are not widely recognized, they do exist for the faculty and administrators who seek them out. The funding that does exist to support assessment efforts exists as a large general allocation for the entire institution.

In the area of managerial or technical support, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning is charged with collecting all institution-wide assessment data. The director of this office reports to the president and was also responsible for leading the pre-accreditation self-study. Additionally, the division of Information Technology supplies the necessary computer support and programming needs for the college. This division is in place to support individual

faculty needs or requests as well. It was mentioned, however, that very few faculty take advantage of this service.

Institutional Leadership

The primary campus leadership for institution-wide assessment starts with the President and then resides mainly within three offices: the Vice-President of Educational Services, the Associate Vice-President of Academic Resources, and the aforementioned Director of Institutional Research and Planning. Classroom assessment, however, is the domain of the faculty and is quite fragmented in its implementation and success. The efforts of faculty are generally informal and vary greatly from unit to unit. Most faculty used traditional methods of student assessment in the classroom.

The president and administration at Santa Fe support increasing student assessment efforts, but because of the effort and resources currently being used to meet state reporting requirements, there has been little time and money targeted to increased student outcomes assessment at the institutional level. The data that has been collected has not yet been used to any great extent in planning or review. Thus, assessment at Santa Fe, while it having administrative support and commitment, is still considered to be in its infancy.

Management Policies and Practices

The policies and practices that support student assessment at Santa Fe reflect the type of assessment and the emphasis that exists at this stage point in time. Since much of the assessment is to meet state reporting requirements, it follows that the resource allocation would come from the state in the form of performance incentives. The state, though it does require a great deal of data collection, does not allocate specific money to institutions to complete this task.

Additionally, Santa Fe administration provides no funding or resources based upon results of assessment or involvement in assessment activities.

The institution does have a Division of Information Technology that is charged with providing support and resources for computing and programming. This includes assisting in areas of developing assessment tools and analyzing assessment information. As previously mentioned, however, faculty and many academic administrators rarely use this resource. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning does use the IT support quite often and produces many of its reports with the help of the IT division. The reports that are produced often mimic the data and reports that are sent to the state and an accountability requirement. There are other reports or monthly newsletters that the IRP office produces and distributes, but most of these are administratively oriented. The data that is collected by the IRP office is accessible to most campus faculty and administrators, though many are unaware of its existence or how to access it. All of the reports produced by IRP are housed in a library can be viewed by any college faculty or staff member. The groups that most often use the data are academic deans and other administrators.

There are no specific policies or practices that involve students in the assessment process. Several of the offices that tests and collect student data, however, do ask for feedback on a regular basis, but this is a strictly voluntary collection of student input. This information is used most often for the improvement of testing services and data collection methods.

Santa Fe has been increasingly providing opportunities for faculty and administrators to attend workshops or meeting related to improving student assessment efforts. Additionally, the institution has brought several outside consultants on campus for workshops on departmental

assessment and evaluating good teaching. Most of the faculty interviewed, however, were unaware of these opportunities.

Finally, Santa Fe has no policy or practice that rewards faculty based on the results of student assessment or for being involved in the student assessment process. There are recognitions that occur each year, in newsletters and with several quarterly teaching awards, but none of these recognitions reward faculty with additional financial resources or within the tenure and promotion schedule. There are certain types of assessment data that are used for planning and review purposes. The CLAST, retention and graduation rates, and GPA data are used for programmatic planning and review. Departments use the data to drop or revises courses and requirements and otherwise evaluate the curriculum.

Link to Academic Management

The student assessment efforts at Santa Fe are mostly responsive to state pressures and reporting requirements. The data collected has yet to be used for significant planning and review of the academic mission and processes of the institution. The lack of use is understandable given the types of data collected. Student assessment is linked only loosely to the academic management process. Most of the current impetus is derived from an upcoming SACS accreditation visit and state reporting requirements. The administration does not have the resources (human and otherwise) in place to sustain much more assessment than what it currently practices. There is great movement toward increasing and improving the student assessment effort at Santa Fe, specifically in the student outcomes area. These committees and discussions that were occurring during our visit indicate that management is headed in the right direction.

Link to Educational Improvement

Student outcomes assessment at Santa Fe is most noticeable at the department and course level. The institution's faculty appear committed to continuous evaluation and innovative revision of the educational environment. Sixty percent of the faculty has been at Santa Fe for more than 20 years. This is seen as a testament to their satisfaction and commitment to student learning and teaching. Though it was mentioned that many thought the administration was less concerned with student learning than with retention and graduation, this is probably a result of the emphasis the state places on these two measures. The institution was in the process of creating a General Education Committee where faculty from all disciplines would review the current general education model and develop an ongoing plan assessment. The administration believes it is not its place to develop the vision and goals for general education but rather it is the faculty role to do this. In support of this end, the administration does provide support for faculty to improve their teaching and learning skills and knowledge through professional development. Based on our interviews, however, it does not appear that many faculty have actually taken advantage of this support and fewer still have tried new methods of teaching and learning practices.

Utilization

The use of student assessment information at Santa Fe is very minimal. The greatest use of information is for state reporting and this involves measures such as retention and graduation rates, which do not accurately assess student learning. As with many institutions, the greatest use of student outcomes assessment is in the classroom, where faculty use various methods to assess student performance. Santa Fe, like our other Community College appears to still be in the early stages of adoption and acculturation of assessment. The administrators we interviewed

made it clear that student outcomes assessment has become a higher priority in recent years and to that end much planning is currently taking place to improve Santa Fe's assessment processes and efforts.

Culture

Although student assessment has been a part of Santa Fe for nearly two decades, with initiating conditions be developed and driven by state mandates, it appears that the institution has been too busy meeting state reporting requirements; reporting data that does not necessarily assess student learning. In recent years, the administration and faculty have recognized the need to improve student outcomes assessment at the course and unit level as well as the institutional level. While there has not yet developed a culture of student assessment, the discussions that were taking place in 2000, indicated that there was a developing culture of assessment *reform* in place. If the administration makes student assessment a priority and provides the necessary resources, Santa Fe is poised to drastically improve its student assessment efforts in the coming years.

Summary

Student assessment is occurring, but the type of assessment is not indicative of those that allow for the assessment of student learning. Much of what is in place—and has been in place for a number of years—merely collects data for state accountability. With the exception of the state required CLAST, the type of data collected (entry-level skills, retention, graduation, GPA, etc.) is not a good indicator of student learning. The faculty and administration have recognized this and with the upcoming accreditation visit have begun a process that appears to have sparked a move in the right direction.

South Seattle Community College

South Seattle Community College (South Seattle) is two-year, public institution—one campus of a four-campus local district—located in the Seattle, Washington area. The institution is accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, is situated in an ethnically diverse southern suburb, and has a student population of just under 6,900. The mission statement stresses preparation for life and work, involvement in the community, and its partnership with business and industry. South Seattle’s mission statement further emphasizes its role in the community and prioritizes technical education, transfer functions, and serving academically and economically disadvantaged students. The student population at South Seattle is over 32 percent students of color, but if one excludes the largely white and male off-site Duwamish apprenticeship program, the student population is actually comprised of 43 percent students of color. Additionally, current figures indicate that nearly 60 percent of South Seattle’s students are in the technical division versus 40 percent of students in the academic transfer division. Even with this large majority in the technical and professional division, faculty point to an emphasis on academics as relevant to work.

A president, who reports to the chancellor of the four-campus Seattle Community College district, heads South Seattle. He directly supervises facilities and operations, development, program services, diversity initiatives and budget. He has a Vice-President for Instruction and a Vice-President for Student Services who oversee a number of areas related either the academic or student service component of the institution.

The developing tale of assessment for South Seattle is one that has been an evolving story. Though it has over a decade of history working on current assessment methods and issues, it cannot yet be classified as an institution that fully embraces student outcomes assessment.

Like many institutions of its kind, South Seattle is pulled from various directions. State accountability measures, regional accreditation requirements, and its internal professional faculty and staff have very different expectations and working within the constraints of an educational environment that has such differences in programmatic content, it has been difficult for South Seattle to make any great strides in student outcomes assessment. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The conditions that initially lead to South Seattle's current efforts in student assessment began over a decade ago in 1990. The drive for student assessment was initiated by both internal and external factors. The institution received a federal "Title III" grant to support the implementation of an assessment plan at the institutional level. The grant came as the result of an effort by a group of faculty interested in assessment. The institution was going through an accreditation visit at the same time, which provided further impetus for the implementation of student assessment on campus. Shortly before receiving the grant in 1990, the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HEBC) created a master plan. This plan conceptualized the creation of a multi-dimensional program of performance evaluation. This plan was intended to eventually tie budget allocations to institutional performance in an effort to increase accountability in state-supported institutions. The early assessment efforts that resulted from these initiating conditions generally emphasized institutional effectiveness variables and satisfaction in contrast to assessment of student learning variables.

These early efforts were followed by another five-year Title IV grant that was used to support further faculty development on assessment. More recently, efforts to assess student learning and understand institutional effectiveness have centered on the identification and

integration of learning outcomes. The current president, who arrived in 1997, suggested that the Curriculum and Instruction Committee develop a list of student outcomes to use in assessment efforts. Though the list that was eventually developed has only found moderate success with faculty, all of the course descriptions now link learning goals to this set of desired outcomes.

Institutional Approach

Student assessment at South Seattle encompasses the collection of data on student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and post-graduate performance. The most well-known assessment tool used at South Seattle is a climate study that the institution conducts every three years. This study concentrates on measuring satisfaction, which is also the main thrust of assessment efforts in several units including many in Student Services. South Seattle uses both internally developed and externally acquired assessment instruments. The alumni and student outcome survey were both purchased from ACT, while faculty and staff developed many of Student Service's tools. Additionally, focus groups are used with general groups of students as well as specifically focused groups on students of color.

There has been little mention of the reporting of assessment information, however, retention reports are generated quarterly as part of the state accountability measures. As is common in institutional assessment, there is an abundance of assessment data at South Seattle but faculty and administrators have yet to find formal ways to present or use their findings.

Institutional Strategy

South Seattle has no direct mention of assessment in its mission statement, though it does obliquely refer to it in a reference to "ongoing improvement," which suggests a continuous quality improvement tradition that has been linked in the literature and practice to general performance assessment in organizations. Furthermore, the highly emphasized "Student

Learning Outcomes” statement makes no direct mention of student assessment. The lack of specific language, however, may be a simply a sign of semantic differences, as South Seattle appears committed to ongoing improvement in the area of assessing student outcomes. The purpose, as alluded to earlier, is for both internal improvement and for accountability to the state and accreditation agency.

While there is no formal assessment plan at South Seattle, assessment generally reflects the administrative organization, which is standardized across the institution with formal structures in place that follow a hierarchy from top to bottom and rely on several committees for the implementation of assessment. The president has indicated his desire to implement assessment and integrate assessment activities into department and unit plans. The structure for implementing assessment is centralized with each vice-president being responsible for connecting assessment activities in his/her area. There is an Assessment Committee as a sub group to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. This group makes recommendations to the president cabinet concerning issues of student assessment.

Institution-wide Support

Institution-wide mechanisms of support for student assessment at South Seattle are modest. The administration supports the efforts through regular faculty development seminars, in particular those originally sponsored by the Title IV grant in the mid to late nineties. The institution does show both depth and breadth in its support for student assessment. The administration has made clear its desire for the use of student assessment in not only the academic and instructional division, but also in the student services division and sees assessment as import at upper levels of administration as well as at the unit and classroom level. Faculty awareness of assessment has remained high even when support was qualified.

Resources for student assessment have derived mainly from the grants received by South Seattle in the past decade. There is no indication that faculty or administrators are given additional funds or incentives to participate in assessment. Conversely, faculty comment that there is not enough recognition of good teaching at the institution. In the area of managerial or technical support, the Institutional Planning Office is charged with collecting all institution-wide assessment data, and with only one full-time employee, the office struggles with understaffing issues.

Institutional Leadership

The leadership for institution-wide assessment resides mainly with the president and his two vice-presidents. Classroom assessment, however, is clearly driven by active faculty. The faculty leadership can be classified as informal and fragmented. As mentioned previously, there is a group of faculty who take great interest in assessment issues and they have been a significant in pushing the institution to examine and increase its student assessment efforts. While the president and administration appear committed to supporting student assessment, South Seattle has yet to make good use of the data that is collected. Furthermore, beyond tying learning goals to student outcomes, as a whole, South Seattle has not made great strides in innovative types of student outcomes assessment. As such, assessment seems to have a low level of focus at this point, which could be a leadership issue.

Management Policies and Practices

When one examines the policies and/or practices that support the student assessment effort at South Seattle, it becomes evident that the institution is still in the early stages of implementing a solid student assessment agenda. The institution does not allocate specific resources based on assessment efforts or results, though the state does tie some of its allocations

to performance standards. Funding for assessment initiatives at South Seattle have generally come from federal grants in the 1990s. Additionally, there are currently no campus-wide information support systems specifically used in collecting and analyzing student assessment information. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges manages much of the information collected by the Institutional Planning Office and Student Services at South Seattle.

The data at South Seattle goes through a specific chain as the information is filtered down to lower levels. The first to get the information is the Assessment Committee, which outlines key findings and then presents the findings to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, and the president's cabinet. The information eventually filters on down to faculty and staff but the system could not be classified as an open access system. Likewise, faculty frequently note that there is no "closure of the loop" in assessment at South Seattle. While information is collected, it is rarely analyzed and used in decision-making and planning and reports are few.

While there is no indication that policies or practices exist to include students in the process of developing or implementing student assessment, students do serve on a number of indirectly related committees such as the tenure committee and the many institutional planning committees. Additionally, Student Services frequently conducts student focus groups and interviews to learn about the concerns of students.

In the mid 1990s, the college was awarded a \$140,000 Title IV grant to provide faculty development in the area of student outcomes assessment. Part of the grant was used to train faculty members in student assessment. Currently, South Seattle offers a one-time-per-year faculty award for curriculum development and the Washington State Teaching and Learning

Center sponsors workshops and money for faculty development, though it does not necessarily need to be tied to assessment.

Student assessment is not directly tied to faculty awards or tenure review. As with most institutions, tenure and promotion do consider teaching performance, but how it is measured varies greatly. At South Seattle, members are evaluated by peers and by using student evaluations. While South Seattle is progressing in the area of assessing student outcomes, at this there is no real practice of using the information collected for planning and review. The original Title III grant helped set up the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, which in turn has charged each vice-president with connecting his/her respective unit's assessment activities to the institutional mission statement and further using assessment information in the planning and review process.

[Link to Academic Management](#)

The student assessment efforts at the management level can be classified as formal but only moderately pursued and executed at a rather slow pace. Student assessment is not linked very closely to the academic management process and most of the impetus comes from several committees, the Assessment Committee, which is part of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee. There is a no mention of assessment in the institution's mission statement and it has been commented that the use of assessment information has yet to be realized.

[Link to Educational Improvement](#)

Student assessment takes shape in a number of formal and informal practices throughout the academic programs division. Some departments hold norming sessions as a group to help insure consistency in assessing student portfolios. Another assessment policy requires that students have a 2.0 GPA and submit a passing portfolio in order to move to the next level of

English. The computer technology department has adopted a pre-tests and post-test program to assess student learning outcomes. Additionally, the students at South Seattle are very aware of the teaching, learning and assessment processes that various faculty use, exemplifying the practice of assessment from a student perspective.

Utilization

The use of student assessment information is lacking at South Seattle. The greatest use of information is at the course level for grading. At the institutional level, it appears that assessment data is used mainly for state accountability mandates. As with many institutions, this is the one area of student assessment that was most obviously lacking. Though South Seattle is still in its early stages of adoption and acculturation of assessment, it would appear that this should be an ongoing goal for those involved in promoting assessment at the institutional level.

Culture

Student assessment has been a part of South Seattle for over 10 years with initiating conditions being developed and driven by federal grant funding. Additionally, the state has promoted student assessment for accountability for more than 10 years. Yet even with this history, the overall culture is one of slow adoption. The administration has exhibited support but in only modest ways. The committees charged with promoting and developing student assessment efforts on campus have had limited success in creating an environment of willing acceptance given the resources available to them. The greatest strides have come at the course and unit level, where many faculty have begun trying innovative methods of assessing student outcomes. Furthermore, student assessment at South Seattle primarily focuses on satisfaction. The overall culture has yet to fully adopt the student assessment movement.

Summary

Student assessment is alive, but not necessarily well integrated at South Seattle Community College. Within the classroom, faculty are convinced of the vital role assessment can play in improving the quality of teaching. Beyond classroom assessment, however, most of the institutional assessment is in the form of satisfaction and exit surveys. Additionally, the administration has yet to close the loop in the assessment process. While much data is collected, little analysis and use of that data takes place in the planning and review process. South Seattle is an institution with great potential for eventually connecting multiple levels of assessment practice in order to improve institutional effectiveness and teaching and learning practice.

Wake Forest University

Wake Forest University (WFU) is a private, four-year, residential, selective liberal arts institution that also has graduate and professional schools. During the 1999-2000 year, WFU enrolled 6,147 students, with 3,850 of them being in the two undergraduates schools, while 2,164 were in the graduate and four professional schools, and 133 were in Allied Health. An important recent development is the strategic plan, known as the Plan for the Class of 2000 (PTC 2000). The plan (among many other things) provides students and faculty with an IBM ThinkPad. Faculty are encouraged to use technology in their classrooms, and the students are becoming more accomplished in their use of technology. The result has been the integration of computer and information technology into the entire teaching and learning enterprise.

WFU uses student assessment information in its continual cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. Assessment becomes a management tool to keep the institution on course towards the achievement of its planned objectives. The administration expects that

departments and units will collect assessment information and use it for the improvement of the academic enterprise. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

There have been several waves of institutional planning during the administration of the current president to address major campus needs, and a fourth is currently underway. This internal effort has been the primary driving force behind the adoption of assessment practices. The most recent wave of strategic planning by the President and VP produced significant change in the academic enterprise. This effort (1992-1994) was undertaken by the Program Planning Committee and resulted in the Plan for the Class of 2000 (PTC 2000).

One external influence was the most recent SACS accreditation in March of 1997. Following the visit, WFU was given 17 recommendations for compliance, the most important of which was to focus on institutional effectiveness- an area not sufficiently addressed in the original report. Following the SACS review, the executive officers, the faculty, and the campus gave greater priority to assessment. There had not been much formalized student assessment in place before the accreditation process, so this could be characterized as a responsive measure.

There also now exists an integrated planning process for institutional effectiveness that is departmentally based, but also connected to the planning efforts of the academic and administrative divisions and the entire institution. A by-product of the other two influences, this is now a major force for ongoing improvement.

Institutional Approach

The student assessment data collected at the institutional level is primarily quantitative and comes through the form of questionnaires and surveys administered to students, alumni, and faculty. The type of data collected is mostly quantitative and focuses on satisfaction and &

experiences; there is no attempt to use cognitive or affective measures. Most of the surveys used by OIR are available nationally, such as CIRP, CSEQ, and HEDS for students and the HERI faculty survey. WFU also uses two in-house faculty surveys--one developed by the Evaluation Committee for the assessment of PTC 2000 and one from the Department of Communication to assess faculty computer use. First year students are also surveyed about their experiences with the new First Year Seminar (FYS) courses as part of the evaluation of PTC 2000. Students are asked to rate the program on its rigor, how it compares with other courses, and if they feel it helped them develop the intellectual skills outlined in the goals for the seminars.

OIR has a regular schedule for data collection and reporting. It participates in CIRP annually and administers the remaining student surveys every other year, with alumni surveys administered every five years. With this combination, WFU students are surveyed at entry, exit, and after graduation. OIR has had more difficulty collecting qualitative data, although it does receive some from open-ended questions on the HEDS survey. Data produced from these instruments is collected and housed at OIR, although some flows up to deans, out to departments, over to student life upon request.

Another major assessment tool is course evaluations. The Information Systems Office makes evaluations students can use for their courses available online. The results and analysis are sent back to department heads. This allows chairs make decisions about how that information is shared with faculty and how many have been completed.

Departments also do their own assessment of programs and student satisfaction. There is a cultural disposition that departments are best qualified to make decisions regarding their goals and how to measure them. Some departments work with Student Life and the data they collect,

but that is more informal and grows out of a relationship over time. Most departments are likely to focus on teaching and the effective delivery of material.

Institutional Strategy

The assessment of student learning or the evaluation of academic programs and services for institutional improvement are not explicitly mentioned in the Wake Forest Mission and Purpose Statement. However, several academic leaders consider assessment part of the purpose of the institution. There is no standard plan, other than having the departments make student assessment activity part of ongoing planning and improvement activities. The strategy is mostly decentralized, with information regularly flowing upwards to planners and decision-makers.

There are three main areas or levels at which student assessment activity occurs. The first is an institution-wide effort that is centrally housed within the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). OIR administers student surveys, and also works closely with the Evaluation Committee for PTC 2000 and the Department of Communication to assess the implementation of the plan.

Departmentally based assessment centers primarily on Program Review and annual reports to deans. Program review has a common procedural structure across the institution but each department has discretion over the assessment information used to make its decisions. A department's review takes about 13 months and the review of all departments operates on a seven-year cycle. Departments also submit annual reports to their deans in which they detail progress on current goals and outline objectives for the future.

The third level of assessment occurs in Student Life, which assesses its own programs and students' experiences. Their data on experiences and satisfaction is vitally important to the

current planning effort to improve the intellectual climate on campus. At all three planning levels, the goal is improvement along institutional priorities.

Institution-wide Support

Institutional support for student assessment comes through administrative leadership, in particular the growing importance of assessment data for evaluating progress on strategic planning goals. The early efforts at assessment were supported and guided by the Provost, who sponsored activities like assessment seminars, although such events are less frequent today. The mid-1990s also produced a consultation with George Kuh on intellectual climate. Current supporting activities include annual planning retreats for chairs, “best practices” conferences by departments, and training on the use technology for teaching. Administrators also hold annual planning retreats.

Management support is less pronounced. Only OIR has budget funds dedicated to assessment activity; there are no targeted funds to departments to do assessment. Technical support exists for the development and analysis of surveys. The Information Systems Office is not dedicated solely to student assessment, but is helping in the evaluation of the strategic plan. It also trains computer specialists to help departments with technical problems.

Institutional Leadership

There has been a history of leadership on assessment by the academic administration. Assessment has received a high degree of attention because student assessment information is used by the academic administration in planning and by committees when evaluating programs. In the early 1990s, the Provost led strategic planning on academic needs and was responsible for many of the assessment-related events on campus. His efforts led to the ongoing discussions between students and faculty on academic life. This role is now being played by the Senior VP

who is heading the new strategic initiative on intellectual climate. The academic administration continues to show leadership. The President and senior officers hold annual planning retreats, as do the deans, to address institutional goals and evaluate progress. OIR plays a central role in directing assessment activity, and the Director also chairs the Executive Committee that evaluates PTC 2000. These groups all use assessment information in decision-making.

Management Policies and Practices

The primary area of emphasis for assessment is its integration into the strategic planning and evaluation processes. The departments and the academic administration have a focus on planning to address needs, a concern for examining student assessment data, and a philosophy focused on improvement. Academic leaders have the sense that assessment fosters planning as a management tool to address problems and help individuals work towards effectiveness.

Link to Academic Management

The different levels for assessment activity and their integration into the planning and evaluation process reflect a data-driven approach to academic management. In the area of strategic planning, PTC 2000 laid out many goals for institutional improvement, and student assessment information helps the evaluation of progress towards those goals. The Evaluation Committee, which is comprised of faculty and administrators and assesses the implementation of PTC 2000, has been involved the selection of assessment instruments and have developed others internally. The members of the EC also serve as liaisons to various committees and offices throughout the university and transmit findings to them.

Since the primary planning unit at WFU is the academic department, even when the Program Planning or Evaluation Committees consider student assessment data, the primary focus is mostly department-specific. Academic departments are asked to demonstrate effectiveness

and progress on goals in annual reports to the deans. The reports must also set objectives for the coming year and the next five years. The EC reviews these reports and examines how departments have used assessment information to measure progress. The SACS review also compelled departments to use more assessment data in the evaluation of their own performance.

Link to Educational Improvement

WFU has an extensive process for academic planning and institutional improvement that values assessment information regarding performance. The emphasis is whether WFU and its units are achieving academic and strategic priorities. The most prominent link to improvement is the implementation and evaluation of the PTC 2000. The plan had three major components: 1) improvement of the first-year experience, 2) use of information technology for learning, and 3) the overall improvement of the intellectual climate on campus.

One major initiative was First Year Seminar courses to increase writing and critical thinking skills. The FYS Committee surveys students about their experiences and satisfaction with their FYS courses. All surveys are combined and the entire FYS program is evaluated at once to determine what the criteria should be for future seminar approval. Another initiative, computer usage, is assessed by the Evaluation Committee and the Communication Department. The Information Systems Office also surveys students and faculty to learn how their own products and services are helping people with their academic work. Changes are made in delivery and training to provide better service.

The Evaluation Committee reviews the departmental reports on how assessment information was used to measure the implementation of PTC 2000. The EC monitors 27 areas of quality, including the quality of students upon entrance and exit, the quality of their experiences, retention and graduation rates, and the effects of study abroad. The EC feel they have helped

departments embrace the SACS requirements for institutional effectiveness. Peer comparisons also help the EC with the evaluation of PTC 2000.

The Director of OIR makes periodic reports to the Executive Council (President, Provost, VPs and Deans) and the Reynolda Cabinet (President and VPs). Smaller work groups within the Executive Council take relevant information to the appropriate department chairs, but then it becomes the chairs' responsibility to use the information. The work groups also make a full report back to the EC once a year.

There are also many innovative initiatives and methods to improve teaching and learning across campus. The Teaching & Learning Center functions as a service unit and resource to faculty on teaching practices. The Computer Enhanced Learning Initiative was a faculty initiative to develop effective uses for computers in instruction. And the International Center for Computer Enhanced Learning (ICCEL), a consortium of officials from WFU and other institutions, holds conferences, conducts interactive sessions, and offers consultation to all types of teachers interested in using technology to increase learning.

Common links to improvement in the departments we studies included assessing satisfaction with service courses, an evaluation of the preparedness of students talking a core of classes, assessing instruction or peer review of teaching, examining student writing to evaluate the effectiveness of a course, and national subject tests to assess content learning.

Utilization

Assessment results have been extensively used in strategic planning and evaluation, academic planning, departmental reviews, and in the refinement of instructional techniques and curricular patterns. Assessment information led to the adoption of several components of PTC 2000 as well as the evaluation of its implementation, and will be very significant in the planning

for the intellectual climate. The program review process has also had significant impacts at the departmental level. Several departments have made changes to their curricula, and a few have been restructured or had programs eliminated.

Across the institution, the cycle of planning, assessment and evaluation has had the greatest impact on teaching. More faculty are focused on how to improve their teaching practices, and the offices and programs dealing with teaching and learning are experiencing increased activity.

Information from assessment has not yet caused the administrative structure to offer more formal support such as resources or inclusion in tenure criteria. Also, WFU is not yet able to assess or demonstrate how students are changing regarding institutional goals like values, perceptions about service, and citizenship. Most of what is known is based on anecdotal information, such as the stories students relate about their experiences.

Culture

Student assessment at WFU is embedded in the institution's larger academic management processes. It is extensive and widely used but is not a separate driving force. It is not done as an end in itself, but as a means to helping the institution become more effective and achieve its long-range goals. Because assessment has been incorporated into the academic planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the administration and the departments, there exists an academic management culture that stresses use of a rational planning and review mode that is driven by data analysis. There is a stress on the uniqueness of WFU and the need to structure academic planning and review around meeting goals and priorities.

Despite the lack of any comprehensive master plan and the mostly decentralized implementation of assessment across campus, there are many ways in which assessment

information comes together to produce institutional improvement. Continued emphasis by the academic leadership sends the message that this is an important part of everyone's work. The "teeth" of the assessment effort to enforce recommendations and make specific changes exist because the deans are committed and collectively, the university has a desire to make things work well. Also, information sharing across campus can put pressure on units to change since no one wants to be seen as under-performing. Planning and evaluation are integral components of its management philosophy, and assessment is an essential tool for helping the university achieve its strategic objectives.

Summary

In conclusion, assessment is now part of what WFU does in its drive towards increased institutional effectiveness. It is difficult to separate the institutional improvements due to strategic and departmental planning from those resulting from assessment of performance. The two processes are closely intertwined and integrated into the management of the academic enterprise. Despite the lack of any formal plan or explicit structure, administrators and departments involve themselves in assessment activity based on a shared goal of improvement.

Northwest Missouri State University

Northwest Missouri State University (Northwest) is a state-assisted, four-year regional institution with a student population of just over 6000, which serves a 19 county region that includes northwest Missouri, southwest Iowa, northeast Kansas and southeast Nebraska. Originally founded as a Normal School in 1905, it is governed by a state-appointed board of trustees and is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Accreditation Association. Northwest is comprised of three colleges that house 21 academic departments: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education and Human Services,

and the College Professional and Applied Studies. As an institution that is immersed in student-centered and learner-centered education, Northwest has distinguished itself among American colleges and universities in three areas: its electronic campus, its “Culture of Quality,” and its outstanding athletic programs. The second of these, its Culture of Quality program, was established in 1987 as part of an effort to strengthen all areas of undergraduate education. The current program borrows from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. In conjunction with its Culture of Quality program, Northwest has developed an extensive system of student assessment efforts and practices.

The underlying storyline for Northwest is one of developing a culture of quality that permeates every aspect of the school and thus helps to drive the student assessment efforts. Student assessment, while initially triggered by national and state attention to accountability, was quickly adopted as part of the culture of quality and academic improvement at the institution. Today, student assessment is an integral part of quality improvement and planning at Northwest. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The initial conditions that precipitated Northwest’s current efforts in student assessment were both internally and externally driven. In 1984, a new president joined the institution and brought his belief in a Culture of Quality. He created a vision of an institution based on quality principles. He envisioned creating a culture of quality through the adoption of business derived quality principles into the educational setting. His initial attempts were seen as controversial and met with great resistance. As the national trend for increased institutional accountability grew, however, these principles have become a way of life for Northwest.

The state also played a role in creating the current conditions at Northwest. In the late 1980s, the governor of Missouri declared state mandates for assessment in all public institutions. As a representative for the presidents of all four-year institutions in Missouri, the Northwest president met with the governor to discuss an appropriate framework for assessment in the state. This meeting marked the beginning of a positive relationship between the state and Northwest in the area of assessment practices. When the governor launched its “Funding for Results” program, based on performance funding, the criteria used embraced many of Northwest’s established principles.

Institutional Approach

Student assessment at Northwest uses a very comprehensive approach, collecting numerous types of performance data (see Table 2) from their students. The areas of assessment

Table 2. Methods, Uses, and Frequencies of Student Assessment Tools.

Method of Collection	Use	Frequency
Profile Information	Admittance and Placement	Admissions process
Course Examinations	Mastery of course material	Varies with every course
General Education Assessment	General Education competency	Senior year
Major Field Assessment	Measure major field competency	Senior year
C-BASE	Required for entry into Teacher Education	Sophomore
Certification Exam	Recommendation for certification	Senior year
Portfolio Analysis	Assurance of competency, self awareness	Freshman to Senior year
Freshman Survey	Academic preparation and reasons for selecting Northwest	Summer preceding enrollment
CIRP	Determine major national trends related to campus climate	Start of fall freshman year
SDTLA	Determine planning, support and development needs and understand where students are at risk	Mid-fall of 1 st trimester & Sample of Seniors in the Spring
Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory	Measure difference in expectations and satisfaction levels	End of 1 st trimester & Junior year
Junior Class Survey	Determine mid-career satisfaction	1 st term of Junior standing
Alumni Outcomes Survey	Gather comparison information on performance gaps against national sample	Three years after graduation
Student Opinionnaires of Teaching	Assist faculty in improving instruction as well as general education and department programs	End of courses

include cognitive and affective learning as well as college and post college experiences. Throughout the student's career, numerous instruments are used at various times to collect information using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data collection process starts from the time the student is admitted and includes high school grade point average, standardized test scores, and high school class rank. Several cognitive measures are taken throughout the student's career and include general education assessment, major field assessment, certification exams, portfolio analysis, and the typical course evaluations. Affective measures of assessment include the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey, the Noel-Levetz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levetz), and the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment (SDTLA). Other assessment measures examine post-college experiences and track alumni.

Institutional Strategy

Northwest has a very formal institutional assessment framework and strategic planning process. The original model took a traditional business model and adapted it to fit the educational goals while at the same time merging it with state mandates and quality indicators. The Northwest model uses three teams that are fundamental to the university-wide approach: the Strategic Planning Council, the Baldrige Category Council, and the President's Cabinet. These three teams drive the three phases of planning. Phase I, the review and analysis, focuses on reviewing the institutional foundational statements, analyzing the external and internal environments using environmental scanning, evaluating current Strategic Initiatives (SIs) and analyzing the overall organizational performance. Phase II, initiative identification, uses the information from Phase I to develop SI proposals to be presented to the President and his cabinet. In Phase III, action planning and development, cross sectional teams use a Seven Step

Planning Process (see Table 3) to develop the accepted SI proposals into action plans. The action plans are developed to support major objectives known as Key Quality Indicators (KQIs) for each SI. This process is very formal and comprehensive with the general purpose of increasing the organizational performance of the institution.

Institution-wide Support

The institution-wide support mechanisms for student assessment at Northwest are quite extensive and unified. The initial support for the student assessment efforts undertaken by Northwest was primarily found in the upper administration. Currently, while the leaders of the assessment efforts are still upper administrators, there is significant support from the faculty and staff. There does remain, however, some skepticism and criticism from some faculty and departments who feel the effort places additional burden on faculty without any compensation financially or otherwise. The President, who is careful to note that involvement from senior administrators is key in continuing support for faculty, staff, and students, recognizes this dissension. Initial financial support came from the Governor to fund the Talent Development Center, but with the addition of the Office of Assessment, Information, and Analysis funding is now derived from the two centrally located budgets of these two offices.

Table 3. The Seven Step Planning Process

Seven Step Planning Process	
Step 1:	Define Key Quality Indicators (KQIs)
Step 2:	Validate KQIs
Step 3:	Establish Goals and Develop a Deployment Strategy
Step 4:	Formulate an Assessment Strategy to Track Performance
Step 5:	Establish Baselines, Track Trends and Do Competitive Comparisons
Step 6:	Benchmarking
Step 7:	Set Performance Targets and/or Stretch Goals

Institutional Leadership

The leadership that supports and administers most of the student assessment efforts at Northwest resides in four key leadership teams: the President's Cabinet, the Dean's Council, the Baldrige Category Council, and the Strategic Planning Council (these have since combined to form a Strategic Planning Council). As such, the leadership model very much follows a top down approach to student assessment. The assessment leadership spans the range of administrative, academic, and student affairs divisions and appears to be very supportive of the efforts of the four leadership teams.

Management Policies and Practices

The management support at Northwest is also quite extensive. The Department of Information Systems plays a significant role in supporting the assessment system. Though it performs only in a support role, it provides much needed technical assistance in writing programs and designing the necessary systems needed in the assessment effort. One of these roles includes tailoring reports for the various constituents throughout the institution. Any faculty or staff can request special report formats and the department is very willing to consult in order to develop what is needed. As such, the access to the data is quite extensive. Through the system of Dashboards—described in the next section—Cabinet members have access to any of the data collected. From there, any faculty or staff who falls under a particular cabinet member can gain access to the data on that person's Dashboard. (e.g. A faculty in Arts and Sciences could view any data on the Dean of A&S' Dashboard.)

Northwest also provides on-site planning and development days for all faculty members at the beginning of the fall and spring trimesters. While these are not specifically geared toward student assessment issues, they are used for overall quality education development, which

includes assessment issues. Furthermore, the academic planning and review process revolves around annual reviews and the Seven Step Planning Process. The assessment data is used extensively as part of this review process.

Though the state advocates a “Performing for Results” system, performance funding actually only accounts for up to 5% of the institution’s budget. In 1997, Northwest consulted with department chairs about tying operating increases to student outcomes, but this was overwhelmingly thought to be a bad idea since they thought assessment practices related to student outcomes should be done regardless of financial incentives. Northwest does not allocate funds for salary or to programs and units based on student assessment results.

[Link to Academic Management](#)

The student assessment efforts at Northwest are linked to the academic management process through a variety of administrative structures. Under the direction of the Provost, the Office of Assessment, Information, and Analysis directs all academic assessment activity on campus. This includes collection, analysis, and dissemination of academic information. Student educational progress is grouped into three broad categories for analysis and dissemination: outcomes and performance, student and stakeholder satisfaction ratings, and operational effectiveness. The information is distributed throughout the campus via a networked system of linked spreadsheets called Dashboards and Profiles, which are a tracking system that indicate the degree to which a program is responding to an initiative. Each of the President’s cabinet members has a Dashboard that corresponds to his/her area of supervision.

As previously mentioned, the President’s cabinet along with the Baldrige Category Council and the Strategic Planning Council are the three teams where the planning and assessment process begins. These groups are then linked, through members, to every divisions

and department of the institution. Furthermore, these three teams lead by example in using the Key Quality Indicators in conjunction with the Seven Step Planning Process to set the agenda for the future. The expectation from these three teams is that every department across the university will use the Seven Step Planning Process and KQIs in establishing goals and programs for the future.

Link to Educational Improvement

There are a number of means by which Northwest links its assessment efforts to the formal academic improvement processes. The most widely recognized would be the annual departmental and course reviews. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences meets with each department three times a year to review the summative assessment data collected and discuss necessary changes for improvement. Likewise, every three years at the institution level and five years at the state level each course undergoes a similar review. Non-academic departments are also provided assessment data for review and improvement of services.

A number of faculty cited areas in which there was considerable innovation, however, there was some confusion between the terminology of educational innovation and the use of new technology. Northwest faculty often discussed the use of new technology as the proof of their innovative teaching and learning practices. Indeed, Northwest has a Center for Technology in Education (CITE), which provides vast resources for faculty to enhance their classroom teaching. Additionally, Northwest provides faculty and staff with a number of institution-wide events including bi-annual addresses from the President and meetings and announcements throughout the academic year. New faculty and staff have an orientation that communicates the Vision, Mission, Cultural Core Values, and Decision Drivers. The University Chairs Council meets

twice monthly to discuss pertinent issues and a monthly Leadership Forum reviews performance outcomes, new programs and strategic implications.

Utilization

The amount of student assessment that is conducted at Northwest would lead one to believe that the results are used extensively in educational and/or faculty decisions. This is not the case. This area was cited by most as the weakness of the Northwest assessment process. Many within the institution, even those in upper administrative positions commented that the data was not used as much as it could be or should be. Aside from using the assessment data in annual reviews and to some extent in the institutional planning and review process, there is a wealth of data that has not been analyzed or used in making educational decisions. There is no use of the data for decisions regarding mission or purpose of the institution and very little use of the data for programmatic and instructional changes.

Culture

The overall culture surrounding student assessment at Northwest is positive. It is seen as an essential component of change and improvement and necessary for meeting state quality goals. The student assessment process is very much intertwined with the quality oriented management approach and the strategic planning process. The system that the administration has developed is well supported and has been widely accepted throughout the institution. And though the faculty view it as a top down effort that often places great burden on those at lower levels, they overwhelmingly support it.

Summary

Northwest Missouri is an institution that takes great pride in its emphasis on quality undergraduate education. For more than a decade, Northwest has used quality standards and

principles of strategic planning based on the National Baldrige Award Criteria for excellence. Student assessment has become an integral part of collecting Key Quality indicators for use in its planning and review process. Northwest is an institution that has an excellent collection and reporting system in place and is moving toward a more integrated analysis capacity and use of the information collected.

Mercyhurst College

Mercyhurst is a private, residential, Catholic liberal arts college that prides itself in its ability to provide programs having a strong foundation in the arts and sciences, but also focused on career preparation. The institution has undergone a transformation in the past 30 years regarding its scope, size, and academic mission. The changes in recent years involved significant growth in all areas of the college's operation, including enrollment, faculty, and institutional advancement. Such growth has changed the organizational dynamics within the institution and created a need for an elaborated administrative structure and a more process-oriented approach to management.

An examination of student assessment at Mercyhurst reveals an institution in the beginning stages of implementing an assessment strategy that it only recently developed. And the college could not be characterized as moving in concert to embrace the changes student assessment entails. The assessment plan was developed amidst a controversy between faculty and the administration over how faculty would be evaluated for tenure and promotion. Still, with a strong commitment from the academic administration, an institutional assessment strategy is being implemented that will eventually impact major components of the academic enterprise. (See Table 4, page 68, for a brief outline of institutional assessment efforts.)

Initiating Conditions

The primary driving force for the development of an assessment plan was the institution's 1992 accreditation by Middle States. Faculty and administrators cited this external impetus, as the reason the current plan exists. Assessment was undertaken, as a response to the accreditation report's recommendation that increased assessment activity was needed for institutional improvement. However, an important internal motivation was that Mercyhurst also sought to demonstrate its contributions to the community.

From 1994-1997, the institution developed a new strategic vision statement, one theme of which stated the college would focus on “continually assessing its programmatic outcomes and its educational effectiveness.” In 1998, a standing committee of the College Senate, the Academic Planning and Assessment Committee (APAC) formed a task force and charged it with developing an institutional student assessment plan. In late 1999, the plan was presented to the faculty.

The reaction by the faculty was one of resistance, and there was a great deal of antagonism over the implementation efforts. The primary conflict was over linking faculty merit increases to assessment data. Although the president supported this position, these functions were eventually split administratively, with different vice-presidents overseeing the two functions. Despite the faculty resistance, in April 2000, the Faculty Senate approved the assessment plan, although a group of faculty published a philosophical counterpoint to its implementation at that time.

Institutional Approach

Mercyhurst collects data on its students through placement exams, CIRP, and the College Student Survey, and its own senior exit survey. The in-house survey asks students about their

experiences within their majors. The college collects information such as student satisfaction and self-ratings in more and different ways than on other relevant constructs such as performance information, portfolios, etc. Student satisfaction data figures prominently in how data are used. One institutional researcher with a half-time appointment manages the collection efforts and oversees surveys and drafts reports. The institution's data collection activities were limited to these efforts; there was no other data gathered at the institutional level.

The distribution of student assessment data is also limited at this time. The president, senior vice-president and the vice-president for enrollment retain most of the information within the upper administration. Results from the Mercyhurst senior survey is reported to departments. Executive officers receive summary descriptive reports of other data, but department chairs see survey data for their respective units. However, institution-wide averages are also made at the program level.

Institutional Strategy

There is no formal statement regarding assessment in the institution's mission statement, although it does list broad learning goals for its students. However, Mercyhurst's Strategic Vision for 2001-2005 does bring the focus of the institution to assessment. The assessment plan developed by the APAC task force seeks institutional improvement and focuses on three areas: the core curriculum, program review, and student life. Currently, the plan would be characterized as being standardized at the institutional level.

The vice-president for enrollment leads the effort on the core curriculum, and a faculty curriculum committee shares some responsibility for this arm of the assessment plan. However, the broader role of that committee in executing the entire assessment plan remains unclear. The focus for program review will be on performance. Over the next few years, building on the work

with the core curriculum, Mercyhurst plans to use student assessment data in its academic planning and program review processes as it moves through a cycle to encompass all departments. Finally, the aspect of the plan concerning the assessment of student life issues was still in its earliest stages and did not have formal assignment of responsibility or allocation of resources. Details regarding the implementation of the assessment plan as a whole are still being finalized and its structure is still centralized at the executive level. At the time of our visit, the strategy for implementing the plan had yet to be shared with the campus community.

Institution-wide Support

There is not yet an extensive network or base of support for assessment across the institution, although there are some related activities. No substantial history of faculty development opportunities regarding teaching, learning, and assessment has emerged to support faculty engagement with student assessment. Professional development seminars and workshops for faculty have touched on assessment principles, although these only reach faculty on a volunteer basis. Other than these, there are few regular events to bring formalized discussion into the structure of daily life at Mercyhurst, although there have been several one-time events that have sparked debates on campus among faculty. These include Faculty Senate discussions, the presentation by the APAC task force on the assessment plan, and the debate over faculty evaluation.

The institution has not yet diverted existing resources or made formal budgetary allocations to support the increased assessment activity. Staffing and structural issues are being formally addressed, however. The vice-president for enrollment has been charged with leading the assessment efforts, while program review will remain under the direction of faculty committees and the vice-president for academic affairs. And, the dean of student development

will most likely undertake the assessment of student life concerns. Also, the college has allotted a part-time professional development/faculty development position, although that post was not filled before our site visit.

The institution is currently developing the management infrastructure to provide adequate support for assessment. Currently, only basic objective data on student progress or graduation is available for integration with emerging data on student learning. But such student assessment data is not yet collected consistently. Moreover, no student information system had been proposed to support or enhance the assessment plan.

Institutional Leadership

The campus leadership provided on assessment is primarily at the administrative levels. The upper administration clearly envisions a role for assessment at the institution, as evidenced by recent public statements from the president and the vice-president for academic affairs. The vice present has also made presentations on assessment to the faculty.

However, the campus as a whole remains divided in its attitudes toward the plan for student assessment that was recently developed. Clearly, the upper administration is committed to making the assessment plan work as part of the implementation of its Strategic Vision, but the leadership among the faculty is fragmented. Some faculty members support departmental and institutional initiatives, but many have also registered highly visible opposition. Because of the debate, there is a great deal of awareness among all parties regarding the institution's agenda for assessment. Despite the opposition of many faculty, the APAC Task Force's assessment plan received the official endorsement of the Faculty Senate.

Management Policies and Practices

Assessment is seen as the way Mercyhurst can both demonstrate its contributions to the community and achieve the improvement that will meet the criteria set forth by Middle States. Indeed, the assessment of student learning and other measures of what Mercyhurst terms "educational effectiveness" receive prominent attention in the self-study documents currently being prepared for the college's 2002 accreditation visit.

Link to Academic Management

Mercyhurst currently shows limited infrastructure to support data driven decisions. Any link of the assessment process to the desired improvement appears to be sporadic among the departments and campus units. Informal communication patterns and predominately top-down administrative decision making may at times serve to aggravate a divide between the faculty and administration, especially regarding assessment.

Link to Educational Improvement

The use of assessment data to produce changes seems to be concentrated at the departmental and program levels at present. The program review process will most likely focus on program effectiveness, although it is unclear what kind of student assessment data on learning will be available for use in the reviews. Since the divisions will be drafting program-level assessment plans, it may be possible to "scale up" the department-level findings in order to design assessment plans for the programs.

Utilization

Currently, the college's use of student assessment data is limited by the scope of the data available. Nevertheless, the vice-president for academic affairs expects to use the information on

student learning in program review. And several departments engaged in assessment show promise in employing data to improve program-level practices.

Culture

The prolonged debate over the adoption of the institution's student assessment plan has made the climate for student assessment a difficult one. Faculty members opposed to assessment expect to see emergent data on student learning employed in negative ways --in the evaluation of departments, programs, and individual faculty.

Summary

The administration and others supporting student assessment activity at Mercyhurst have had to overcome significant internal opposition to develop and begin implementing a plan that they will feel will result in improvement of the institution in the long run. Although current assessment efforts are limited and still quite centralized, the plan should be very comprehensive when it is fully implemented. As it builds the infrastructure to support the assessment collection, analysis, and reporting functions, the administration will continue to build the internal political support needed to have all departments and programs embrace assessment activity. By phasing in the plan over the next few years, the president and academic administrators hope to convince their faculty that assessment can help the institution achieve the goals set forth in its most recent strategic plan.

Chapter 3

Comparative Analysis

This chapter offers a comparison of the seven institutions across the eight domains of the conceptual framework. The nature of this analysis is to compare institutions across a broad range of institutional contexts, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of student assessment efforts as they relate to each domain. While it is understood that each institution has its own context, which may make it difficult to draw comparisons for certain domains, the goal has been to provide a variety of examples upon which student assessment leaders can evaluate their current and future efforts. The analysis will follow the domains from the conceptual framework in Chapter 1 providing examples of different types of institutional student assessment efforts. A comparative glimpse of the seven institutions across each of the domains is shown in Table 4. As in Chapter 2, the Institution-wide Strategy, Support, and Leadership domain has been divided into three subsections, and the Integration with Academic Management and Educational Improvement domain has been divided into two subsections for greater detail.

Initiating Conditions

The initiating conditions for each institution were identified and categorized as either arising primarily from external sources, internal sources, or in some cases both external and internal sources (see Table 4). The types of external sources that may have stimulated institutions to initiate student assessment efforts often include state mandates and accrediting agency guidelines. Internal sources could include a variety of catalysts including leadership, faculty, or staff interests in student assessment, grants to increase student assessment, or other sources that might create an increased effort in assessing student outcomes. Where there were external conditions or forces helping to initiate the institution's student assessment effort, those

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Conceptual Domains across Seven Case Study Institutions.

	Institution						
Dimension	Iowa State University	Wake Forest University	Northwest Missouri State University	Western Washington University	Mercyhurst College	South Seattle Community College	Santa Fe Community College
Initiating Conditions	<p>External – from Board of Regents</p> <p>External – professional accrediting agencies</p>	<p>Internal – institutional strategic planning process.</p> <p>External – to lesser extent, regional accreditation recommendations.</p>	<p>Internal – early 80s new president brought in belief in “culture of quality”.</p> <p>External – as accountability and assessment movement increased, state adopted “funding for results” program.</p>	<p>Internal – recognized importance of SA.</p> <p>External – state master plan.</p>	<p>External – regional accreditation recommendations.</p>	<p>Internal – faculty interested in SA receive federal grant.</p> <p>External – regional accreditation visit suggested needed improvement in SA</p>	<p>External – State mandates requiring college-entry placement tests and reporting of retention and graduation rates</p> <p>External – regional accreditation requirements</p>
Institutional Approach	<p>Content primarily student satisfaction and experiences.</p> <p>Timing and content determined by department.</p> <p>Program review annual but staggered (individual departments every 7 years).</p>	<p>Institution-wide assessment is mostly affective focusing on satisfaction and experiences.</p> <p>Most surveys are externally developed and used nationally. Two are developed internally.</p> <p>Timing of collection at entry, during, exit and post-college.</p> <p>Department do their own SA with student evaluations and satisfaction surveys.</p>	<p>Comprehensive approach to collecting SA data. Content in cognitive, affective and post-college areas. Using numerous instruments mostly externally developed national instruments but a few internally developed. Collect both qualitative and quantitative information.</p> <p>Timing of collection at entry, during, exit, and post-college.</p> <p>Extensive reporting system using spreadsheets and institutional intranet to provide deans, department chairs and unit directors with SA data.</p>	<p>Comprehensive – cognitive, affective and post-college data collection.</p> <p>Type and timing varies by unit.</p> <p>Most instruments are internally/department ally developed.</p>	<p>Limited efforts in the areas of cognitive assessment. More active affective and post-college assessment</p>	<p>Cognitive, affective, and post-college. Cognitive is generally focused on student learning outcomes, affective is focused on student satisfaction and post-college are alumni surveys.</p> <p>Abundance of data but very underutilized as reporting and analysis has not been formalized at any level.</p>	<p>Content is cognitive, affective and post-college – mainly college entry skills, student satisfaction and employer surveys. CLAST is one outcomes assessment that is used.</p> <p>Timing varies depending on content: cognitive mainly at entry, satisfaction during and at exit, and post-college as indicated.</p> <p>Majority are standardized from state.</p>

Dimension	Iowa State University	Wake Forest University	Northwest Missouri State University	Western Washington University	Mercyhurst College	South Seattle Community College	Santa Fe Community College
Institutional Strategy (Emphasis)	<p>No central or formal plan.</p> <p>Decentralized process with departments taking initiative.</p> <p>Different between A&S and professional schools.</p> <p>Purpose initially external accountability but has moved to internal improvement.</p>	<p>SA not explicitly mentioned in mission and no formal plan, but academic leaders consider assessment to be part of ongoing planning and improvement.</p> <p>Decentralized strategy with information flowing up to planners and decision-makers.</p> <p>SA occurs at three levels: institution-wide, departmental, and in student services.</p>	<p>Strategy driven by institutional improvement as well as state accountability.</p> <p>Very formal structure based on traditional business model adapted to fit education.</p> <p>Centralized and standardized across all departments and units.</p>	<p>Undergraduate education.</p> <p>Centrally guided.</p> <p>Purpose is both external accountability and internal improvement.</p>	<p>Focus on undergraduate education.</p> <p>Purpose for external accountability vis-à-vis regional accreditation.</p> <p>Highly centralized.</p>	<p>Mission emphasizes ongoing improvement. Major focus of SA on internal improvement with some external accountability from accreditation and state reporting requirements.</p> <p>No formal assessment plan, but assessment generally reflects formal structures across the institution that follows a top-down hierarchy.</p>	<p>Focus on undergraduate education.</p> <p>Purpose is external accountability.</p> <p>In process of revising handbook to include planning and assessment systems and processes.</p> <p>Centralized structure for the type of assessment that occurs.</p>
Institution-wide Support	<p>Vice Provost stimulate interest in SA.</p> <p>Concentrated on helping faculty develop their own initiatives.</p> <p>Departments must do SA out of existing funds, no special SA money.</p>	<p>Support initially from provost, sponsoring seminars and other professional development activities.</p> <p>No specific targeted funds for departments to do assessment.</p> <p>Only one office, OIR, has funds budgeted for SA.</p> <p>Annual planning retreats for department chairs, best practices conferences by departments.</p>	<p>Extensive system of institution-wide support from upper administration that recognizes importance of key senior administrators is necessary to continue faculty support of SA efforts.</p> <p>Faculty remain mostly supportive but somewhat skeptical of efforts.</p> <p>Office of Assessment, Information, and Analysis has primary responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and distributing SA data.</p>	<p>Administrative support for efforts by units but no regular centralized efforts to increase SA.</p>	<p>Very little substantive support for SA.</p> <p>Professional development is on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>No information system for SA data.</p> <p>Currently have only appointed a position to oversee the SA effort at the institution level.</p>	<p>Modest mechanisms of institution-wide support.</p> <p>Faculty development seminars (mostly originally sponsored by federal grant) providing breadth and depth of support.</p> <p>Administration desires SA not only in academic and instructional areas but also student services and sees SA as important at upper levels of administration and well as classroom and department level.</p>	<p>Good institutional support for SA. Funding for training, conferences, and workshops.</p> <p>Office of IR and Planning and VP of Educational Services provide most of administrative support.</p>

Dimension	Iowa State University	Wake Forest University	Northwest Missouri State University	Western Washington University	Mercyhurst College	South Seattle Community College	Santa Fe Community College
Institutional Leadership	<p>Board of Regents presents an external source of leadership.</p> <p>Internally support comes from the president, but focuses more on Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>Also Administrative leadership in two new offices: VP for Under-graduate Programs and Student Outcomes Assessment Coordinator</p>	<p>High degree of administrative leadership for SA as a result of importance in planning and evaluating programs.</p> <p>Provost has been responsible for many SA related activities as part of strategic planning on academic needs.</p> <p>OIR plays central role in directing SA activity.</p>	<p>The leadership for SA efforts resides at the top with the president. Below him the presidents council, the dean's council, the Baldrige Category council, and the strategic planning council all provide the necessary leadership throughout the institution.</p>	<p>Main leadership is Administrative and resides three levels below President.</p> <p>Faculty are fragmented in their support of SA.</p>	<p>Leadership is concentrated in upper administration.</p> <p>Some faculty have shown support for departmental assessment and some institutional assessment but many faculty have also registered visible opposition.</p>	<p>Leadership resides with President and two VPs</p> <p>Classroom assessment clearly driven by a few active faculty, but is informal and fragmented.</p>	<p>Leadership is administrative from the top, but centralized in the VP of Educational Services, Associate VP of Academic Resources, and IR and Planning.</p> <p>Faculty support is varied from unit to unit and generally informal.</p> <p>Resources for SA overburdened by state reporting requirements.</p>
Policies and Practices	<p>Initially developed set of P&P in 1991 in response to Board of regents to improve instruction, curriculum, and the academic enterprise.</p> <p>Additional goals have since been added to evaluate strategic plan, create campus-wide dialogue.</p>	<p>SA is very integrated into the strategic planning and evaluation process. As such policies and practices related to planning and evaluation often incorporate SA activity.</p> <p>Information system used for SA is not a dedicated system but used to evaluate strategic plan.</p>	<p>SA is integrated into the planning and review process. The process is based on business models and the Baldrige quality award criteria drive the SA efforts.</p> <p>Department of Information Systems provides support across the institution.</p> <p>Access and distribution of information is quite extensive down.</p> <p>Professional development opportunities are provided but not specific to SA.</p> <p>Student affairs are involved equally.</p>	<p>Campus-wide information support system, reports, faculty and staff professional development, varied impact by unit on planning.</p>	<p>Currently lacks the SA effort to gage the types of policies and practices in place to support SA.</p>	<p>State ties some allocations to performance standards, but no institutional policies of resource allocation based on SA.</p> <p>SA information filters down from Assessment Committee to departments and faculty but cannot be classified as an open access system.</p> <p>Students serve on committees, but no formal policy mandates this.</p>	<p>Resources allocated from state in form of performance incentives.</p> <p>Division of Information Technology support for data system is good, but under utilized.</p> <p>Reports and access to data are broad, but again underutilized.</p> <p>Faculty development opportunities are fair and increasing.</p>

Dimension	Iowa State University	Wake Forest University	Northwest Missouri State University	Western Washington University	Mercyhurst College	South Seattle Community College	Santa Fe Community College
Link to Academic Management	<p>No well developed links to academic management</p> <p>Not well integrated into institution.</p> <p>SA data flows up to administration but no evidence of use in decision-making.</p> <p>No systematic use at institutional level, but coordination is increasing due to 2 new positions.</p>	<p>Very integrated into the academic management of the institution.</p> <p>Administration is driven by strategic planning and evaluation, which uses SA to evaluate programs.</p> <p>Primary planning unit is the academic department; therefore SA data focus is mainly department specific.</p>	<p>The SA effort is driven by and integrated fully into the academic management of the institution through the use of the seven-step planning model, the Baldrige award criteria, and the use of Key Quality Indicators.</p> <p>The culture of quality drives the management approach and the SA efforts intended to support academic improvement.</p>	<p>Limited connection with academic management via strategic planning.</p> <p>Sporadic implementation left up to units.</p> <p>Not well integrated into institution.</p>	<p>Institution has limited SA infrastructure to provide adequate links between SA and academic management.</p> <p>The current links are limited to informal top-down communication patterns for decision-making.</p>	<p>Links to academic management are formal but only moderately pursued and executed.</p> <p>Not integrated into institutional planning.</p>	<p>Links to academic management are limited.</p> <p>Data collected has yet to be used significantly for planning and review.</p> <p>Department Chairs have access to information, but underutilize the institution-wide information. Concentrate mainly on departmental information.</p> <p>Moderately integrated, but not well used.</p>
Link to Educational Improvement	<p>SA links to educational improvement via long range planning and evaluation and program review and revision.</p> <p>Use of 15 performance indicators.</p> <p>As of 1998, faculty and departments required to demonstrate how SA data supports their curricular and program revisions.</p> <p>Adoption of innovative professional development contribute to academic improvement</p>	<p>Link to educational improvement via academic planning using SA information on performance.</p> <p>Have developed Plan for the Class 2000 using assessment data. Three components include improve 1st year experience, use IT for learning, and improve overall intellectual climate on campus</p> <p>Executive Council provides department chairs with SA information whose responsibility is to use the information for improvement.</p>	<p>SA linked to educational improvement through annual reviews, which use SA data to evaluate programs, curriculum and teaching.</p> <p>Each course goes through review at institutional level every three years and by the state every five years.</p> <p>Institution provides resources for faculty to improve teaching and learning techniques.</p>	<p>Sporadic use by unit of SA results for educational improvement.</p>	<p>Concentrated at the department levels only and focuses on program effectiveness.</p>	<p>Links to educational improvement are formal and informal. Some departments hold norming sessions to insure consistency in grading portfolios and other subjective assessments.</p> <p>Pre-test / post-test program in the computer technology department.</p>	<p>Noticeable at the department and course level, but at institutional level, data is mainly use for state reporting.</p> <p>Administration seen as less concerned with student learning than with retention and graduation (state reporting measures).</p> <p>Newly formed general Education Committee charged with addressing ongoing assessment plan.</p>

Dimension	Iowa State University	Wake Forest University	Northwest Missouri State University	Western Washington University	Mercyhurst College	South Seattle Community College	Santa Fe Community College
Utilization	<p>Utilization varied with significant improvement occurring only in a few departments.</p> <p>At institutional level SA data used to evaluate strategic plan and assess technology needs.</p>	<p>Extensive use in strategic planning and evaluation, academic planning, departmental reviews, and refinement of instructional techniques and curricular patterns.</p> <p>Faculty much more focused on improving teaching and offices and programs providing teaching and learning resources have experienced increased activity.</p>	<p>Though extensively collected, SA data is not used as extensively as it could be. Cited by most as major weakness.</p> <p>Data used mainly in annual reviews of courses and to a lesser extent in institutional planning and review, but the extent of data collected could be put to far greater use.</p>	<p>Greatest use with state accountability reporting.</p> <p>Departmental use varies by unit from good to poor.</p>	<p>Very limited due to the limited scope of data available.</p>	<p>Use of SA data is lacking. Greatest use is at course grading level.</p> <p>At institutional level, data used mainly for state reporting requirements.</p>	<p>SA data used for state reporting.</p> <p>Greatest use of SA is in classroom, but use is minimal at department and institutional level.</p>
Culture	<p>Struggling to achieve acceptance.</p> <p>Faculty vary on their view of importance and usefulness of SA.</p> <p>Administration seen as inconsistent in support for SA.</p>	<p>SA is embedded in institutions larger academic management processes, not a separate driving force.</p> <p>Culture of planning and review that is data driven.</p> <p>Continued emphasis by academic leadership sends message of importance to SA as tool for planning and improvement.</p>	<p>Positive culture of SA across institution, though many faculty appear skeptical and a few even critical of the additional burden SA efforts put on faculty.</p> <p>The administration supports SA and therefore the faculty generally follow, but not fully accepting.</p>	<p>Only moderate acceptance though SA has been part of the discussion for nearly 20 years.</p>	<p>A negative expectation concerning the use of SA data in a program evaluation and individual faculty evaluation has created a difficult SA culture.</p>	<p>Culture of slow adoption. State mandates and Federal grants for past ten years, but slow adoption of SA efforts.</p> <p>Limited resources seen as primary cause for lack of adoption.</p>	<p>Institution has developed a culture of meeting state reporting requirements (external accountability) but SA for internal improvement has yet to be accepted on a broad scale.</p>

forces were categorized as proactive, adaptive, reactive, or resistant. State requirements are cited, to some degree, in all public institutions as an external initiating condition for student assessment. State requirements, however, are often focused on reporting grade point averages, and retention and graduation rates and not as focused on actual measures of learning. The Santa Fe and South Seattle Community Colleges, which generally need to be more competitive, are most likely to be affected by state mandates. Western Washington also has a state master plan that has facilitated the student assessment efforts at that institution. Western Washington is seen as being adaptive to the state mandates as they took a role in helping the state determine the master plan when it was being developed.

Other institutions have cited accrediting agency recommendations as an external influence facilitating student assessment. Iowa State cited professional school accrediting agencies as most influential while Wake Forest, Mercyhurst, Santa Fe, and South Seattle all cite previous regional accrediting agency reports as having the most external influence. In each of these cases the institutions were seen as reactive to the external conditions.

Iowa State, Wake Forest, and Northwest Missouri, where internal conditions played a large role in initiating their student assessment efforts, have stronger assessment programs than those with mostly external initiating conditions. In the case of Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri, the institutions were seen as being proactive, recognizing early in the accountability and assessment movement the need to increase their student assessment efforts while tying the results to the institutions planning process.

A examination of the initiating conditions for institutions in this study reveal that for public institutions, as one would expect, state mandates were and important factor in creating the conditions for initiating institutional student assessment efforts. For private institutions,

however, there were more likely to be internal forces that played a role in initiating the institutions student assessment efforts.

Institutional Approach

Institutional approaches to student assessment vary widely based on the institutional emphasis and strategy (see Table 4). Institutions with highly decentralized student assessment efforts (Iowa State and Western Washington) have varied approaches across the institution while institutions with highly centralized student assessment efforts (Wake Forest, Northwest Missouri, and Santa Fe) are consistently uniform across the institution. While some institutions emphasize using student assessment for internal improvement others have developed student assessment efforts in response to some form of external accountability. The approach dimension has several key areas that were studied to determine the comprehensiveness of the institution's student assessment efforts. The areas include the breadth and origin of student assessment measures, content or type of assessment; timing of assessment; extent of reporting, analysis, and studies; and the flow of information.

The origin of the student assessment measures that are used varies by institution from forms that are standardized from the state (or nationally) to institutionally developed measures and institutions that use both. This also varies within certain institutions from unit to unit. Every institution had at least one internally developed measure (e.g. student satisfaction surveys). Wake Forest, Mercyhurst, South Seattle and Santa Fe used externally developed surveys in most cases, while Western Washington and Northwest Missouri developed most of their measures internally. Iowa State used both internally and externally developed measures depending on the department or unit performing the assessment.

The content/type of student assessment and the timing of assessment were consistent across all institutions, though each did vary in the degree of assessment performed for each type. The three types of measures most often used were cognitive assessment, affective assessment, and assessment of former students with affective assessment (i.e. satisfaction and experiential assessment) being the most widely used. The timing of assessment occurred at entry, while enrolled, at exit and after graduation. Those institutions with centralized student assessment processes (Wake Forest, Northwest Missouri, South Seattle, and Santa Fe) generally collected all three types of assessment data and at every point in a student's career. The individual units dictated the content and timing of assessment at Iowa State and Western Washington.

The extent of reporting, analysis, and studies was evaluated as being extensive, limited, or non-existent with institutions varying from being quite extensive (Northwest Missouri) to being quite limited (Mercyhurst). The other institutions fell somewhere in between these two levels. All institutions had some form of reporting and analysis that occurred, but the extent of analysis was usually seen as a weakness in the student assessment effort at every institution. The amount of data collected was not indicative of the type and extent of analysis performed on the data.

The information flow generated from the collected data varied greatly from institution to institution. Iowa State and Western Washington were similar with information flowing from the departments up to academic management or central assessment administrative levels. Institutions with centralized efforts like Northwest Missouri, South Seattle, and Santa Fe were more likely to have information flow down and out from a central administrative office, though even in these institutions certain assessment information generated at the department level did flow upward to a centralized office.

Among institutions in this study, the student assessment approaches appeared to vary considerably based upon the institution's emphasis (internal improvement or external accountability) and the institutional strategy for attaining that emphasized goal. Those institutions with highly centralized efforts emphasizing internal improvement generally had more uniform and consistent approaches to student assessment. Those institutions with decentralized efforts often emphasizing external accountability to state or accrediting agencies, often had sporadic approaches in their student assessment efforts.

Institutional Strategy

A study of the institutional strategy examined the focus of student assessment in the institution's missions statement, whether a student assessment plan or policy existed and at what levels, the type of structure that existed in conjunction with student assessment, and the implied purpose of student assessment for each institution (see Table 4). No institution makes mention specifically of student assessment in the mission statement, however, South Seattle includes ongoing improvement as part of its mission, and stresses student assessment as a means for pursuing ongoing improvement. Additionally, Mercyhurst has a *Strategic Vision* that brings the focus of the institution to student assessment. The mission statements for Western Washington and Santa Fe include an emphasis on undergraduate education, but the remaining institutions make no direct mention of student assessment or undergraduate education.

Several institutions have adopted plans or policies related to their student assessment effort. Northwest Missouri, Mercyhurst, and Santa Fe all have written plans that address the ongoing assessment efforts of the institution that are standardized across the institution. Iowa State, Wake Forest, and South Seattle have no centralized formal plan or policy for student assessment. Iowa State leaves this to the individual departments while Wake Forest consider

assessment an integral part of ongoing planning and improvement, which is a well documented process and occurs at three levels—institution-wide, departmental, and student services. Western Washington has no formal plan as of yet, but has a centrally guided assessment effort with individual control at the department and unit level.

The purpose of the student assessment efforts at each institution varies from internal improvement to external accountability with each institution having some degree of each. Iowa State initially developed its student assessment efforts in response to an increase in external accountability, but has more recently moved to purposes that suggest internal improvement. Iowa State has a unique situation where the accrediting agencies for the professional school are driving assessment to a large degree, while the college of Arts and Sciences has been driven by state accountability. South Seattle and Santa Fe are both driven largely by external accountability pressures, though South Seattle did have a group of faculty who received a grant to increase student assessment as a means for internal improvement. Western Washington is an example of an institution where both external accountability and internal improvement share equal importance. The external accountability in this case comes from state assessment mandates. Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri are two very good instances where internal improvement provides the greatest impetus for student assessment across campus. Both of these institutions have integrated student assessment into their planning and improvement processes. Mercyhurst, while emphasizing internal improvement, has yet to fully integrate student assessment into its planning process and has just begun to view student assessment as a means for approaching internal improvement.

After examining institutional strategy, it becomes clear that institutions emphasizing internal improvement are more likely to have student assessment as part of their planning process

and show stronger student assessment efforts across the institution. Those institutions that emphasize external accountability have generally less developed and moderately implemented student assessment practices.

Institution-wide Support

The measures of institution-wide support that prevail at each institution are a good indicator of the quality of the student assessment effort (see Table 4). The extensiveness of support across the institution may take many forms and draw from administrative or faculty sources. Institution-wide support may take the form of annual activities such as forums, seminars, or workshops provided to administrators, faculty, and staff in order to increase knowledge and use of student assessment methods throughout the institution. Institutions may also provide incentives for student assessment training or use. Additionally, the degree of institutional-wide support can be gauged by the type and amount of resources allocated for student assessment activities. Institutional support in the form of allocated resources may vary from general allocations across the institution to no specific allocations targeted for student assessment.

Most institutions have a modicum of passive support at the upper levels of administration, but only a few, Wake Forest, Northwest Missouri, and to a lesser degree Western Washington, Santa Fe, and South Seattle, have active support from the upper administration. Nearly every institution has one central office charged with managing the institution-wide student assessment effort. However, these offices vary in the degree of involvement and participation they have for the institution's student assessment effort. Santa Fe has a large staff devoted solely to testing and student assessment while Mercyhurst has no office or position charged specifically with this task.

Institutional budgets targeted specifically for student assessment also vary greatly. Wake Forest has one office charged with supporting and promoting the institutions student assessment effort and has a line item budget specifically for student assessment. This is the exception rather than the rule. The other institutions support their student assessment efforts using the existing funds allocated to the department and units. Every institution made funds available for administrators, faculty, and staff to use for training, workshops, seminars, or other learning activities, but all of these funds were allocated as general professional development funds and not specifically allocated for student assessment training.

Some institutions do provide in-house training for student assessment. Northwest Missouri has an annual orientation that includes student assessment training for all of its academic administrators and faculty as well as some academic and student services staff. Likewise, Wake Forest has annual planning retreats for department chairs and also best practice conferences sponsored by departments. On the other extreme, Western Washington and Mercyhurst have no regular centralized efforts to increase student assessment.

The faculty support for student assessment efforts varies across every institution and range from supportive to skeptical and occasionally critical. Several institutions, Western Washington, Mercyhurst, and Santa Fe, have faculty governance groups that are charged with examining issues related to student assessment as it applies to faculty. Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri have a good deal of faculty support; though there still remain some faculty who are skeptical about certain assessment activities. Iowa State and Western Washington have much less support from the faculty as a whole. While student assessment is making in-roads, the majority of faculty see no reason to waver from the way things have been done in the past.

The degree of institutional-wide support proves to be a good indicator of the quality of an institution's assessment effort. Those institutions with strong upper administrative support tend to have strong student assessment program that is highly integrated into every aspect of the institution. Institutions with less administrative support, particularly at high levels, have shown to be lacking in certain areas of their student assessment efforts.

Institutional Leadership

The institutional leadership for student assessment is typically found in either administrative positions or faculty positions and occasionally in both (see Table 4). The institutions in the case studies were found to have the leadership role concentrated in administrative positions. Most institutions (Iowa State, Wake Forest, Northwest Missouri, South Seattle, and Santa Fe) have an administrator at the vice president or vice provost level that oversees the institutions student assessment efforts. Wake Forest, Northwest Missouri and to some extent Iowa State, are examples of institutions whose president is actively involved and supportive of student assessment. The board of regents at Iowa State also presents an external source of leadership to the institutions student assessment efforts. As a result, these institutions have significantly better student assessment programs.

Faculty leadership, which is less evident among all institutions, varies considerably throughout each institution. While several institutions (Western Washington, Santa Fe, Northwest Missouri) have faculty groups that are institutionalized to deal with student assessment issues, none emerge as a dominant, positive influence in the institutional student assessment efforts. South Seattle has an informal faculty group that was responsible for obtaining a federal grant to increase student assessment efforts. This group, however, was self-organized by several faculty interested in student assessment. Western Washington is an

example of a case where the faculty governing body has acted as an inhibitor, scrutinizing efforts and slowing the student assessment efforts. Northwest Missouri has four specific groups that are involved in the institutional planning process—a process in which student assessment is highly integrated—and two of these groups, the Baldrige Category Council and the Strategic Planning Council, include faculty in their membership, but are not exclusively faculty. Beyond the faculty leadership roles, there exists in all institutions very fragmented support from faculty. While some faculty see the need for increased attention to student assessment efforts, others see no need to change the current approach.

The student assessment leadership for the institutions in this study was found to be primarily administrative. Most institutions have administrators at the Vice President level or equivalent. Throughout this study, faculty leadership was generally lacking, and a great many faculty had strong reservations about increased student assessment efforts.

Management Policies and Practices

There are a number of policies and practices that institutions may implement in conjunction with student assessment efforts (see Table 4). Many institutions provide computer systems support, allow access to student assessment information, create and distribute reports based on student assessment results, and encourage professional development for faculty and administrators as well as student affairs staff. Other policies and practices include using student assessment information in budget decisions, faculty evaluation decisions, and institutional or departmental planning and review decisions. The case study institutions differed significantly in the types of policies and practices implemented and the degree to which they were emphasized.

Every institution has some formal mechanism(s) for reporting student assessment results and all have some degree of access to information. Northwest Missouri is an example of an

institution that has a high emphasis on access and reporting with a computer linked system that allows deans and department heads to view results and compare them with previous years and other units. On the other extreme, Iowa State has placed a low emphasis on access and reporting. Though every institution did make at least a minimal amount of information available, faculty were often unaware of the existence of information or where to find the information.

In this era of technology, institutions are eager to provide computer systems to support student assessment efforts. None have dedicated systems used specifically for student assessment information, but several (Northwest Missouri, Wake Forest, and Western Washington) have placed a high emphasis on creating computer policies to support student assessment efforts. Other institutions, Santa Fe, Mercyhurst, Iowa State and to some extent South Seattle, use computer resources, but have not placed a high emphasis on this aspect of their student assessment efforts.

Institutions vary in their support of student assessment through faculty development opportunities, and student affairs involvement. Northwest Missouri provides annual orientation workshops, but other institutions do not generally have policies or practices specific to professional development for student assessment. In most cases support is provided through general faculty development funding for conferences and workshops. Additionally, while institutions do have resources (both monetary and otherwise) that can be used in student assessment efforts, none cite any resource or funding that is strictly tied to student assessment efforts or results. Budget decisions are not generally tied to student assessment results or efforts. For Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri, however, having student assessment integrated into the planning process appears to loosely link certain budgetary decisions to assessment outcomes.

Each institution has some degree of student affairs involvement in its student assessment process, with Northwest Missouri placing a high emphasis on this practice. For other institutions student affairs staff play very minor or peripheral role. No institution cites any specific policies or practices of involving students in the planning or management process for their student assessment effort, though South Seattle is an example of an institution that does have students serving on student assessment committees. Two others, Western Washington and Northwest Missouri, mentioned having some committee involvement by students, but there are no formal policies to ensure that student involvement takes place.

In the area of planning and review, every institution cites the use of student assessment data for academic practice, though Northwest Missouri and Wake Forest have the student assessment process highly integrated into their planning process and place a very high emphasis on its importance. Other institutions, Mercyhurst and Western Washington, place much less emphasis on the connection between planning and review and student assessment results.

Considering the broad range of policies and practices that can be employed by institutions to support and promote student assessment, most institutions only place high emphasis of a select few. Clearly, institutions with strong student assessment efforts have a broader array of practice and policies that support the institutional effort. The policy areas most widely emphasized deal with access and reporting of student assessment data followed by general institutional support for faculty development.

Link to Academic Management

The links from institutional student assessment efforts to academic management in the institutions vary from having no well-developed links to having highly integrated links (see Table 4). This seems to be correlated to the centralized versus decentralized approach to student

assessment for each institution. Those institutions with highly centralized efforts, Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri, also have highly integrated links between student assessment and academic management, while those institutions that are decentralized, Iowa State and Western Washington, have fewer or no strong links between student assessment and academic management. The case studies examined links between student assessment efforts and aspects of academic management that include strategic planning, program review, budget areas, and academic quality. Each of these areas was rated as having links student assessment that range from being formal and regular to links that are informal and sporadic.

Northwest Missouri and Wake forest are excellent examples of institutions with formal links between the student assessment process and the academic management of the institution. Both of these institutions have highly integrated student assessment programs that are linked directly into the strategic planning and program review processes of the institution. Student assessment information is collected and reported on a regular basis and used in gauging the academic quality of units, departments, and courses. Though, there are no direct links between the budget process and student assessment efforts, the highly integrated approach at both institutions creates loosely coupled ties between these two areas.

Iowa State and Mercyhurst fall at the other end of the continuum. These institutions have no clearly defined links between student assessment and academic management processes. Any links that do exist tend to be informal and occur only on a sporadic basis. Santa Fe, South Seattle, and Western Washington fall somewhere in the middle. While they have some formal though limited links to certain academic management processes—most often in areas of program review—they are not regularly used or well integrated into the institutions' academic management processes.

Those institutions with strong student assessment efforts generally had direct links between those efforts and most areas of the academic management of the institutions. In institutions with only moderately good assessment efforts, the links were less direct and those that were present were generally in the area of program review or academic planning. Other institutions had sporadic links between the student assessment efforts and the academic management within the institution.

Links to Educational Improvement

Student assessment may be linked to educational improvement through instructional improvement, teaching and learning innovation, faculty/professional development or a combination of these areas (see Table 4). The case studies examined the links to various types of educational improvement and identified the nature of the links as being either intensive, regular, occasional, and/or voluntary. Just as the links from student assessment to academic management processes differed among case study institutions, the links between student assessment and educational improvement also differ.

Three of the institutions, Iowa State, Wake Forest, and Northwest Missouri, have strong links between student assessment and educational improvement. In these institutions, student assessment information is used for academic planning and review and in some cases, proposals for a change in curriculum has to be accompanied by supporting student assessment data in order to be considered. Iowa State has adopted innovative professional development, which is aimed at educational improvement in the classroom. Wake Forest developed a plan for the Class of 2000 that includes the use of student assessment information to improve the “overall intellectual climate on campus.” At Northwest Missouri each course goes through a review at the institutional level every three years with student assessment data being used as a large piece of

the review. Northwest Missouri also provides faculty with resources to improve teaching and learning techniques. Each of these three institutions use student assessment information on a regular basis to improve educational quality, though certain efforts (e.g. professional development) occur on a less regular basis and are often voluntary.

In the other institutions, Santa Fe, South Seattle, Mercyhurst, and Western Washington, the educational improvement links are tied to departmental efforts rather than institutional efforts and occur on a less regular basis and to varying degrees from department to department. South Seattle has some departments that hold norming sessions to insure consistency in portfolio grading and other subjective assessments. Likewise, the efforts at Western Washington and Mercyhurst are concentrated at the department level and are reported as being sporadic in nature. The administration at Santa Fe is seen as being less concerned with teaching and learning issues and more concerned with retention and graduation rates that are reported to the state, although several departments are concerned with the overall improvement of students' educational experience.

As in the previous section, the links to educational improvement were very direct and intensive for those institutions with strong student assessment efforts. Several of the institutions in this study had very poor links between student assessment and the institutions educational improvement efforts. These institutions generally had only moderately successful student assessment efforts as a whole.

Utilization

The use of student assessment information occurs primarily in two areas for most institutions (see Table 4). The first area includes making academic decisions concerning the revision of academic mission or goals, revision or reorganization of academic programs,

allocating resources to academic units, modifying student assessment plans and policies, and other academic or curriculum related decisions. The second area involves making faculty decisions concerning faculty promotion and tenure, faculty salary increases or rewards, modifying teaching methods, and other issues directly related to faculty. The institutions in the case study vary as to the use of student assessment information in these two areas. Some include student assessment information in one or both of these areas, while others make little or no use of student assessment information in either of these areas. In every case, institutions were rated as placing a high, moderate, or low level of importance on the use of student assessment information in academic or faculty decisions.

With the exception of Northwest Missouri, institutions across the board place a low level of importance of using student assessment information for faculty decisions. Northwest Missouri indirectly uses student assessment information in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions through the review of course and faculty evaluations on a regular basis.

The use of student assessment information for academic decisions is given a much higher level of importance at many institutions. Iowa State, Wake Forest, and Northwest Missouri regularly use student assessment information program review, strategic planning, and curricular improvements. Western Washington, South Seattle, and Santa Fe use student assessment information mostly for state reporting and at the course level for curricular improvements. Mercyhurst is use of student assessment information is limited by the type and quality of the data available. However, the vice-president for academic affairs does have an expectation that student assessment information will be used in program review.

Cited by most institutions as the weakest component of their student assessment efforts, the use of assessment data could be far greater in all institutions. Even those institutions with

strong student assessment programs are much better at collecting and reporting than analyzing and using assessment information. At the department and course level, student assessment data is used much more for evaluating and revising the curriculum. However, this varies greatly among institutions and varies as well from department to department within institutions.

The utilization of student assessment information was by far the least evolved of the dimensions examined in this study. Few institutions used the data or information gathered in their student assessment efforts beyond simple program review or academic planning. Once again, institutions with strong student assessment programs were shown to utilize the information on a greater basis and across a broader range of academic areas.

Culture

Describing the culture that exists at any particular case study institution is somewhat difficult given the varying degree of student assessment efforts and methods that exist (see Table 4). The institutions with the most successful student assessment efforts, Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri, have cultures that accept and embrace student assessment as a necessary component of education. These two institutions have integrated student assessment into their strategic planning processes and see student assessment as a driving force for continued internal improvement. Wake Forest and Northwest Missouri have embedded cultures where student assessment is considered just one equally important part of the larger academic management process.

Institutions such as Iowa State and Western Washington are struggling to create a positive culture for student assessment in a system where the effort and leadership is decentralized. This decentralized student assessment process contributes to the lack of full acceptance by faculty and administrators throughout the institution. While some departments

understand and embrace new student assessment efforts, others remain skeptical and resistant to developing and using new methods. These two institutions have fragmented cultures where the degree of acceptance and use varies across the institution.

The community colleges, Santa Fe and South Seattle, also lack a strong, positive culture for student assessment. The reason for a weak culture in these two institutions may be attributed to the nature of the institutions and the lack of resources to fully commit to a positive student assessment effort. The strong need to meet state reporting requirements for funding in the competitive two-year industry may contribute to a more emergent culture that seems to lag behind in the development of a strong student assessment program. These institutions might be classified as having a restrained culture with few resources to fully develop a fully integrated student assessment program.

The student assessment culture of the institutions in this case study is difficult to evaluate, as is culture in general. However, the institutions that tend to emerge as the leaders in institutional student assessment clearly have cultures that accept and in many cases embrace the concept of student assessment and its many institutional applications.

Chapter 4

Organizing to Support and Promote Student Assessment: Lessons and Insights

The picture provided by these seven institutional case studies and the results of our previous Phase II National Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment provide some important insights and lessons for how institutions can organize their institutional efforts to support and promote the use of student assessment for institutional academic improvement. These can be summarized in five major categories: institutional models for organizing student assessment, conceptual approaches to promoting student assessment, lessons about the organizing dimensions, the interdependence of the student assessment process and building an assessment culture.

Models for Organizing Student Assessment

Our case studies of three of our five four-year and university institutions provide three useful and somewhat distinct institution-wide models for organizing an institution's student assessment effort. The experience of Iowa State University, Wake Forest University, and Northwest University provide examples (Mercyhurst which was in the process of establishing its patterns of organizational support is not yet helpful and Western Washington's pattern is similar to that of Northwest Missouri, though they have not yet reached the same caliber of effort and support.). Those models are directed decentralization, loosely coordinated, and centrally guided.

Directed Decentralization

Iowa State University provides an example of a somewhat deliberately designed directed decentralization model of organizing which distributes various roles and activities related to student assessment at different levels of the institution. While there is a commitment of the institution's central administration to the need for student assessment, the role of the executive

officers in this model is quite limited. They have supported the importance of student assessment, played a role in attempting to influence the Iowa State Board of Regents' requirements for student assessment to assure they serve institutionalized and not just reporting purposes (i.e., making them more program oriented to reflect ISU's diverse schools and colleges), provided central support for accreditation reviews, and provided some institution-wide data collection on students.

There is a second tier of institution-wide activity under the Provost's office, which provides developmental assistance related to student assessment for the various schools and colleges. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, who oversees (among other things) the office of Student Outcomes Assessment and the Center for Teaching Excellence, directs institution-wide assessment efforts at this level. However, the implementation and support for student assessment is diffuse and largely housed in the associate dean's offices of the various schools and colleges.

Finally, the primary core of student assessment activity carried out by the various schools and colleges who decide what student assessment data that is relevant to its own educational purposes, direct the collection and analysis of it and handle their own professional accreditation requirements and state mandated reports. The engagement of each school and college varies and an evaluation of assessment efforts have not been systematic.

This decentralized distribution of organizational and administrative support for student assessment seems appropriate for large, loosely structured institutions with highly differentiated academic units. It allows the institution to address external pressures for student assessment, provides an array of mid-level support efforts and engages faculty and academic administrators

at the school and college level in meaningful student assessment. The weakness, of course, is that not all schools and colleges are highly committed to or involved with student assessment.

Loosely Coordinated

Wake Forest University provides an example of a moderate to large private institution that coordinates and integrates its student assessment activity with a well-developed set of institutional and academic management processes. Each management process serves a different function in promoting institutional change and improvement, but each draws on student assessment data in its deliberations and shares its results with the other processes. A brief synopsis reflects this pattern.

WFU's executive officers have developed and are committed to a periodic and systematic strategic planning process (every four or five years). WFU's strategic planning efforts draw on special student assessment reports from the director of institutional research as well as information from its other academic management process: an annual evaluation and program review process.

The institution's program review process requires all academic and administrative units to undergo intensive period reviews (ca. every five years). These reviews include unit self reviews and collection of special data on student performance relevant to the unit as well as institution-wide student assessment data that is regularly collected by the director of institutional research and which can be used for cross unit comparisons. Most importantly, the results of these reviews are taken seriously by the academic vice-president, deans, department chairs, and a university faculty committee and important decisions affecting the direction or resources of a department are often made.

The institutional evaluation process is an annual one which considers an array of institutional information collected by the director of institutional research,, including student assessment data, which selects different issues or areas to focus on each year and often identifies areas which become the focus for strategic planning.

Under-girding these strategic, program review and evaluation processes are a well-established institutional research office. This office regularly collects, analyzes and reports on an array of university and student assessment data, assists programs and other groups in collecting special information, provides administrative coordination for the program review process and serves as a liaison to the institutional strategic planning and evaluation processes.

This model is a useful one for a moderate sized institution, which has developed a coherent management approach emphasizing regular processes, wide involvement, and a data-based approach to decision making. It requires continuous commitment of key academic leaders to design effective institutional and academic management processes. In addition, it benefits from a sophisticated institutional research office that can provide both student assessment leadership and respected assistance in coordination of sensitive institutional processes like strategic planning, program review, and institutional evaluation.

Centrally Guided

Northwest Missouri State University provides an example of a small to moderate sized institution which has a centrally guided organizing model in which student assessment is an integral part of an institution's overriding institutional and academic management philosophy and approach to institutional improvement. NMSU's president and central administration have adopted a total quality approach to institutional management. In one sense, this is similar to Wake Forest's coordinated model, which relies on coordination of a series of institutional and

academic management processes. However, NMSU's model is driven by a more explicit focus on quality improvement, uses a set of centrally designed processes drawn from a specific institutional management approach (TQM) and administers these the various management processes more tightly.

NMSU's centrally guided model begins with a strong commitment to quality improvement as reflected in the Baldrige model and has made them the institution's primary performance focus in state and national competitions, winning the Missouri Quality Award in 1997, and participating as a pilot for the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award on the national level.

In order to accomplish this they have incorporated three leadership teams and designed a tightly linked set of academic management processes. The leadership teams include the Baldrige Category Council, the Strategic Planning Council, and the President's Cabinet. The management processes include a Seven Step Planning Process, an annual budget related program review and a centralized institutional data collection and reporting process featuring KQI's (key quality indicators for all levels of academic management).

These groups and processes are linked in a three phase planning process. Phase I, Review and Analysis, focuses on the review of foundational statements, analysis environmental scans, and evaluation of current Strategic Initiative (SI) plans. Phase I also serves as an analysis of overall organizational performance. Phase II, Initiative and Identification, begins with SI proposals that are based on the outcomes of Phase I and the evaluation of past SI plans. The Strategic Planning Council develops SI proposals and present them to the Presidents Cabinet, which ultimately decide which SIs will be pursued. Each approve SI is assigned to a specific Cabinet Member for primary responsibility. Phase III, Action Planning and Development, continues the process during which cross-functional teams use the Seven Step Planning Process

to develop action plans to support major objectives, also known as Key Quality Indicators (KQI), for each SI. The Baldrige Category Council is responsible for assisting academic and administrative units to understand the concepts associated with the framework of the Seven Step Planning Process and for setting the agenda for the Presidents Cabinet on self-study, analysis of results data, and review of feedback from assessments. Completion of Phase III occurs when Cabinet members report on the deployment process for each SI, including the action plans, goals, resource requirements, measures, current status, and long-term performance objectives. A final approval for the SIs is then given and action plans are formalized.

Clearly, student assessment data, centrally collected, is a key resource in NMSU's total quality approach to institutional management. The Office of Assessment, Information and Analysis collects and analyzes data, builds KQI's, and prepares reports that include student assessment for an institution where quality improvement is focused on student performance makes student assessment central to the broader institutional management philosophy and approach.

Conceptual Approaches

The case studies reaffirmed a set of three different conceptual approaches to supporting student assessment that were identified in our earlier analysis of the Phase I National Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment. (Peterson and Vaughan, forthcoming). These three conceptual approaches had a different emphasis and integrated a differing set of organizational and administrative activities or processes. They are: Rational Information Based Approach, Assessment as Institutional Strategy Approach, and Human Resources/Developmental Approach.

Rational Information Based Approach

The first, a rational information or research-based model, reflects the extent to which institutions collect and study information on student performance. The greater the extent to which institutions collect a wide variety of student assessment information and do studies of or research on factors that improve student performance, the more likely they are to use the data to make academic decisions. Furthermore, institutions need to increase the access of this information to constituents across the campus. In doing so, they increase the likelihood of the information being incorporated into the academic decision making process. This rational model relies on increased collection, analysis, and distribution of results related to student assessment, which leads to increased use in academic decision-making. This suggests careful planning and development of an information system relegated to student assessment that links data collected more systematically to its use in decision-making.

The case study institutions all utilized this approach to a greater or lesser degree. However, Iowa State University, Wake Forest University, and Northwest Missouri State University all had well-organized approaches to collecting, analyzing and reporting student assessment data (and other data as well). They emphasized using this data rationally in their various academic management processes, in making major academic decisions, and for internal and external reporting purposes.

Assessment As Institutional Strategy Approach

A second model, the strategy model, involves the focus of student assessment as an integral part in developing an institution's mission, its internal or external purposes, and institution-wide pattern for supporting student assessment. By incorporating student assessment into its mission, an institution is increasing the importance of student assessment as a means of

educational and institutional improvement. Student assessment should also recognize the key external demands for student assessment from states and accrediting agencies as well as incorporating its internal purposes into statements that guide individual units across campus. Having a clear administrative structure to support student assessment and a well-developed and coordinated plan for student assessment is also useful. Thus promoting student assessment through a clearly defined strategy, which incorporates it into the institution's mission and purpose and provides structure and guidelines for it, can become an important determinant of whether the resulting information will be incorporated into academic decisions.

Our case study institutions again varied in the extent to which they have an overall approach to student assessment. However, ISU, WFU and NWMSU all saw student outcomes and its assessment as part of their institutional mission and purpose, were sensitive to negotiating its external as well as internal purposes, and had a plan (implicit or explicit) for collecting and reporting student assessment data and a clear office or structure to assume responsibility for it. They had academic management or educational improvement processes that were designed to use or stress student assessment.

Human Resource/Developmental Approach

The human resource or developmental model, as its name indicates, suggests that institutions involve faculty, students, and staff in the student assessment process. This includes providing faculty and administrators with opportunities to participate in professional development and training to improve this knowledge and skills, to provide incentives for participation, and to reward involvement in student assessment activities. The results suggest all of these types of initiatives seem to promote the using of student assessment information in decision-making and need careful, planned attention.

Although to a lesser degree than the institutional strategy or rational approaches, our case study institutions also reflected a human resource approach. To varying degrees, most had attempted to train, educate, and involve academic and student affairs administrators and faculty in understanding and using student outcomes and assessment. Some recognized the need for incentives or rewards for their participation and involvement although this was more limited and usually ad hoc. Others encouraged involvement in student assessment scholarship as a part of their professional role. Iowa State had, perhaps, the best model of offices that provided continued training and assistance in understanding and using student assessment.

Lessons About Organizing Domains

The comparative analysis in Chapter 3 highlights the patterns across the seven institutions in several domains of organizational and administrative support for student assessment. A brief summary of the lessons about these organizational and administrative support domains is as follows:

Initiating Conditions

- Both internal and external sources can be important initial sources of student assessment efforts.
- It is important that institutions develop internally oriented purposes for student assessment – not just responses to external influences (states, accreditation).

Institutional Approach

- Both institution-wide and unit specific measures of and approaches to student assessment are useful.

- Objective measures of student assessment are easiest to obtain, to quantify, and to standardize, but learning outcomes, which are qualitative, unit specific, and difficult to develop may be more useful.
- Larger and more complex institutions need more varied approaches to the type and content of student assessment measures. Differentiation of institution-wide and unit specific measures is probably most useful.

Institutional Strategy

- Mission emphasis on student assessment and centralized plans on policies for student assessment may be a sign of institutional commitment but do not seem to be critical.
- While institutions have both internal and external purposes for student assessment, internal purposes are more important to sustain ongoing efforts to collect and use student assessment.

Institution-wide Support

- Institution-wide support is important and takes many forms: central administrative commitment and support, resources allocated explicitly for student assessment, mechanisms for broad faculty participation, visible institution-wide events.
- Many forms of institution support that operate at multiple levels seem more desirable.

Institutional Leadership

- High levels of both administrative and faculty leadership for student assessment is critical for sustained efforts.
- Central administration still provides the predominant source of leadership for and emphasis on student assessment and seems to be essential in most institutions.

Management Policies and Practices

- Some level of computer systems support is necessary to provide institutional faculty or administrators with tools to collect, analyze, and report student assessment information.
- Institutions should provide and distribute student assessment reports to faculty and administrators in order to increase awareness of and commitment to student assessment efforts.
- Access to student assessment information should be open and easy for members of the institutional community.
- Institutions should attempt to involve students in the planning and implementation of student assessment efforts.
- Professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators in areas related to student assessment and improved teaching and learning in the classroom is necessary to achieve educational quality and positive student assessment effort across the institution.
- Student Affairs staff should be involved in the student assessment effort at all levels of the institution.
- Institutions should tie student assessment to faculty evaluation for promotion tenure and rewards.
- Student assessment information should be included in the academic planning and review process at department, division, and institutional levels.

Utilization

- Student assessment information is most likely to be considered in decisions related to broad academic goals and academic programs or curricular issues and in modifying the student assessment process itself.

- Student assessment data is seldom used in faculty evaluation and is controversial when attempted.
- In current practice, the use of student assessment information is seldom extensive regardless of the institution's internal purposes for student assessment or the type of decisions being addressed.

Interdependence of Student Assessment

Four overriding principles seem apparent in reviewing these seven cases. First, student assessment works best when it serves internal institutional purposes as well as external reporting and accreditation needs. Both are critical uses of student assessment. Nevertheless, it is important that both these purposes are served- that there is a balance of emphasis on internal and external purposes for student assessment. Moreover, it is helpful when these two often divergent purposes can be made more convergent. Both ISU and NWMSU were able to modify external demands for student assessment to make them convergent with their own institutional purposes and needs.

Second, despite the considerable rhetoric about student assessment and the attempts by many institutions to develop an independent process or office for student assessment responsible for designing, collecting, analyzing and reporting results, we found little evidence to support such an approach. The student assessment process and/or office need not only to serve useful institutional internal and external purposes, but also, to be closely integrated with other academic management or educational improvement process and functions.

Third, linking student assessment to an institution's academic management processes and decision structures as was done at WFU and NWMSU was an effective way to make student assessment serve the institution's needs. This, of course, requires the establishment of a clearly

identified and legitimate set of academic management processes like a quality improvement model, strategic planning, institutional evaluation, program review, performance budgeting, etc.

Fourth, linking student assessment to an institution's educational improvement processes is another useful approach to integrating student assessment into the larger institutional purpose. Examples include embedding some or all aspects of student assessment into special campus processes for faculty development, instructional improvement or new program design and development. ISU places considerable effort in this area through two units, CTE (Center for Teaching Excellence) for faculty development and LEA/RN (Learning Enhancement Action / Resource Network) for program innovation.

Culture, Time, and Continuity

Building an institutional culture that supports and promotes student assessment and its use for academic decision-making and educational improvement is one of the ultimate measures of whether or not student assessment can serve institutional improvement. Culture, of course, is multidimensional and includes many of the organizational and administrative dynamics and dimensions previously discussed as well as a pattern of behavior that values and incorporates student assessment. In our Phase II National Survey we found few institutions that could be said to reflect an organizational and administrative pattern that was broadly supportive of student assessment (Peterson and Einarson, 2001) and likely to have a strong assessment culture – most institutions performed only a limited amount of student assessment (usually on objective and managerially-oriented, not educational measures), had only limited institution-wide patterns or specific policies or practices supporting it, and seldom used the information for academic and educational decision making. Our seven case study institutions were selected because they appeared to be better

developed than most. Yet, only three seemed to be approaching a culture of student assessment – ISU, NMSU, and WFU.

The experience of these three institutions may be revealing. Over a long period, all three have had stable executive leadership who were strongly or somewhat supportive of student assessment. All three had an academic management philosophy or approach and/or well-developed faculty, instructional or program improvement processes or units. These also had developed over time and incorporated student assessment activities. In addition, all three had mid-level experts on student assessment that guided its development, oversaw data collection and analysis and were able to integrate those efforts with these broader academic management and educational improvement efforts.

Building a supportive culture for student assessment apparently requires not only commitment of people and institutional resources, but continuity and time.

Appendix A

Case Study Protocol

Interview List

Documents List

Interview Protocol:
Promoting Student Assessment and Innovation

Institution: _____
Interviewee (Title and Name): _____
Interviewer: _____

- Section Used: _____
- _____ I. Interviewer Background
 - _____ II. Institutional Approach to Student Assessment
 - _____ III. Institutional Support Patterns
 - _____ IV. Internal and External Influences (Initiating Conditions)
 - _____ V. Academic Management Policies and Practices
 - _____ VI. Departmental Innovative Teaching, Learning and Student Assessment Patterns
 - _____ VII. Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment
 - _____ VIII. Assessment Culture and Climate

Documents Obtained: _____

Other Interview Leads:

I. Interviewee Background:

How long have you been in your current position? _____ This institution? _____
What is your highest degree? _____
What field? _____

Briefly describe your role (office, committee, etc.) and involvement with student assessment as it relates to undergraduate education?

Or to innovative teaching, learning or assessment practices in your department as it relates to undergraduate education?

II. Institutional Approach to Undergraduate Student Assessment

A. Please describe your Institution's approach student assessment?

Probe: Types of student performance indicators (cognitive, affective, experiences, post-college), their breadth of use, timing or frequency.

Probe: Types of instruments or interesting qualitative or innovative methods.

B. Does your student assessment activity include a focus on any Special groups or sub populations?

Probe: involve studies of how student characteristics or experience relate to student performance measures?*

*Copies if available

C. What types of profile or reports of student performance are regularly produced?*

Distributed or discussed?

*Copies if available

III. Institution-Wide Support Patterns

A. Is there any emphasis on student assessment in your institution's mission statement? Or formally adopted statement of purposes?* Please describe:

*Copy is available

B. What, if any, type of institution-wide events are sponsored to promote or examine student assessment on campus?

C. How is planning for and coordination of student assessment organized on your campus?

Probe: Formal plan?* Describe

* Copy if available

Probe: Commission, task force or committees? Describe membership and role.

Probe: Locus of executive responsibility?

Probe: Offices or groups responsible for supporting student assessment design, training, data collection, analysis or reporting? Describe

D. Where does the primary support for student assessment reside on your campus?

Probe: Primary leaders or champions (administrators or faculty; individuals or groups)?

E. Evaluation of Institutions Student Assessment Process*

Probe: Has your institution conducted a formal evaluation of your student assessment process? If so, why and by whom was it evaluated?

Probe: What was process, key elements examined and major recommendations?

*Copy if available

IV. Internal and External Influences (Initiating Conditions)

A. State Level - Public Institutions Only

1. Is there a state mandate or policy on student assessment for your institution? If so, describe its requirements (plan, indicators, reporting, evaluation, etc.)
2. How was your institution involved in the establishment of this state effort?
3. What use does the state make of this information?
4. How would you describe your current relationship with the state agency responsible?
It's overall influences?

B. Regional/Institutional Accreditation

1. What role did student assessment or performance indicators play in your most recent regional accreditation review?*

Probe: Type of evidence required/presented?

Probe: Recommendations?

*Copy if available

2. How has regional accreditation shaped your institutions involvement with and/or content of or pattern of support for student assessment?

C. Other External Influences

1. Has your institution made use of or benefited from any professional association programs, materials, advice, etc) in developing your student assessment process? Describe.
2. Have private foundations or corporate groups supported or influenced the development of your student assessment process? Describe

D. Internal Influences

1. Have there been any forces internal to the institution that were influential in the initial student assessment efforts.

V. Academic Management Policies and Practices

Institution's have adopted a wide variety of policies, practices or regular procedures which promote or support the collection of student assessment information or that enhance or required its use. In the following areas are there such policies and practices that you think have been especially beneficial or counter productive to your student assessment efforts? Provide examples.

A. Allocation of Resources

B. Student Information Systems

C. Access to Student Assessment Data

D. Distribution of Reports and Studies to Various Groups

E. Student Related Policies (communication, participation, feedback etc.).

F. Professional Development Opportunities for Faculty, Academic or Student Affairs Staff or Students (on or off campus).

G. Faculty Evaluation and Rewards (promotion, salary, recognition etc.)

H. Academic Planning and Review (departmental, degree programs, general education, courses etc>)

VI. Departmental Innovative Teaching Learning and Student Assessment Patterns

VII. Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment

A. Uses in Academic Decisions

1. Has your institution actively used student assessment data in making decisions regarding any of the following? Provide examples.

Probe: Academic mission, purposes, programs, or curricular and instructional patterns.

Probe: Student Affairs or Academic Support Services

Probe: Resource Allocation Patterns

Probe: Faculty Rewards or Evaluations

B. Internal Institutional Impacts

1. Has the existence and/or use of student assessment information had and internal impact on the following? Provide examples/

Probe: Educational discussions or curricular and instructional patterns?

Probe: Faculty satisfaction with or interest in teaching?

Probe: Student satisfaction, retention, grades or post graduation performance?

C. External Impacts

1. Proponents of student assessment at many possible external impacts external impacts

or results. Has your institutions benefited from or been adversely affected by student assessment data in any of these external arenas or relationships? Provide examples.

Probe: Application/acceptance rates
State funding
Accreditation evaluations
Private fund raising
Grant success
Communication with constituents
Institutional regulation or image

VIII. Assessment Culture/Climate

In light of all we have discussed, how would you summarize the overall institutional perceptions of the nature and role of student assessment in the institution.

- A. How it has reshaped academic or instructional patterns in the institution?

- B. What student assessment has meant to (or how it has affected) the student role?
The faculty role?

- C. The governance or administrative process of the institution?

- D. The institution's image or reputation?

Interview List for Case Studies

1. Academic Vice President or Provost
2. Dean of Arts & Sciences
3. English Dept Chair
4. Math Dept Chair
5. Chemistry Dept Chair
6. Psychology Dept Chair
7. Chair or President of Faculty Governing Body
8. Chair of Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
9. Academic Officer in Charge of Undergraduate Assessment
10. Director of Educational Evaluation / Student Assessment
11. Head of Academic Advising for Undergraduates
12. Director of Faculty Instructional Development or Teaching & Learning Unit
13. Associate VP Student Affairs
14. Director of Accreditation or Self-Study
15. Chair of Institution-wide Assessment Committee or Task Force
16. Director of Student Data Systems or Management Information Systems
17. State Relations Officer
18. Three focus groups:
 1. Students (8-12 (including 3-4 freshman) taking courses in 4 focal departments)
 2. Faculty (8-12 with 1 from each of four focal departments)
 3. Dept. Chairs (3-5 from non-focal departments)

Documents List

1. Institution's Missions Statement
2. Student Assessment Purpose Statement
3. Student Assessment Performance Measures Used
4. Regularly Produced Reports from Student Assessment
5. Formal Plan for Campus Student Assessment
6. Most Recent Accreditation Report and Recommendations
7. Formal Evaluation Plan and/or Report on Campus Student Assessment
8. State Policies / Guidelines for Student Assessment

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brugler, S., Peterson, M. W., Vaughan, D. S., & Mayhew, M. (2000). Northwest Missouri State University: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Cook, B., Dey, E., Ziskin, M., & Vaughan, D. S. (2000). Western Washington University: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Matney, M., Peterson, M. W., Perorazio, T., & Brugler, S. (2000). Iowa State University: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Perorazio, T. , Peterson, M. W., Hurtado, S., & Ziskin, M. (2000). Wake Forest University: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Augustine, C. H., & Vaughan, D. S. (1999a). Institutional support for student assessment: Methodology and results of a national survey. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Peterson, M. W., Einarson, M. K., Trice, A. G., & Nichols, A. R. (1997). Improving organization and administrative support for student assessment: A review of the research

literature. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Vaughan, D. S., Dey, E., & Landreman, L. (2000). Santa Fe Community College: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Ziskin, M. ., Dey, E., Landreman, L., & Grunwald, H. (2000). South Seattle Community College: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI.

Ziskin, M., Peterson, M. W., Grunwald, H., & Wang, Z. (2000). Mercyhurst College: A case study on the institutional dynamics and climate for student assessment and academic innovation. (National Center for Postsecondary Improvement). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, NCPI