

FSCASL



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Newsletter of the Faculty Senate Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning

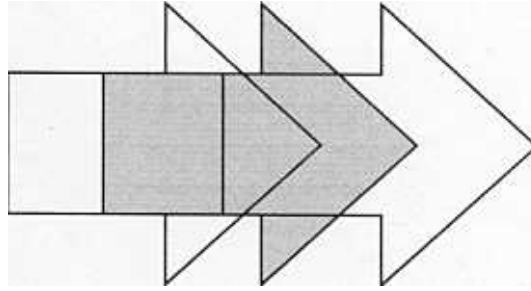
What is FSCASL?

The Faculty Senate Committee on Assessment (of Student Learning) (FSCASL) of fifteen members represents the faculty, academic teaching staff, the Faculty Senate, graduate and undergraduate students, and the Interim Associate Vice Chancellor. The Faculty Senate elects a chair for a one-year term and the member representing the Vice Chancellor and Provost is the University Coordinator of Assessment.

The duties of the FSCASL include coordinating assessment efforts including (but not limited to) assessment in verbal and quantitative areas; assessment of general education program; assessment of undergraduate major programs; and assessment of graduate programs, monitoring assessment activity including publication of program goals in appropriate documents; integration of assessment into program review; connecting assessment to program improvement, planning including the development opportunities related to assessment, and determining budget requirements and advocating budgetary support for assessment activities.

Currently the FSCASL Chair is Dr. Jennifer Mihalick and the University Coordinator of Assessment is Dr. Corrine Donley. The members representing faculty are Drs. Isabel Alvarez, Kim De Dee, Gerald Fast, Dan Gier, Jaya Jambunathan, Richard Kalinoski, Mark Lattery, and Peter Remender. The undergraduate student representatives are Almed Hashaam and Patience Fonkem and the graduate representatives are Sue Fellerer and Faryal Sami. Dr. Karen Kapke represents the academic staff and the Interim Assistant Associate Vice Chancellor, Craig Fiedler attends meetings and advises the Coordinator.

FSCASL



Assessment in General Education Courses

The University's Assessment Plan includes the following ten goals for student learning in general education:

1. effective written and oral communication;
2. skills related to critical thinking, problem solving and creativity;
3. heightened intellectual, cultural and humane understanding and sensitivity;
4. the ability to manipulate symbol systems and use quantitative methods;
5. skills associated with the scientific method including rational inquiry, data collection, analysis, theory formulation and hypothesis testing;
6. an understanding of world history, civilization and political processes;
7. an understanding of economic and social sciences;
8. an understanding of the interdependence of humankind and the natural world;
9. an understanding of the principles of mathematics and the sciences;
10. an understanding of literature, the arts, and systems of human thought.

Last September the committee surveyed the faculty to determine the state of assessment in general education courses. The survey indicated that material related to each goal is covered in a large number of courses. Many courses cover more than one of the areas 6-10. Also for each goal, student accomplishment is being assessed in a number of courses. The subject area goals (6, 7, 9, 10) are assessed most often, while goals 3 and 8 are assessed least often. Both tests and performance-based assessment tools are used.

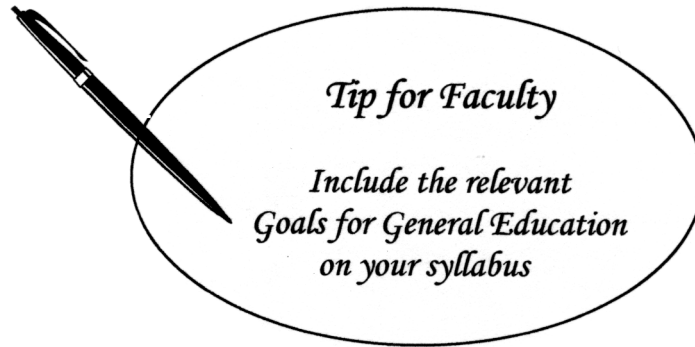
FSCASL Long-Term Goals

The FSCASL has three long-term goals toward which it is working. The first is to be a motivated committee that acts to govern itself by meeting regularly each semester, fully participating in discussion and planning, maintaining a quorum at all meetings, and working in teams of two to three persons to accomplish the work.

The second goal is to diligently maintain and improve faculty attitudes toward the process of assessing student learning by helping faculty to be aware of the profitability of assessment for students at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh through printed and electronic publications, individual assistance to programs, and workshops.

The third goal is to progress toward compliance with the University Assessment Plan designed in 1995 through monitoring of ongoing assessment plans, dissemination of useful information, facilitating discussion, advocating for funding, designing and implementing a general education assessment program, and willingly assisting programs who do not have plans.

The percentage of programs that have designed plans, programs that have made changes as a result of involvement in assessment, and programs that have analyzed data to make programmatic changes have all increased. In 1999-2000 the greatest increase was in the percentages of programs that analyzed their data and made programmatic changes in response to those data.



Results of the Social Validation Survey Presented from 1999 to 2001

The University Coordinator of Assessment, Corrine R. Donley surveyed faculty who are involved in carrying out the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Assessment of Student Achievement concerning their attitudes toward the assessment program here. In 2000, 36% of the 69 faculty surveyed, and in 2001, 46% of the 61 faculty surveyed returned their questionnaires. The results of the survey show no remarkable changes in the basically warm or neutral attitude in 1999-2000 to 2001.

Questions on the survey included:

- How involved have you been in the development and implementation in your program's assessment plan?
- How important do you think it is for UW Oshkosh to comply with NCA's assessment requirements in 2007?
- How confident are you that UW Oshkosh's programs will make meaningful program modifications as a result of assessment programs before the 2007 review?
- How sensitive to your particular needs do you feel the Assessment Coordinator and/or Faculty Senate Assessment Committee is?
- How well do you believe the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee's work affects the development and implementation of your assessment program?
- How much assistance do you believe the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee has given your program?
- On a Likert Scale of A through E, with E being the most positive response, faculty reported on both surveys that involvement in assessment is rather important. Whether or not people feel we will be in compliance with North Central Association of Colleges and School's (NCA) requirements when they return, was better than half in both years, and slightly more faculty did report that they believed there would be more meaningful modifications for NCA's next visit. In accord with the 2000 results was the warm, but not over enthusiastic attitude to the sensitivity of the people responsible for the assessment program at the University. The most positive change over the three years was to faculty's response to the question, "How well do you believe the Faculty Senate Assessment Committee's work affects the development and implementation of your assessment program?" However, the reaction to that question remained just slightly over average. Faculty continued to feel that the FASCAL gives only minimal assistance to them in their pursuits of assessment. One must take into consideration the poor return on the survey and that none of the changes were significant at the .05 level.

College of Nursing Proud of Its Broad Assessment Plan

Since its inception in 1969, the College of Nursing (CON) has been developing, carrying out, and evaluating its assessment plan to improve its educational program. The college has many years' data to champion its ability to teach undergraduate nurses necessary knowledge and skills for a rapidly changing world. It is a worthwhile long-term project

Stephanie Stewart, Undergraduate Program Director and member of the CON Undergraduate Assessment Committee attributes this remarkable progress to the nursing profession's accreditation process. The National League of Nursing Accreditation Program has required rigorous performance criteria for nurses for many years, while many educational institutions have just begun to see the great benefits of program assessment for their students.

One of the most gratifying aspects of CON's well-developed program is knowing that courses the undergraduate nursing students often report as uninspiring, uninteresting, or unproductive are the courses they say are most important once they are in the field. She says the faculty know that lower Student Opinion Survey (SOS) scores in those courses do not indicate poor quality; the courses are justified by the attitudes revealed by nurses in the field.

Honest assessment of their educational program is rewarding, also, when students' ratings of the capstone/culminating performance course are extremely positive. This final course is based on skill mastery-to-criterion, and although a few students must repeat it until they master them, exiting students highly approve of the course.

Dr. Stewart reports that multiple evaluation tools are essential and that data from all of them are equally useful in making programmatic decisions. However, CON has found that surveying employers was difficult and the low return did not justify their use. Therefore, CON has discontinued them.

The evaluation methods that remain productive are standardized tests, and outcome measures, which include standardized critical thinking tests, teacher made oral communication tests, and standardized tests for designing nursing interventions. A capstone performance course is an important evaluation tool, and not as important, but useful are the diagnostic elements of the National Council Licensure Examination that CON reviews.

In addition, CON requires student evaluations of course content beyond the SOS's, and present these evaluations to its research office and program directors for analysis, rather than to the faculty. In this case, programmatic changes are a product of objective assessment by administrators.

All assessment instruments are based on CON course goals and objectives. The goals represent the mission of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UW Oshkosh) and CON. Therefore, surveys of exiting undergraduates' and graduates' attitudes toward their education at UW Oshkosh are founded upon those same goals and objectives. Nurses and student nurses respond to such questions as: "How well do you believe the course met its objectives? What are the strengths of the whole nursing program? What are its weaknesses?" CON also appraises the professional growth and lifelong learning of alumna through surveys of their professional advancement, further education, honors, and contributions to the field.

Dr. Stewart suggests that educational programs embarking upon assessment design spend a great deal of time determining the goals and performance objectives for their students. Further, she says the college or department must be committed to a continuous, long range, step-by-step process that is imbedded within faculty responsibilities. As a result of CON's commitment to assessment from the start, it has not required assistance from UW Oshkosh's Senate Committee on University Assessment. However, Dr. Stewart stressed the importance of a supportive university committee, because programs should develop assessment plans. The rewards of on-going program assessment are great for faculty, students, and the community.

Dr. Stewart, long involved in development of collegiate assessment programs, says, "Our students are being assessed out in the world, so we ought to be assessing ourselves." One of the best ways to do that is through Continuous Quality Improvement and serious self-examination by a college or department.

This newsletter has been brought to you by Corrine Donley, University Coordinator of Assessment
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