MHEC
MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reports

Volume 1

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Maryland Higher Education Commission

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Complete institutional reports appear in Volume 2 of this report.

Section I. Executive Summary

The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR) is conducted periodically to review the assessment of undergraduate student learning at Maryland public colleges and universities. Because of the wide range of missions and student populations at Maryland institutions, there are no common standards for student outcomes. For this reason, institutions are expected to demonstrate how assessment of learning leads to improvements in teaching and learning, rather than demonstrating student progress toward a specific target. Institutions are required to illustrate their assessment processes by discussing how they assess the four "essential skills" of general education: written and spoken communication, scientific and quantitative literacy, critical thinking, and technological competency. Most institutions also discussed their assessment structures in other subject areas.

Maryland colleges and universities are engaged in robust assessment of teaching and learning. Assessment has improved significantly since the last SLOAR. No institution is making any of the basic errors which some institutions were reported to make in the 2007 SLOAR, such as using placement data or enrollment data as evidence of learning outcomes assessment. And some Maryland institutions have demonstrated exemplary assessment.

However, wide variation persists among institutional assessment efforts in Maryland, as in other states. Alongside the exemplary institutions are some institutions that struggle to collect direct evidence of learning, to evaluate results at the program or institutional level, or to develop systems for reviewing results with an eye toward improving teaching and learning. There are a number of common problems, which appear on pages 12-13 of this report. Institutions should consult the detailed reports in Volume 2 of this report to learn how their peer institutions have confronted these same challenges, and apply best practices to their own campuses.

Institutional reports include a narrative section describing changes in assessment since 2007. These narratives provide a wealth of helpful information about how assessment leads to improvement, and show that there are many ways for institutions to develop and embed learning assessment into courses and programs.

One of the striking features of the institutional narratives is that many of them report that assessment efforts are often interrupted by changes in institutional leadership – presidents, chief academic officers, even faculty assessment coordinators. While leaders can and do have important influence over assessment processes, assessment activity should be so broadly based among faculty and departments that changes in leadership should not interrupt it. Institutions should be aware of the temptation to halt progress because of a leadership change and should commit themselves to avoiding such delays.

Despite these obstacles, learning assessment is clearly thriving at Maryland colleges and universities. Most institutions have well-defined processes for assessing learning in one or more areas. Students are demonstrating their mastery of key skills, and faculty are using the results of learning assessment to improve teaching and learning. Most institutions demonstrate a sound understanding of how to design outcomes, develop and carry out assessment, use those results to improve teaching and learning, and share results across the institution.

Institutions must build on their successes to ensure that teaching and learning are improved at all levels of the institution. Institutions must also consolidate and strengthen their assessment

processes, so that assessment activities do not cease during changes or reorganizations of faculty or administrators. Institutions should look to their peer institutions in Maryland for ideas about how to apply and adapt successful assessment practices. These ongoing practices help to ensure that colleges and universities are effectively preparing students for the challenges of work, citizenship, and self-development.

Section II. Introduction

Background and History

Before 1996, the accountability process for Maryland public colleges and universities required each institution to develop a plan for the assessment of learning outcomes and to submit an annual progress report on the plan to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. These reports were aggregated and published as the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR). In 1996 the Commission adopted a new accountability framework, including narrative reports and benchmarked indicators which were to be provided annually. The SLOAR would no longer be required annually, but periodically. Upon the advice of the Commission's Segmental Advisory Council, the Commission requested reports every three years, the first of which was published in 1998.

Upon receiving the 2001 report, the Commission asked the Secretary of Higher Education to convene an inter-segmental workgroup to identify standard measures for learning outcomes, in the hope that standard measures would more easily identify improvements in teaching and learning. The inter-segmental workgroup concluded that an emphasis on results at the institutional level, rather than on standard measures across segments and systems, would allow campuses to focus more on making improvements than on aligning measures, and therefore result in greater improvements in learning. In addition, the workgroup determined that campuses would benefit if the learning outcomes assessment report were closely connected to the material that institutions provide to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the regional accrediting body whose jurisdiction includes Maryland, as part of their regular accreditation process. In particular, the workgroup recommended that the report focus on the "essential skills" identified as minimum skills to be developed in general education, in accordance with Middle States' Standard for Accreditation on General Education (Standard 12). These recommendations served as the basis for the SLOAR in 2004 and 2007.

In 2007 the Commission requested the formation of another workgroup to revise the guidelines. This workgroup completed its work in 2011 and sent revised guidelines to colleges and universities. A summary of the new guidelines appears below. In addition, the workgroup recommended that, because it often takes a considerable amount of time for the results of new assessment efforts to become evident, the Commission should shift from a three-year reporting cycle to a five-year reporting cycle. Therefore, after the 2011 report is completed, the next SLOAR will not be due until 2016.

Rationale for Institutional Reports

Maryland's higher education accountability framework includes several components which discuss a wide variety of factors. Since student learning is the central goal of higher education, it is appropriate that the framework include reports about student learning.

The 2007 SLOAR noted that external stakeholders were increasing the attention they give to learning outcomes assessment. Since that time, interest in outcomes assessment has continued to grow. In particular, Middle States has shown an increasing tendency to take formal non-

compliance actions against an institution that does not demonstrate "that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement."[1] In 2006-2007, Middle States took four non-compliance actions; in 2009-2010, Middle States took 28 non-compliance actions.[2] Although Middle States does not provide aggregated or historical data about the reasons for non-compliance actions, and there may be multiple factors leading to non-compliance actions (including multiple factors at a single institution), this sevenfold increase in the number of actions testifies to Middle States' increased willingness to act. In the present context, then, progress reports submitted to the Commission give institutions the opportunity to prepare for their reports to Middle States and identify opportunities for improvement.

Periodic statewide progress reports also provide opportunities for colleges and universities to evaluate their success in maintaining academic quality, facilitating student growth of skills and competencies, and improving institutional effectiveness. Regularly distributed information allows institutions to borrow ideas within programs, across programs within institutions, and across institutions.

Institutional Report Guidelines

As in the past, Part One of each institutional report constitutes a summary of assessment activities, and also identifies the person or group that provides institutional leadership for a campus' assessment efforts.

Part Two continues to address how the following four general education competency areas, which are aligned with the Middle States "essential skills," are assessed on each campus:
- Written and Oral Communication
- Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning
- Critical Analysis and Reasoning
- Technological Competency

Institutions were asked to provide the information below for each of the four competency areas:

- Institutional definition of the competency;
- Level(s) at which the competency is assessed (e.g., institutional, program or course), including a description of the process for aggregating results across areas and specific examples of different levels of assessment;
- Process(es) used to evaluate competency (i.e., methods, measures, instruments), including information about the methods and approaches used to measure the competency area (both direct and indirect) and specific assessment instruments;
- Results of the assessment work related to this competency, including results of assessment efforts, data which demonstrate the assessment outcomes should be provided

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[1] Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation* (Online Version – Revised March 2009), p. iv.
[2] Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Promoting Educational Excellence & Improvement*, November 2010, p. 3.

(where possible), and any improvements made as a result of assessment activities, especially changes or modifications to teaching and learning practices.

Part Three of the report, new in 2011, explains how the institution's assessment of the major competency areas has evolved since 2007. Institutions were asked to use this section to summarize modifications and adjustments to the institution's assessment plan and/or activities since 2007, and describe whether and how assessment work has been integrated into the institution's infrastructure.

The majority of institutions assess outcomes in addition to the "four essential skills." These activities are discussed in Parts One and Three of institutional reports.

Structure of This Report

Volume 1 of this report includes this introduction, followed by an overall analysis of assessment activities across the State. This analysis is followed in turn by the text of the institutional summaries provided by each of the institutions, along with analysis by Commission staff of the full institutional reports. Community colleges and four-year colleges and universities appear in separate sections.

Volume 2 of this report, which is available on the MHEC website, contains the complete reports submitted by all of the twenty-eight participating campuses, in order to foster conversation and discussion about learning outcomes assessment.

Section III. Statewide Analysis of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Activities

Reports for the 2011 SLOAR were submitted by 28 institutions: all sixteen community colleges, ten of the eleven University System of Maryland institutions, and Morgan State University and St. Mary's College of Maryland. The University of Maryland, Baltimore is exempted from the SLOAR requirement because its institutional mission focuses strongly on graduate and professional education, rather than undergraduate education.

Maryland's higher education institutions have made continued progress in their assessment of student learning outcomes. Perhaps the most obvious sign of progress is that every institution demonstrates a sound grasp of the fundamentals of outcomes assessment. No institution is making the basic errors which some institutions were reported to make in the 2007 SLOAR, such as using placement data or enrollment data as evidence of learning outcomes assessment.

Some exemplary colleges and universities demonstrate that learning assessment occurs comprehensively, with a system that includes all of the following features:
- **Clearly defined learning outcomes**, at the course, program, and/or institutional levels
- **Active assessment of learning**, using direct and indirect methods, at the course, program, and/or institutional levels
- **Use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning**, and/or allocation of resources on the basis of assessment results, at the course, program, and/or institutional levels

Frederick Community College and the University of Maryland, College Park demonstrated evidence of each of these features in their reports. Both Frederick and College Park have well-articulated and clearly defined learning outcomes, framed in terms of specific student behaviors that effectively demonstrate student mastery of goals. Both campuses provide a number of examples of assessment projects from a wide variety of academic units. These examples included concise descriptions of problems, steps taken to address problems, and critical "before and after" data that showed the efficacy of solutions. Both campuses describe institutional structures – including faculty committees, specialized assessment resources and experts, and support and participation from high-level academic administrators – that allow faculty to review outcomes assessment results with the support of administrators and use these results to improve teaching and learning. Other institutions may wish to review these exemplary reports to help address concerns on their own campuses, and improve their own future SLOAR reports.

At the same time, there is a wide degree of variation in the quality of institutional assessment in Maryland, as in the rest of the nation. Alongside the exemplary institutions are some institutions that struggle to collect direct evidence of learning, to evaluate results at the program or institutional level, or to develop systems for reviewing results with an eye toward improving teaching and learning.

This disparity exists among community colleges and also among baccalaureate-granting institutions. Despite the fact that two-year and four-year institutions face different challenges in assessing student learning, the assessment efforts of the most advanced community colleges and four-year institutions resemble each other more closely than those of the least advanced institutions of their own type.

Demonstrating Assessment Activities

SLOAR guidelines require institutions to discuss their assessment of the four "essential skills" in general education, as articulated by Middle States: written and oral communication, science and quantitative skill, critical analysis, and technological competency. Although there is considerable variety in educational outcomes among institutions, each institution requires students to develop strength in these four essential areas. Seventeen institutions provided information on these four skills alone.

Institutions were also permitted to identify additional competencies for general education, and eleven institutions did so. The only additional competency occurring at more than one institution was Information Literacy, which is defined as a separate competency at six institutions, and included in Technological Competency at several others. Other competencies offered at different institutions include Arts Appreciation, Content Knowledge, Creativity, Cultural Appreciation, Experiential Awareness, Global Awareness, Global Citizenship, Personal Responsibility, and Personal Self-Management.

All 28 institutions clearly defined one or more learning outcomes for the four essential skills at the institutional level. Outcomes for all four essential skills were clearly defined by 18 institutions, and 5 additional institutions offered clear definitions for three skills.

The most common problem with outcomes was that some institutions identified outcomes that were not connected, or only vaguely connected, to particular student behaviors. For example, an outcome might specify that a student will "understand" a certain skill or area of knowledge. The outcome would be better defined by saying a student will "demonstrate an understanding" of the skill. This kind of clear connection to student behavior makes it easier for students to know the expectations for their work, and easier for faculty to identify occasions for learning assessment.

Almost all institutions have well-identified outcomes and measures for two essential skills, Written and Oral Communication and Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning. A significant minority of institutions struggle with outcomes or measures for Critical Analysis and Reasoning and Technological Competency. Institutions experiencing difficulty in these areas should examine the reports in Volume 2 of this report to consider how the best practices of other institutions might be emulated on their own campuses.

Both direct and indirect measures of learning were used at 18 institutions, and 27 used either direct or indirect measures. Examples of common direct measures included:

- Evaluation of student work products according to rubrics
- Locally developed examinations
- Nationally normed standardized proficiency tests, especially the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

Examples of common indirect measures included:

- Locally developed self-concept surveys of students and alumni
- Surveys of other groups including employers and faculty

- Nationally normed self-concept surveys, especially the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Demonstrating Improvement

Only 14 institutions provided evidence that assessment results were used to make improvements in teaching processes. Several institutions declared that results led to improvements, but did not provide any examples of these changes or how they drew on assessment results. Space is strictly limited in these reports, and so institutions may have chosen to omit this evidence in favor of other material. However, improvements resulting from assessment are an essential requirement for Middle States accreditation, and so institutions should be sure to provide examples of improvements in Self-Study Reports and Periodic Review Reports, as well as in future editions of SLOAR.

Here are a few examples of department-level improvements in teaching strategies and practices resulting from assessment.

- CECIL COLLEGE. In one course in which the Critical Analysis and Reasoning outcome is assessed, faculty determined that students struggled most with understanding concepts and providing sufficient detail in their written work. In response to these results, the initial assignment was converted to an in-class assignment to ensure that all students have a shared understanding of the outcome and the exercise.

- CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE. In an introductory course in Computer Information Systems, the department established a benchmark of 75% of the students demonstrating mastery of at least 80% of the outcomes related to Technological Competency. After the first semester of the project, the department members concluded (1) students were not fully aware of the rubric used to assess and grade projects and (2) students were not prepared for such a comprehensive project. Additional instruction and scaffolding strategies were used to prepare students better for the rigor of the project. The percentage of students reaching the benchmark rose from 61% in the first semester to 80% in the second semester.

- TOWSON UNIVERSITY. The Art + Design program discovered that senior students demonstrated only adequate mastery of a learning outcome requiring them to "articulate… their personal aesthetic and professional direction." An introductory-level course was redesigned to give students more frequent, and earlier, opportunities to develop and practice this skill.

- UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY. The Physics Department assessed student ability to "formulate problems in the language of mathematics and to use both mathematical and computational skills to solve physical problems" in a 400-level course. Assessment results from three semesters indicated that student mastery would be improved by additional focus on this outcome in an earlier, 200-level course.

In order to move improvements from the department level to the institutional level, it is essential that institutions communicate assessment results across departments to all faculty. Here are two exemplary approaches to institution-wide communication.

- HAGERSTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE has established several vehicles for communicating learning assessment results to the whole faculty. Regular newsletters, presentations at faculty meetings, and professional development activities allow faculty to learn from each other about practices and strategies in learning assessment.

- SALISBURY UNIVERSITY maintains a website with extensive resources on general education, assessment, and the university's academic review process.

Common Challenges

Although each college and university has different contexts and situations, it is nevertheless possible to discern some challenges that confront several different institutions. Institutions are encouraged to consult with one another, and to review Volume 2 of this report, to gather ideas and strategies that have been successfully used at other Maryland institutions to address these obstacles.

- *Unclear outcomes.* In a few cases, outcomes are missing or are poorly defined. Outcomes are best expressed as behaviors or actions by students: for instance, Wor-Wic Community College defines one of its outcomes by stating that students will demonstrate the ability to "apply mathematical models to the solution of problems." This approach makes it easier for students to understand and meet expectations, and easier for faculty to recognize behaviors of mastery when students exhibit them. Outcomes such as "students will understand," "students will become [or be] familiar," "students will become [or be] aware," or "students will appreciate" should be restated and made more specific.

- *Confusion of direct and indirect measures.* Direct measures of learning are the optimal source of information about student learning. Indirect measures such as student or employer opinion surveys can provide valuable supplemental information, but they should not be used without direct measures. In particular, course grades and course passing rates should not be used as direct measures of learning. Course grades can and do reflect factors other than learning, such as attendance, timeliness, class participation, and mastery of knowledge rather than mastery of skills. They are therefore inadequate as direct measures of skills.

- *Failure to review student work.* A few institutions base their assessment efforts on reviewing syllabi, curricular structures, and faculty activities, rather than reviewing student work. While curricular review is a necessary part of learning assessment, it is not sufficient. Student work is the most reliable source of information on student learning. Assessment processes must be based on the review of student work.

- *Focus on process, rather than on conducting assessment.* Some institutions have focused on developing processes for assessment and structures for review, but have not gone on

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to conduct learning assessment or review assessment results. For example, an institution may have required all departments to establish a process for assessment, but not required departments to submit assessment results for review by faculty at the institution level. This omission prevents institutional attention to department results, and in some cases allows departments to avoid conducting assessment. Sound processes are essential to assessment, but must be accompanied by assessment by faculty.

- *Results not being used for improvement.* Some programs and institutions do not complete the assessment cycle by using assessment results to make improvements to courses and curricula. This is an essential requirement of Middle States for accreditation, and institutions must demonstrate that they are not merely conducting assessment for its own sake, but actively integrating the evaluation of assessment results into improving teaching and learning experiences and, ideally, decisions about the allocation of resources.

- *Results asserted but not demonstrated with evidence.* Some institutions assert that assessment is being conducted and that assessment is leading to improvements, but they do not provide evidence of these results. Institutions should provide examples of results and of specific changes made because of results.

- *Narrow scope of assessment activities.* In some cases, assessment activities are confined to a few programs, courses, or even sections of courses. To be sure, sampling and pilot programs are effective ways to evaluate teaching and learning. But institutions must ensure that learning assessment takes place in all departments and programs, and become part of the work for all faculty rather than a handful of assessment specialists. Lengthy assessment cycles can also allow some programs to avoid conducting assessment for several years. Assessment should be a regular part of the activities of every department and program.

These problems are common obstacles for institutions. But learning assessment is intended to be a dynamic and evolving process for colleges and universities, and institutions should continue to work to address these difficulties. Institutions should review the narratives provided in Volume 2 of this report to learn how peer institutions have addressed these challenges. They might also benefit from conversations with faculty and administrators at other institutions. Communication of processes and results, both within and across campuses, is invaluable for engaging questions about teaching and learning.

Institutional Narratives and Institutional Change

The institutional narratives in Part III of the institutional reports provide a wealth of helpful information about the progress of assessment efforts at colleges and universities. They show that there are many ways for institutions to develop and embed learning assessment into courses and programs, as well as many structures for ensuring that results are shared with appropriate groups.

One of the striking features of the institutional narratives is that assessment efforts are often interrupted by changes in institutional leadership. A search for a new president or chief academic officer frequently leads to a hiatus in assessment efforts, in the belief that the new

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leader will wish to have input into the process. Even the decision to hire an individual to undertake formal support and oversight of assessment can disrupt progress, even if the individual is already a member of the faculty. While leaders can and do have important influence over assessment processes, assessment activity should be so broadly based among faculty and departments that changes in leadership should not interrupt it. When an institution hires a president or chief academic officer, many operations are routinely placed on hold, but classes are still held, the library still circulates materials, and the financial aid office still distributes aid. Assessment activity should continue as well. Institutions should be aware of the temptation to halt progress because of a leadership change and should commit themselves to avoiding such delays.

Considering Statewide Learning Outcomes

Many stakeholders advocate that the State develop and implement a set of learning outcomes that could be used at every institution. These stakeholders believe that these common learning outcomes could be used to ensure that all graduates meet a minimum level of competency, to focus greater effort and attention on improving teaching and learning in selected areas, and to allow policymakers and the public to compare the achievements of Maryland colleges and universities with each other and with those of other states.

There are many visible examples of the common-standards approach in education policy, especially at the K-12 level. The federal No Child Left Behind act is perhaps the best known. However, critics of the common-standards approach believe that an intense focus on a few educational objectives tends to drive out support for other worthy outcomes, and moves policy attention away from student learning and towards instructor performance.

As noted above (page 5), the common-standards approach has been considered several times by MHEC since at least 2001. Each time, MHEC has opted instead for a methodology that allows each institution to use outcomes that the institution believes is suitable for its mission and student population. This methodology seems well suited to the variety of educational missions within Maryland, and also allows institutions to concentrate on conducting assessment, rather than on resolving conflicting choices about student knowledge, skills, and abilities. It also aligns with the approach taken by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the accrediting body to which Maryland institutions belong.

The 2011 SLOAR report demonstrates that the institutional-improvement approach does lead to improvements in assessment of learning. To be sure, it is difficult to say whether the common-standards approach would have been more effective in this regard.

Despite the prevalence of the common-standards approach at the K-12 level, very few states have successfully implemented common learning outcomes for higher education that apply equally well across a range of diverse institutions. It may be that there are more fundamental commonalities among K-12 schools than among colleges and universities, and that the common-standards approach may not be applicable at the higher education level. However, at the time of this report several national and international efforts are underway to encourage states to develop common outcomes for higher education, including the Assessment of Higher Education Learning

Outcomes project under the aegis of the Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development and the Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative led by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. If these endeavors lead to productive results, Maryland may wish to revive consideration of the common-standards approach.

Summary

Learning assessment is thriving at Maryland colleges and universities. Most institutions have well-defined processes for assessing learning in one or more areas. Students are demonstrating their mastery of key skills, and faculty are using the results of learning assessment to improve teaching and learning. Although not every Maryland institution demonstrates the same exemplary assessment processes as the best colleges and universities, most have a sound understanding of how to design outcomes, develop and carry out assessment, use those results to improve teaching and learning, and share results across the institution.

The principal challenge for institutions at this point is to build on their successes: to expand successful assessment processes in one or two skills to other skills, to expand assessment processes from the course and institution level to the program level, to ensure that all departments and programs are assessing learning and using results to improve teaching and learning. Institutions must also consolidate and strengthen their assessment processes, so that assessment activities do not cease during changes or reorganizations of faculty or administrators. Institutions should look to their peer institutions in Maryland for ideas about how to apply and adapt successful assessment practices. These ongoing practices help to ensure that colleges and universities are effectively preparing students for the challenges of work, citizenship, and self-development.

Section IV. Executive Summaries and Commission Evaluations: Community Colleges

This section presents the executive summary for each institutional report, exactly as submitted to MHEC by the institution. Each executive summary is followed by the MHEC review of the institution's full report.

Full institutional reports appear in Volume 2 of this report, which is available on the MHEC website.

Allegany College of Maryland

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Allegany College of Maryland's vision is to embrace the dynamic spirit of learning for life. This is done by establishing a lifelong learning community dedicated to excellence in education and responsive to the changing needs of the communities it serves. It focuses on preparing individuals in mind, body, and spirit for lives of fulfillment, leadership, and service in a diverse and global society. It is committed to engaging students in rich and challenging learning opportunities within a small college atmosphere that is known for its personal touch.

ACM's values include integrity, respect, opportunity, wellness, and quality which are ensured through assessment. The purpose of Student Learning Assessment (SLA) is to engage the campus community in a systematic, continuing process to create shared learning goals and to enhance and improve learning. By assessing student learning, the institution is demonstrating that its students have the knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with the institutional goals of the college and that they have achieved appropriate higher education goals. Student Learning Assessment at Allegany College of Maryland is a way to improve the way we teach and the way students learn by asking two questions:

> What do our students need to learn?
> How do we know they've learned it?

Student Learning Assessment is a faculty-driven process where faculty determine the student learning goals, the assessment methods used, and the benchmarks against which the results are measured. They collect and report the results and use those results to improve the way they teach and the way students learn. Assessment results are reported at the course level and also at the program level. Whether at the course or program level, the assessment process is an ongoing process repeated each academic year with the results used to make improvements to the teaching and learning processes. The power of assessment as a tool for improvement comes from using results to identify and build on strengths while addressing weaknesses.

Though assessment has been a priority of the college's for several years, no one position was charged with managing it until 2005 when a new position, Associate Dean of Instructional Affairs who reports to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, was created in part to address this need. In 2009, a faculty committee was formed to evaluate the assessment process and make recommendations to improve it. In order to ensure that the assessment process continues to improve with faculty playing a larger role in its administration, a faculty member will be given release time to coordinate the assessment efforts starting in fall 2011. This faculty member will work closely with the Associate Dean of Instructional Affairs and faculty to determine the needs of faculty and to ensure that the assessment process continues to evolve. He/she will be responsible for the following:

- Work with faculty to create a plan for systematic course and program assessment to be used by all programs/departments.
- Determine effective and appropriate ways to share assessment results with stakeholders.

- Coordinate and provide professional development opportunities for faculty in area of assessment.
- Work with Associate Dean of Instructional Affairs to ensure that assessment results are collected and archived.
- Update academic assessment website as necessary.
- Assist faculty in the development of overall assessment strategies, development of surveys, rubric development, and any other assessment needs.
- Support campus strategic planning, including institutional benchmarking.
- Work with the Associate Dean of Instructional Affairs, the Institutional Research Director, the Vice President of Administrative Services, and Computer Services to aggregate and analyze assessment data and disseminate the information to decision-makers.
- Prepare reports on institutional progress toward meeting stated goals, such as accreditation, campus-wide strategic planning, and academic program review.
- Conduct presentations for the college community related to student learning assessment.

In addition to the Student Learning Assessment process, ACM's Curriculum Committee helps ensure the quality of academic instruction. The Curriculum Committee reviews and evaluates all proposals for new curricula and courses and for changes in existing curricula and courses. In addition, it makes recommendations for changes to the college curricula and course offerings after careful review. The committee consists of twelve (12) faculty/staff members recommended by the ACM Faculty Senate, five (5) ex-officio voting staff members, and one student appointed by the Student Government Association.

Allegany College of Maryland's assessment activities align with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's expectations and Standards 7 (Institutional Assessment), 12 (General Education), and 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). The college is committed to providing the resources and support necessary to sustain the assessment process ensuring that it results in continual improvements to the teaching and learning processes.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Many elements of an effective assessment program are present at **Allegany College of Maryland**, but the college must ensure that assessment is carried out at all levels and units of the institution. For example, the report declares that assessment takes place at the course, program, and institution levels, but does not provide evidence of any institution-level review of general education outcomes assessment data or any institution-wide changes in teaching or curriculum resulting from assessment activities.

In many places, the report should be strengthened with greater specificity. For example, the report states, "Some assessment results indicated that changes were necessary to the way a course or program was structured. Faculty from many different areas realized that students needed practical experience demonstrating and explaining what they've learned and changes were made to facilitate that." These statements leave many unanswered questions. What assessment results suggested changes? What changes were made? Which courses and programs were affected? How many different academic areas identified the need for more practical experience? What were some of those areas? Were they disproportionately concentrated in some departments or programs? What were some of the changes made, or at least one or two of the most significant? Were they made at the course level, the program level, or the institutional level? The college should provide more detail and more examples to clarify how assessment is being used, as well as to identify areas where greater attention may be needed.

The college's discussion of results properly says that individual faculty should evaluate learning within the contexts of their courses, disciplines, and programs. However, the faculty must be able to work collectively to address institution-level issues, and so the faculty must ensure that some cross-disciplinary and institution-wide conversation takes place. Faculty are not only experts in content but also experts in teaching, and there is a danger in conceiving the faculty as a whole as an aggregation of "content experts" rather than as a body committed to teaching and learning. Student learning is a responsibility of the faculty as a whole, and faculty therefore have an interest in ensuring the conditions for a discussion about teaching, informed by assessment results that are usable by faculty in all disciplines. Each faculty member and each department should have individual responsibility for ensuring that part of the institutional learning outcomes are met, but the faculty as a whole has a collective responsibility for ensuring that all learning outcomes are met.

Anne Arundel Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The central mission of Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) is learning; AACC responds to the needs of a diverse community by offering high quality, affordable and accessible learning opportunities and is accountable to its stakeholders. Consistent with the institutional mission and vision, AACC expects learners to acquire and demonstrate appropriate proficiency in core competencies which encompass general education and essential life skills. The college is committed to offering educational experiences that allow learners opportunities to acquire, develop and demonstrate growth in these competencies. The attainment of these competencies provides the foundation for lifelong learning.

Assessment at AACC is mission-based, shared learning through the systematic collection, interpretation and use of information about student learning achievement and institutional effectiveness as a learning college. The primary goal of learning outcomes assessment at AACC is to improve student learning and to ensure that more students are more successful in achieving their academic, professional, and personal enrichment goals. As such, it promotes the improvement of student learning, teaching, and the educational environment. Thoughtful interpretation and use of assessment data by faculty and staff enable the college to fulfill its vital learning commitment to the community.

All members of the college are partners in teaching and learning and play an integral role in supporting, enhancing, and in evaluating student learning. AACC has fostered a college-wide culture of assessment by engaging members of the college community in the systematic, continuous process of creating shared learning goals to enhance student success and achievement. AACC's strategic plan, Student Success 2020, provides the foundation for student success initiatives as well as learning outcomes assessment. Student Success 2020 initiatives center around three strategic issues (access, success, and resources); learning outcomes assessment is integral to AACC's commitment to optimize student success for all learners.

In 2010, AACC joined *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, a national commitment to student success and institutional improvement, aimed at identifying new strategies to improve student success, close achievement gaps and increase retention, persistence and completion rates. Conceived in 2004 by Lumina Foundation for Education and seven national partner organizations, *Achieving the Dream* is focused on creating a "culture of evidence" on community college campuses in which data collection and analysis drive efforts to identify problems that prevent students from succeeding and develop programs to help them stay in school and receive a certificate or diploma. A systematic collection of direct and indirect evidence of student learning occurs at various points in time and in various situations throughout students' experiences at AACC. AACC is focused on helping all students identify meaningful educational goals; building systems and programs to track, monitor and support students' progress in achieving their goals; involving faculty and staff in examining current practices; and making changes necessary to increase students' success. AACC priority areas for meeting *Achieving the Dream* goals: 1) increase the course success rates of students placed into

Intermediate Algebra (MAT 012) and Composition and Introduction to Literature 1 (ENG 111) and 2) improve administrative infrastructure to support student success.

The Office of Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA), staffed by a director, facilitates and coordinates the student learning outcomes assessment processes at the college. The college leadership provides oversight and support for learning outcomes assessment. General oversight for the Office of Learning Outcomes is provided by the vice president and the associate vice president for learning, with daily oversight provided by the dean, Virtual Campus. The director, LOA, works closely with the instructional deans and department chairs or directors to provide the leadership for faculty engaged in the assessment process.

The Learning Outcomes Assessment subcommittee, a subset of the college's Teaching and Learning Committee, is comprised of eight faculty, four staff, the director of LOA and a student member who liaises with the Student Association. The LOA subcommittee advises the Office of LOA on matters related to assessment, promotes assessment strategies, provides training for peers, and periodically evaluates the assessment process at the college.

The Educational Policies and Curriculum committee (EPC) chaired by the associate vice president for learning and vice-chaired by a faculty member, plays a central role in shaping the curriculum at the college through its representative faculty membership. EPC processes ensure that learning outcomes for courses and programs are set at the department level and that course offerings display appropriate academic content, coherence and rigor. All new courses or programs, as part of any proposals seeking action for approval by the Academic Forum, must include the intended learning outcomes as displayed on the Worldwide Instructional Design System (WIDS) templates (http://wids.org/Home.aspx) for program and course outcomes. Twenty-two degree programs at AACC had established approved outcomes in 2004; as of May 2011, 51 of 54 (94%) degree programs at AACC have approved learning outcomes. In addition, EPC convenes core competency task forces to recommend revised outcomes for internal general education courses or to reaffirm existing outcomes. Currently, the technology fluency competency is under review.

Processes and procedures at AACC align with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education expectations and Standards 7, 12, and 14. Ten college-wide core competencies are expected of all AACC graduates: communication, technology fluency, information literacy, personal wellness, self management, scientific reasoning, quantitative reasoning, social and civic responsibility. These competencies reflect the mission, goals and objectives of AACC and parallel those related to general education and essential skills identified in Standard 12 of *Characteristics of Excellence.* The college's commitment to and investment in learning outcomes assessment supports the continuation of faculty efforts toward professional accountability to students and to the public vested in the effectiveness of AACC in meeting its central learning mission.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

At **Anne Arundel Community College**, assessment processes have been thoughtfully developed and are thoroughly discussed. The report would be improved with more examples and details of results, as well as how those results were used to improve teaching and inform other decisions at the institution. In addition, while assessment structures are well positioned to foster campus-wide evaluations of student learning and campus-wide discussions, no evidence is presented that such institution-level discussions have taken place.

Baltimore City Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Institutional assessment of student learning at Baltimore City Community College focuses on three areas: Institutional Learning Goals (Standard 7), General Education (Standard 12), and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (Standard 14).

1. Institutional Learning Goals (Standard 7). The vice president for academic affairs, academic administrators and faculty are responsible for the academic integrity of the College. The 2010 faculty revision of the General Education Statement and Core Competencies led to the identification of nine Institutional Learning Goals. The nine goals state: "Upon graduation, all BCCC graduates should be able to": 1) think independently; 2) communicate effectively (verbally and in writing); 3) reason abstractly; 4) gather, evaluate and interpret numerical data; 5) gather, evaluate and interpret information; 6) draw conclusions based on evidence; 7) understand and develop an appreciation for social and cultural diversity; 8) understand and develop an appreciation for the arts; and, 9) participate as civic and socially responsible citizens. The College aligned these Institutional Learning Goals with the General Education disciplines and is in the process of identifying the courses where these goals are taught. The assessment of the Institutional Learning Goals will begin in fall 2011.

2. General Education (Standard 12). The 2010 revised General Education statement is as follows:

   BCCC defines general education as educational experiences that enable students to become informed, independent, critical thinkers. Through a diverse curriculum, students acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively; reason abstractly; gather, evaluate, and interpret numerical data and written information; draw conclusions based on evidence; apply knowledge to real-world situations; develop an appreciation for social and cultural diversity; value the arts; and become individuals prepared for the lifelong journey of learning and responsible citizenship in their communities, the nation and world.

   Faculty developed five General Education Core Competencies from the General Education Statement: I) Communication; II) Arts and Humanities; III) Social Sciences and Cultural Awareness; IV) Mathematical and Scientific Reasoning; and V) Personal Development. The College is in the process of integrating these competencies into programs and courses and including them in the student learning outcomes assessment process. Furthermore, the College requires computer literacy of all its graduates (see Technological Competency section); however, the development of a specific statement addressing this competency will be accomplished during the fall 2011 semester.

3. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (Standard 14). Baltimore City Community College conducts an ongoing cyclical process designed to engage the faculty in a sustainable program of assessment with a clearly defined timeline. Courses are assessed on a regular basis by

faculty who teach the courses and coordinators who oversee programs. With the help of a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Matrix (Appendix A), all BCCC academic departments conduct assessment of student learning outcomes by establishing measurable outcomes and identifying tools and criteria for assessment. Additionally, faculty members collect and analyze data and summarize their results. The results lead to modifications (where necessary) to improve teaching and learning. The first complete cycle, using the SLOA Matrix, concluded in 2010, with assessment data aiding faculty in making improvements to teaching and learning.

SLOAs are imbedded in course syllabi. Selection of outcomes for assessment is determined collaboratively by faculty who teach the courses, the program coordinator, and chairperson. SLOAs are submitted to the chair (in electronic form) prior to the end of the semester and reviewed on a regular basis by the chair, the dean, and the vice president for academic affairs. Assessment training is a collaborative process between the chair and/or the coordinator and faculty. It includes faculty workshops at the beginning of each semester and opportunities to attend conferences sponsored by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, professional conferences in the disciplines, and guest speakers.

One method of ensuring faculty members are continually engaged in the assessment process is the inclusion of assessment in faculty evaluations. The chairpersons are required to rate faculty on three indicators of assessment activities: 1) submits goals of substance consistent with the mission of the College, including Student Learning Outcomes Assessment; 2) assesses Student Learning Outcomes and presents plans to enhance student success; and, 3) participates in the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment process.

At the program level, the Program Review and Evaluation Committee (PREC), a standing committee of the faculty governance board of the Senate Executive Committee (SEC), is responsible for the systematic review of programs for improvement, suspension, or discontinuance. Every program is on a five-year cycle that includes internal and external stakeholders. The PREC process incorporates a report on student learning outcomes assessment for the five-year period. Program recommendations are sent to the vice president for academic affairs and the president for proper reporting to the board of trustees.

During the spring 2010 semester the SEC established a Student Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Assessment Task Force. The major charge of this group was to work with the president and vice president of academic affairs to prepare an assessment of the current state of the College's Student Learning Outcomes processes and monitor them to ensure a systematically organized, sustainable process promoting a culture of assessment.

As noted in Part One of this report, in 2010, the College developed new Institutional Learning Goals, a General Education Statement, and Core Competencies for General Education. Assessment of outcomes for these will begin in fall 2011.

Additionally, the College appointed a faculty member to serve as Project Director for Accreditation and Assessment. This person is responsible for working with faculty and Academic Affairs administration to maintain a sustainable and organized assessment plan based on best practices. The appointee is also a member of the Maryland Community

College Learning Outcomes Affinity Group (MCLOAG), a consortium of the 16 Maryland community colleges devoted to addressing assessment issues by sharing assessment resources.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Baltimore City Community College has completed important groundwork. Establishing learning outcomes is the essential first step in outcomes assessment, and faculty review of syllabi and course objectives is also key. However, the college must also be able to incorporate assessed student work into its process and systematically use the results to produce improvements in teaching and learning. There are many changes to teaching described in the report, but there is little or no indication of how these changes followed from outcomes assessment results.

The institution's assessment structure must ensure leadership and participation by faculty across campus, rather than by a limited group of faculty or administrators. Faculty should share assessment results across campus to foster improvements in teaching and learning.

Carroll Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

After the adoption of the new seven GE Learning Goals in 2008, and as evidence of the integration of these goals within courses, faculty undertook a major alignment initiative in 2009. Under the guidance of the College's academic leaders, faculty examined each credit course's objectives in relationship to both department program goals and the new seven General Education Learning Goals, regardless of whether designated as a GE core requirement or not. In order to make the connection between course objectives and program and general education goals more obvious to students, all syllabi now reference the program goals (PG) and/or general education learning goals (GE) intended to be met by each course objective. These goals are also posted on the college website.

Following an established five year plan, each year one or two of the program goals are discussed within academic departments, which include General Education Learning Goals. For example, during academic year 2008-09, the English Department measured students' ability to construct thesis-driven essays and support assertions with relevant information, while the Science Department in the same time period measured students' ability to manipulate data scientifically, both of which specifically address GE Learning Goals 1 and 3 respectively.

Over a five year period, then, all goals will be assessed. The periodic program review enables a broader assessment of the program as a whole by using the outcomes data gathered over the prior five year period. The aim is to systematically evaluate programs to determine whether or not student learning outcomes are being met and to inform any changes or improvements.

Each academic discipline developed its individual program goals in the context of what, at the time, were the college's core competencies. So, departmental assessment plans include program goals which are now reflective of General Education Learning Goals 1 through 4. New goals have been added for the competencies of creativity, global awareness, and personal development and social responsibility. Assessments were added in 2010-11 and will be included in the updated five year assessment plans.

While significant attempts to address GE goals have been made through the departmental program reviews and other periodic assessments, to better address the College's need for a systematic and regular assessment of general education, the GE core course requirements are now recognized as a distinct program, As such, the General Education Program will have a periodic review using the same guidelines as are used for other academic programs. Prior to the end of the five year review cycle, each of the seven General Education Learning Goals will have been systemically assessed using a performance-based model of assessment.

The college is currently developing evaluation rubrics for each Learning Goal using cross-disciplinary faculty teams. In a blind analysis, random samples of artifacts are being collected from those courses that assess the selected General Education Learning Goal, and a separate evaluation team is using the scoring rubric to assess the artifacts. In the fifth year, the General Education Committee will review all the results for a complete picture and offer suggestions for improvement as needed.

It is also important to note that assessment activities include work being evaluated within the Library department as they offer sessions to support information literacy knowledge; learning

within Student Affairs as they measure learning outcomes in several departments; and Distance Learning, which not only utilizes data from evaluation of course outcomes but also evaluates learning within the distinctive format of distance education.

After commendation from the Middle States visit, our college is confident the General Education Learning Goals are being met through evaluation of learning outcomes at the course and program level. The results in Part II of this report indicate how well the college meets its mission and goals, which is part of institutional effectiveness as measured in Standard 7. For Standard 12, our additional activities described in Part III demonstrate how, by looking across the college, we expect to find areas of improvement that would strengthen student learning and could be instrumental in our continuous improvement journey. Finally, our program review process helps to meet Standard 14, where the results of the assessment of learning outcomes leads to improvement, as needed, and confirms our graduates have the knowledge and skills the faculty, under the direction of Dr. James Ball, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, deem necessary for completion.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Carroll Community College's report is laudable because it illustrates that many different kinds of assignments are used to embed assessment across the curriculum. In addition, it offers several fine examples of changes stemming from assessment results. The college should ensure that such changes are happening across the institution. In addition, the college is aware of problems in sharing results across the institution and is working to address these obstacles.

In some places, the report does not clearly convey the implications of some assessment results. For example, the report might state that 82.28 % of the students successfully achieved a benchmark. However, the percentage alone is of little use without context. If the institution had set a goal of 80%, then the goal was reached; if the goal was 95%, then the goal was not reached. Some additional clarification of this kind will be helpful in future reports.

It is not clear from this report how assessment results are shared at institution level or how they affect resource allocation. The college acknowledges that this is an area needing improvement, and expresses a commitment to improve these processes in the future. This kind of self-examination is an excellent example of how assessment results should be used by institutions to guide future improvements.

Cecil College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2010 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness permeates all planning efforts at Cecil College. The following objectives serve as the overarching priorities for student learning outcomes measures:

- Develop and implement <u>student learning outcomes across the curriculum</u> to insure that each learner who enters the institution acquires the comprehensive skills and knowledge needed for higher levels of learning and/or the workplace.

- Develop and implement <u>student learning outcomes within each program of study</u> to insure that each learner acquires the necessary skills and knowledge needed to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of an academic discipline.

- Develop and implement <u>student learning outcomes within each course</u> to insure that each learner who enters the institution will acquire fundamental skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.

The Cecil College Assessment Committee (CCAC) provides institutional leadership for the College's assessment efforts. Membership includes the Vice President Academic Programs; Vice President for Enrollment, Student Services, and Institutional Effectiveness; Dean of Academic Programs; Director of Academic Program Support (Co-Chair); Director of Institutional Research (Co-Chair); and full-time faculty representatives for each discipline.

A process has been implemented to collect student learning outcomes assessment data, results, and use of assessment results by requiring all faculty members to submit a course assessment report each fall and spring semester. Full-time faculty members submit reports for three courses each semester and include a maximum of five student learning outcomes for each course. Part-time faculty members submit a report for each course taught and also include a maximum of five student learning outcomes for each course. Excerpts from these assessment reports are included for each General Education Competency.

At the institutional level the College has implemented the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). This survey is administered every other year to collect indirect measures of student learning outcomes. We have included a comparison of 2006 Cecil scores with 2010 scores for each general education competency listed below.

Beginning in fall 2007, Cecil College implemented the Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA) to provide direct measures of student learning outcomes in general education competency areas. The survey is administered every other year: in the fall to first-time students and in the spring to graduating seniors. An ongoing challenge has been obtaining a statistically significant sample size. The following tables present the results for 2008-2009 for Cecil College and all two-year schools that participated in the administration of the CCLA. The

results indicate that Cecil College students (both entering and exiting students) performed better in all categories than the comparison schools on every type of assessment.

Mean Scores for First-Year Students

Assessment	Cecil College	All Schools
Performance Task	966	930
Analytic Writing Tasks	989	968
Make-an-Argument	976	957
Critique-an-Argument	1003	980
Total CCLA Score	978	949

Mean Scores for Exiting Students

Assessment	Cecil College	All Schools
Performance Task	1115	1013
Analytic Writing Tasks	1148	1053
Make-an-Argument	1144	1046
Critique-an-Argument	1152	1059
Total CCLA Score	1132	1033

Another institutional level measure is the standardization of the approval process for each course syllabus. The process ensures that measurable learning outcomes are embedded in each course, as approved by the institution's Academic Affairs Committee. This process has enhanced the College's ability to heighten the focus on learning outcomes while promoting a cross-discipline approach to the achievement of general education requirements.

At the course level, all course syllabi are required to include student learning outcomes, outcome indicators, types of assessment used, and sample assessment activities.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The report from **Cecil College** provides fine examples of assessment results in individual courses and programs and how the results are used to make improvements. The college should work to ensure that these effective improvement efforts are happening across the institution.

In future reports, the college may also wish to explain how outcomes are verified for students and how results are shared with faculty across the institution. In addition, the college should explain how assessment processes lead to changes at the institutional level.

Chesapeake College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Chesapeake College has systemic assessment processes at the institution, program and course level. The Academic Program and Curricula (APC) committee oversees the program and course-level assessment processes. This academic committee is comprised of faculty, the Vice-President for Academics, both academic Deans, and representation from the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Assessment (IPRA). The Academic Planning and Assessment (APAC) committee oversees campus-wide assessment initiatives. The group is comprised of administration, deans, IPRA staff, and representation from all major faculty committees including Developmental Studies and General Education. Additionally, representation from campus departments such as the Registrar and Advising are part of this committee.

Academic Program Review

All programs are included in a 5-year cycle for academic program review. Each program is assigned a program manager. The program manager collaborates with the department and associated faculty and staff to prepare a comprehensive program review. The IPRA office provides resources and support for each department completing a program review. A template is provided to guide the program review and assure all necessary components are included. In addition to the template, a comprehensive guide is available to provide specific directions, examples, and further explanation of the process. A major component of the academic program review is the inclusion of program-level student learning outcomes. For each outcome, indirect and/or direct data is presented to document student achievement in that particular outcome. Programs are encouraged to provide internal as well as external data to demonstrate the program's progress as well as demonstrate campus-wide support of the college's goals.

The committee has developed a rubric to assess the program quality and vitality. The APC committee provides feedback to the program manager about the assessment. For each program review, the APC considers any suggested program and/or curriculum changes in addition to any suggested resource allocations. Each program review suggests data-driven action plans for the APC committee to approve.

Course-Level Assessment

During the 2008-2009 academic year, Chesapeake College initiated a pilot course assessment process. Six courses participated by developing common student learning outcomes, determining targets and assessment tools and methodology. Data was collected and action plans developed for implementation the following academic year. During the 2009-2010 academic year, this pilot was expanded to include 40 high-impact courses. Faculty used the following table to organize and document their assessment activities.

Student Learning Outcomes	Targets/ Benchmarks	Assessment Methodology/	Results and Analysis	Action Steps

		Tools		

During the 2010-2011 academic year, the college established a campus-wide course-level assessment program. Approximately one-third of the 455 active courses were scheduled for course level assessment. A three-year plan was developed to systematically phase in all active courses. The IPRA office provided resources and support to all faculty involved in this initiative.

In December 2010, the Board of Trustees approved the purchase of TracDat, an online academic assessment system. This product is designed to support the assessment needs of the academic programs along with other divisions such as student support services. This tool helps to manages assessment processes such as planning, data storage, data analysis, data utilization and follow up. The software is able to demonstrate the purposeful alignment between college strategic goals, program outcomes, and course outcomes. Data is organized into reports for faculty, staff and administration to support formative and summative evaluation of program progress. TracDat also has the capacity to assist in the reporting requirements for accreditation purposes.

Additional support for program-level and course-level assessment is provided by the IPRA staff through multiple professional development opportunities. Several sessions were held throughout the 2010-2011 academic year to further explain and model assessment processes. These well-attended sessions allowed faculty to get one-on-one help to develop quality assessment plans in order to collect and analyze appropriate data to drive instructional decisions for improved student achievement at the course and program level.

During the academic year 2010-2011, the academic leadership facilitated training sessions for faculty members to review and revise all academic program mission statements, goals, and student learning outcomes for publication in the 2011-2012 academic catalog.

Institutional Assessment Initiatives

The General Education committee initiated a process for all previously-identified General Education courses to re-apply to the program. The committee developed an application template along with a rubric used to evaluate alignment of course to the program competencies. Each application required six general education competencies along with one content-specific competency (as appropriate). Pairs of faculty members peer-reviewed the applications. Thirty courses from across all academic departments were approved as General Education courses. Appendix A documents the alignment between the courses and the specific competencies that are assessed in the course. At Chesapeake, General Education is considered a program; and as such, is included in the five-year cycle for academic program review. The General Education program will participate in a comprehensive review during the 2011-2012 academic year.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Chesapeake College has established a sound framework for assessment activities. Most learning outcomes are well-designed, although a few are broad and vague. The latter would be improved by describing student behaviors that are concrete and more specific. The college has also developed a good curriculum map, which should be refined as various assessment processes move forward.

The college reported that aligning outcomes for the Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning competency led to "vertical conversations pertaining to the content of sequential courses." Assessment processes should lead to exactly this kind of alignment of course outcomes and pedagogies. It would have been helpful to provide additional details on both the decision process and the action process for improving instruction, and how these changes fostered greater student success. Nevertheless, this result is commendable and the college should promote similar efforts across the college.

Chesapeake provides a notable illustration of how learning outcomes design can lead to pedagogical changes and improved outcomes. The discussion of the course CIS 109, Introduction to Computers, is a fine example of how assessment results led to action steps by the faculty, including greater communication and realigned instruction, which successfully led more students to achieve the designated objectives.

College of Southern Maryland

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Quality Improvement Process

The Quality Improvement Process (QIP) is the vehicle to achieve greater institutional effectiveness by providing a vision and focus for the talent and energy of the college community. Achieving institutional effectiveness begins with the CSM mission statement and the statement of purpose of the college and for each unit. From the statement of purpose, strategic and operational plans are derived. The most successful, colleges collect data about themselves, their peers, and the environment on a regular basis and then act on them in an agile fashion. Decisions about institutional priorities and action timelines are made as units identify and implement appropriate plans. Ideally, departments/division work links to institutional work. Results from assessments of the basic unit operations and services flow to budget decisions and into new rounds of planning.

The Quality Improvement Council (QIC), consisting of representatives from all major areas and levels of organization within the College of Southern Maryland, helps to stimulate and monitor quality improvement efforts. Planning and assessment at the college is viewed as the shared responsibility of instructional and non-instructional personnel. There are several components of the QIP at CSM: Planning, both strategic and operational: assessment, including the assessment of student learning outcomes and administrative processes; and process improvement. To address each of these areas, the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) has three supporting sub-committees: College Strategic Planning Team (SPT), College Assessment Team (CAT), and College Innovation Team (CIT). These groups regularly review the planning and assessment results of the college from a "global" and strategic level and guide the college on all matters of planning and assessment.

The committee is chaired by the president of the college. Individuals from all areas of the college comprise the membership of the QIC, including the vice president of each college division and at least two designees from each of those divisions. The academic areas have both department chair and faculty representation.

Student Surveys

Assessment findings are consistently used to drive improvement and innovation. Teaching effectiveness of full- and part-time faculty is measured routinely. Faculty members receive student evaluations, both summative and formative, through both the general education survey and the Instructor Evaluation Questionnaire (IEQ). The results of the IEQs are reported to the faculty member and the division chair and are used for improving instruction, as well as to reinforce current practice. The evaluation results are one factor considered for an instructor's promotion or tenure status. A recent pilot program of the IDEA Center Student Ratings of Instruction Survey began in Spring 2011, and full implementation of this survey will be considered at the completion of the pilot program. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) results, which are collected every other year, indicate CSM students perceive a better than normal emphasis on general education coursework, and graduate follow-up

surveys demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with job and transfer preparation, as well as with general education.

In Spring 2011, CSM credit students were invited to complete the biennial CSM Student Satisfaction Survey. The survey was developed to measure key intended outcomes as identified within the assessment plans of the functional units of the college as part of the assessment component of the Quality Improvement Process. The goal of the survey is to provide units with results that can be used to inform decision making and target improvement efforts. The survey, first administered in Spring 2009, is conducted biennially in spring terms of odd-numbered years as a complement to the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) which is administered in spring terms of even-numbered years.

Student Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Assessment

Much of the direct evidence that student learning assessment information is used to improve teaching and learning is found in the work of the academic divisions of the college, as well as the academic committees. Assessment measures and methods are determined, assessment results are reported, and recommendations are developed accordingly. In 2010, the college instituted a Curriculum and Instruction Committee which reports to the Learning Council. Each Academic Division is represented on the Curriculum and Instruction Committee; the committee is chaired by the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Learning Council consist of the Vice Presidents of each campus, Vice President of Student and Instructional Support Services, and representatives from academic and support services divisions; the Council is chaired by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

One of the charges of the Learning Council and it's sub-committees is to ensure academic program integrity through an effective Student Learning Outcomes Plan, which has been under development during the 2010-11 academic year. Additional changed in 2010-11 included the development of the Core Learning Area approach to student outcomes assessment. The Core Learning Areas for all CSM students have been developed and a plan for assessing the outcomes associated with each Core Learning Area is nearing completion.

In addition, the Division of Academic Affairs has re-instituted an Academic Program Review plan, requiring a large-scale review of each program every five years; twenty program reviews were completed during the 2010-11 academic year under this revitalized plan.

While these new approaches to assessment have been under development, existing assessment approaches have not been abandoned. General Education measures continue. For each course, faculty documents the general education competencies they believe are taught with emphasis therein. Additionally, a master syllabus for each general education course has been developed that specifies the particular skills and categories of knowledge (from the list of 72 that appears in the college catalogue) that students can expect to be given the opportunity to practice or acquire in the course.

Indirect evidence of the assessment of general education competencies builds on a long tradition of assessment of the college's general education program. Acting on behalf of the General Education Committee, the Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Research (PIER) Department administers surveys to measure the program's success. Results enable faculty to determine deficiencies in any course or program and thereby address them. Several divisions (e.g., Biology and Physical Sciences; Business, Economics, and Legal Studies; Languages and

Literature) use the results of these surveys in order to make adjustments to their general education courses or simply to verify that the general education outcomes are being met. As students prepare to graduate from CSM they are asked to complete a General Education Survey. Graduates are asked whether they were exposed to the values, skills, and knowledge that faculty members believed they were teaching in their courses. The four surveys administered to the graduates, when combined, address all of the 72 general education competencies students are given opportunities to acquire. Student Learning Outcomes are also measured through ETS Proficiency Profile testing used to assess how much our students are learning and how we can improve our educational outcomes. This test assesses the four core skill areas of critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The report by the **College of Southern Maryland** describes a sound process for learning assessment. Most outcomes are well defined, but some are vague and could be made more concrete. In addition, the college's measures of institution-level assessment appear to rely solely on indirect measures (surveys), not direct measures. Indirect measures can be valuable supplements to direct measures, but the college should give pride of place to direct measures.

The report would benefit from greater specificity in other areas. The college asserts that learning outcomes are evaluated at the course and program levels, but no evidence for this is presented. There is a statement that the results are available "in many places" but no specific examples of place are given (e.g. the library, a website, the VPAA's office, etc.). There is little or no evidence that faculty review the results or, more importantly, use the results to improve teaching. Such examples are essential to improvement, and would provide assistance to faculty at CSM as well as at other campuses.

Community College of Baltimore County

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) celebrates learning and is committed to ensuring that our students grow as learners, develop a passion for life-long learning and use what they have learned to benefit our community. Therefore learning outcomes assessment has been a major emphasis of the college and is prominent in the college's strategic plan.

To guide this process the college has a Learning Outcomes Assessment Advisory Board (LOAAB) comprised of faculty and administrators from all disciplines at CCBC and includes representatives from Student Advising and Student Services, who are implementing their own process and learning outcome assessment projects. This Board, along with assistance from the Planning, Research, and Evaluation Office, reviews the results from all General Education Assessments and works with the college's Outcomes Associate and GeneRal Education Assessment Teams (GREAT) Coordinator to help faculty and student services staff determine what changes need to occur to further enhance student learning. At this level results from Learning Outcomes Assessment (LOA) Projects, GREAT Projects, institutional survey results, and the results from standardized tests are brought together into a broader picture of how programs and courses need to be changed. In addition to curriculum changes that have resulted from particular LOA projects, the results from this review process contribute to the creation of professional development workshops. These workshops are provided to assist faculty with areas of student performance that need improvement such as global awareness and inclusion of culturally responsive teaching techniques. All assessment projects at CCBC follow the same five-stage model:

> Stage 1: Design and Propose a Learning Outcomes Assessment Project
> Stage 2: Implement the Design and Collect and Analyze the Data
> Stage 3: Redesign the Course to Improve Student Learning
> Stage 4: Implement Course/Program Revisions and Reassess Student Learning
> Stage 5: Analyze and Report Final Results

During the four years since the last SLOAR report, CCBC has conducted program reviews, course level assessments and institutional level assessments. In addition to course level and general education assessment, the college supports 8-10 program reviews each year. These projects involve the collection of student work to provide direct evidence of the degree to which students are meeting their course and program level outcomes.

The goal of program review is to determine a program's strengths and weaknesses and provide direction when improvements are needed. Degree programs are assessed at least once every five years. Program level assessment examines the cumulative results of a sequence of courses, and may include the use of capstone courses, critiques, portfolios, certification exams, real-life simulations, and internships.   Program assessments must meet several standards, including measurable outcomes and external validation. Program learning outcomes for every program are included in the college catalog, which is available on-line. The Program Review process is

designed to assess those measurable outcomes. Subsequent recommendations have led to a range of improvements in the use of portfolio assessment as well as the use of software packages, standardized tests, internships, work projects and other means to verify that students have mastered program requirements.

Course level assessments are conducted on all high impact courses, which are courses with high enrollments. Each year several new courses begin an assessment project. The goal of this assessment is to create a plan for improving student learning. Over the past four years, a variety of courses have participated in this assessment activity, ranging from Criminal Justice 202 to Spanish 101. Project leaders design a common instrument which is disseminated to all sections, including courses offered via the web. The results are utilized to target specific areas that may be challenging for students, then interventions are implemented and the data collection process proceeds again. Course level assessments have been utilized to make significant gains in the success of students.

General education assessment takes on a different form from the course level assessment. General education assessment is based on standardized course-embedded written assignments. All courses that are classified as general education must participate. Written projects are assessed on six criteria: content, communication, critical thinking, technology, cultural appreciation, and independent learning. Each course must design a rubric to correspond with the assignment. The assignment is graded by two independent scorers. The assignments are scored on a 1 to 6 scale with one being the lowest score and 6 the highest. The majority of courses receive mean scores in the three to four range. Some of the results from these projects are provided in the data section for the different competencies.

In addition to course level assessment, CCBC has conducted a variety of institutional level assessments such as the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) (See Appendix A for results) and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The MAPP was conducted in the Fall of 2008 and assesses critical thinking, college-level reading, writing and mathematics skills. This assessment was administered to students enrolled in English 101 and Health 101 during the Fall 2008 semester. The findings indicate that in the areas of critical thinking and mathematics CCBC students performed similarly to other community college students. In the areas of reading and writing CCBC students obtained slightly lower scores than those at other community colleges.

CCBC has participated in the CCSSE and the Community College Survey of Faculty Engagement for the past seven years. These surveys are conducted every two years. The student component is administered to a randomly selected group of students while the faculty portion is distributed to all faculty members. In 2009, the Vice President of Instruction implemented Pedagogy Projects across all schools to focus on some of the areas that students responded were lacking in their relationship with the college. The 2010 CCSSE results showed an increase in four of the five benchmarks. These results confirmed the successful impact of the Pedagogy Projects on student engagement. Each year, the Dean of Instruction for Curriculum and Assessment publishes a report, which summarizes all assessment activities and results. This report is shared with the Board of Trustees and all members of the college community.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The **Community College of Baltimore County** exhibits real strength in developing learning outcomes, using a mix of assessment methods, and applying sampling techniques to evaluate teaching and learning at the institutional level. However, the college's review process needs to be strengthened at the departmental level, and the college should move away from the use of simple mean scores in reviewing complex courses.

CCBC has done an outstanding job of developing learning outcomes that establish clear expectations for student behaviors. The mixed-method assessment process ensures that student achievement is evaluated from several perspectives across the curriculum.

CCBC's sampling technique is a good way to evaluate learning from an institutional perspective. However, it is less effective at helping individual faculty evaluate their own courses, and at providing feedback to students. The college should consider strategies for supplementing the sampling technique with processes that address these options, such as training all faculty to apply assessment techniques in their courses, or assessing the introductory course in each discipline, or assessing all courses in one discipline on a rotation basis.

Assessment results for courses are limited in the report to a presentation of overall means. There is no context in the report for evaluating performance against a standard. Is a 3 a good score, or a poor one? Does the college intend for all courses to achieve a certain minimum level? Or does it intend for a certain proportion of courses to reach a given level? These objectives should be clarified.

In addition, the use of overall means fails to provide a basis for evaluating individual components of courses. For example, the course rubric in Appendix C indicates that student work in this course is assessed on six different criteria. An overall mean score of 3 might be achieved by consistent 3 scores on each criterion, or by scores of 4 on each of four criteria and 1 on each of two criteria. The intervention plan that faculty might develop in the first case would certainly differ from that developed in the second case. The college should ensure that faculty are using these criterion-level results when deciding how to modify teaching practices.

Frederick Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Frederick Community College (FCC) rigorously assesses Middle States General Education Competencies (Standard (St) 12) using a three-year Outcomes Assessment Cycle. FCC targets high-enrollment general education courses which require students to demonstrate core competencies. Rubrics, practical assessments, and outcomes-linked exams are used to assess student performance and ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed throughout their academic career. In spring 2011, FCC implemented a rigorous program-level student learning outcomes assessment process as part of a new academic program review of all existing programs. Over the next five years, every academic program will assess student learning outcomes and relevant general education core competencies. Faculty will determine which General Education Competencies correlate and enhance outcomes in each program, and Program Managers will compare data and design additional course-level assessments to improve general education competency. This rigorous new Academic Program Review process will help the College modify existing general education curricula, career and transfer programs, and educational practices and ensure that the College is fulfilling its institutional mission, meeting its intuitional goals, and exceeding higher education expectations (St14).

The Frederick Community College Course-Level Outcomes Assessment Cycle

Academic departments choose a high-enrollment course to undergo a rigorous assessment for a three-year cycle. High-enrollment general education courses or courses that require general education competency are assessed. FCC completed the first three-year assessment cycle in 2009, and will complete the second cycle in spring 2012. To this date, all departments have submitted their assessment data and are on track based on the established timeline. During the first cycle faculty assessed:

- Health Education students' *Critical Thinking Competency,*
- Fundamentals of Speech students' *Critical Thinking Competency,*
- General Psychology students' *Critical Thinking Competency,*
- Computer Information Systems students' *Technological Competency*,
- English Composition students' *Written Communication and Critical Thinking Competency,*
- Pre-calculus students' *Quantitative Reasoning and Critical Thinking Competency*, and
- Introduction to Biology students' *Scientific Reasoning and Critical Thinking Competency*.

The College's 2nd Cycle (fall 2009-spring 2012) was made even more rigorous, requiring that departments assess two St 12 competencies simultaneously. During the 2nd Cycle faculty assessed:

- Introduction Nursing and Introduction Surgical Nursing students' *Quantitative Reasoning and Technological Competency,*

- Introduction to Art, Introduction to Drama, Introduction to Music, Drawing I, and Fundamentals of Music, Developmental Reading, and Survey of US History students' *Critical Thinking and Written and Oral Communication* Competency,
- Computer Information Systems students' *Critical Thinking* and *Technological Competency*.
- US History students' *Critical Thinking and Written Communication Competency.*
- Developmental Reading student's *Critical Thinking and Written Communication Competency.*
- Anatomy and Physiology students' *Scientific Reasoning and Critical Thinking Competency*, and
- Career Math students' *Quantitative Reasoning and Critical Thinking Competency*.

Frederick Community College Program Assessment

In fall 2009, faculty experimented with methods of assessing programs in a way that was concise and rigorous. During this pilot phase (2009-2010), faculty directly and indirectly assessed the Culinary Arts, Police Science, Bioprocessing, Emergency Management, Construction Management, Nuclear Medicine, and Nursing programs.

Faculty recommended that FCC implement a more comprehensive, systematic program review process in fall 2010. Over 5-years every academic program will assess the program's student learning outcomes, evaluate the program based on quantitative performance measures, conduct a rigorous self study, and host external reviewer visits. General education competencies will be mapped throughout each program, and program managers will work with other faculty to implement multiple new course-level assessments. This will lead to even more assessment projects as curricula are modified. Each year, 15 programs will rigorously assess student learning. Program managers will have the option of creating an ongoing assessment project to measure student competency each year.

Additional Assessment Activities

Since 2009 FCC faculty have worked on additional assessment projects outside of the three year cycle. The Assessment and Research Department (A&R) enhanced resources available for all faculty and launched ongoing learning assessment in all Chemistry 101 (*Scientific Reasoning)*, all Developmental Math (*Quantitative Reasoning*), and all Developmental Writing (*Written and Oral Communication Competency)*. A&R created and piloted a unique assessment toolkit for measuring Cultural Competence. In addition, qualitative data from faculty's Annual Self-Assessment Reports were collected to capture how full-time faculty use embedded assessment techniques in the classroom. A&R collected hundreds of rubrics for a newly designed intranet site, enhanced its bi-semester newsletter, and coordinated a new Annual Assessment Showcase to share annual assessment results with faculty, students, administrators, and support staff. In fall 2009 A&R developed a customized new online assessment webportal to easily and accurately capture any type of assessment data. The webportal has dramatically improved collection of large-scale quantitative data for assessment of general education competencies.

Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional effectiveness (St7) is measured in many different areas at FCC. The College conducted an internal evaluation of how each academic and support area helps the College fulfill its mission, goals, and accreditation standards in preparation for the Periodic Review Report (PRR) due in June 2011. The College has conducted several assessment projects for the student support services in assessing and improving institutional effectiveness. So far the Tutoring Center (2010, *various competencies*), Writing Center (2010, *College-level Communication*), Student Engagement – (2010, *Co-Curricular events' impact on Critical Thinking*), Library Services (2010, *Critical thinking/research competency*), Multicultural Student Services (Written and Oral Communication) have all assessed student learning in various competencies as well as have collected indirect survey based data to improve institutional effectiveness. Currently, the College is developing an Institutional Effectiveness Plan with emphasis on assessment of student learning for the student support services.

Institutional Assessment Leadership at Frederick Community College

The College has a clearly defined leadership structure designed to maximize faculty's support. The Assessment Coordinator assists with outcomes assessment projects, meets with faculty, processes data, and authors concise analysis reports. The Executive Director of Assessment and Research, AVP of Arts and Sciences, and the Vice President of Learning provide departmental guidance and oversight of assessment projects. The Outcomes Assessment Council (consisting of ten full-time faculty, A&R, AVP of Arts and Sciences, and AVP of Teaching and Learning meet monthly to discuss project status and results. The new Program Review Support Team (consisting of all A&R specialists and AVP of Arts) supports individual program managers.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Frederick Community College has made many commendable improvements to its learning assessment processes since the last report. These improvements include the addition of outcomes assessment at the program level, efforts to assess the same competencies from departments across the institution, and the development of a web portal and campus events designed to foster the collection of data and the sharing of results across the institution.

Frederick's emphasis on cycles is helpful in and of itself, because it appears to have provided indicators used by faculty and administrators at the department, program, and institution levels. The process supplies several useful examples of how faculty at other institutions can adapt processes, build on findings, and focus on particular areas needing attention. The framework for collecting and sharing results is also helpful in this regard.

The report provides clear evidence of how results lead to changes, along with evidence of how initial strategies were adapted based on second-round results. For example, in English 101, assessment results showed that changes to critical reading pedagogy were more successful when combined with a "linking" strategy, and so this practice was applied to all courses. Moreover, FCC provided similar evidence from departments across the college. This indicates that assessment activities are well grounded throughout the institution.

Garrett College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The adoption in April 2009 of new institutional goals that derive from the institution's mission and that are measurable established a coherent framework which serves as the basis for Garrett College's institutional assessment process.   These Goals address six main areas of institutional performance: accessibility; student satisfaction and success; educational effectiveness; effective use of financial, human, and physical resources; workforce development; and community service. In addition, changes made to many of the College's structures and processes, most notably its resource allocation and budgeting processes, coupled with the adoption of a much more comprehensive strategic plan, have created an organization and an environment within which data are used effectively to inform decision-making, drive improvements, and bring about institutional renewal.

The data collected as part of the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Institutional Performance Accountability System and for reporting to the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) provide the foundation for the College's assessment data needs. The long-term use of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) tests for communication, mathematics, and critical thinking; the more recent (since 2006) biennial administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE); and instructor-designed assessments used at the individual course level are currently the primary tools used for assessing the achievement of student learning outcomes. Data from these assessments will be supplemented by results obtained from the College's soon to be implemented assessment of student learning outcomes at the program-level. Recent improvements to the College's management information system have enabled wider and easier access to data and have also significantly increased the range of available data, much of it in real-time.

Garrett College first began to develop a plan for assessing student learning outcomes in fall 1997. Between fall 1997 and fall 1998, the College's faculty worked as teams to establish six core learning goals for the general education program. Based on these six learning goals, the College's general education outcomes assessment plan was completed in fall 1998 and implemented in spring 1999, with the first administration of the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). The plan was modified in 2003 and 2004, ultimately resulting in eight student learning goals focusing on the following skills: (1) information literacy (2) written and oral communication (3) critical analysis and reasoning (4) scientific literacy and quantitative reasoning (5) information management skills (6) cultural and global perspective (7) personal and interpersonal skills, and (8) academic and technical proficiency in the major. These broad learning goals parallel and expand on the five competencies identified in Standard 12 of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's "*Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.*" It should be noted that the eighth learning goal having to do with proficiency in the major is not a general education goal, but rather an "institutional" goal to be assessed at the program level. These same goals also provide the framework for assessing student learning at the course and program level (where applicable).

Garrett College currently assesses student learning at the institutional (viz., general education) and the course level, with assessment at the program-level scheduled for implementation in fall 2012 (although some program-level assessments may be piloted during the 2011-12 academic year). The College relies primarily on the CAAP for assessing written and oral communication skills, critical analysis and reasoning skills, and quantitative reasoning (mathematics) skills, and the Texas Information Literacy Tutorial (TILT) to assess information literacy. The remaining learning goals are assessed at the course-level. A number of instructor-developed assessments are used to assess student learning at the course-level. These include course-embedded assessments, including written work and presentations scored using a rubric; scores on tests and competency exams accompanied by test "blueprints" describing what is being assessed; score gains between entry and exit on tests, competency exams and writing samples; ratings of student skills in the context of class activities, projects and discussions; and portfolios of student work.

The College also employs a number of other (mostly indirect) measures in order to assist in assessing learning outcomes at the various levels. Such measures include acceptance rates of students applying to programs at transfer institutions; student performance at Maryland institutions after transfer from Garrett (with data regularly collected by the Maryland Higher Education Commission); grades and passing rates in courses, e.g., GER math and communication courses; graduate satisfaction with educational goal achievement and quality of transfer preparation as measured by exit surveys administered to all graduates; employer satisfaction with career program graduates; classroom observations; student evaluations of instruction; and results from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE).

The College's Dean of Instruction is responsible for overseeing the student learning outcomes assessment program with assistance from the Office of Institutional Planning and Research.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

For several years **Garrett College** has placed the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) at the core of its assessment process. Garrett's report contains CAAP results from a twelve-year period, providing unusually robust long-term data about teaching and learning at the institution. However, the College provides no evidence that the indirect assessment of the CAAP is complemented by direct course-based assessment, which is a significant limitation of the report.

Standardized examinations can often have a key role in an assessment process, especially when combined with direct results from course-embedded assignments. Garrett states that course-embedded assignments are included in the process, but the college does not provide examples or descriptions of these assignments, results or conclusions from these assignments, or accounts of how these assignments led to changes in teaching and learning. Greater specificity about these assignments will provide better information about how assessment is currently used on campus and how it can be applied in the future. Similarly, in Part 4 of its report, the college declares that assessment results have "inform[ed] planning, decision-making, and resource allocation, and [driven] institutional improvement, including teaching and learning." In future reports, the college should demonstrate this influence rather than simply asserting it.

The report also fails to provide a context for CAAP results. It is not clear whether a score of 60% is good or bad, or whether it meets or exceeds any institutional targets or norms. Garrett should provide a context for its results in future reports, including a description of the goals it sets for students (for example, whether all students are expected to earn a minimum number of certificates of mastery).

Finally, Garrett should revise some of its broader and less concrete learning outcomes to include more detailed and specific student behaviors. Specificity makes it easier to assess these behaviors, to establish commonalities across courses and programs, and communicate them effectively to students, faculty, and the campus community.

Hagerstown Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Outcomes assessment of student learning provides feedback to faculty members and professional staff for the purpose of improving academic programs, teaching and learning. The involvement and leadership of faculty as the content specialists is essential as they bring relevant experience, useful interventions and strategies for change, and expertise to the outcomes assessment process. It is through the analysis of student learning that Hagerstown Community College (HCC) improves learning in a systematic and effective manner. Assessment has fostered communication between full-time and adjunct faculty to help create uniformity across course sections. Student learning outcomes assessment is a primary component of the institutional effectiveness model at HCC and, as a result, faculty and staff have become more familiar with the importance of data analysis, accountability and quality assurance. Assessment, curriculum development and review, and planning are interrelated processes that foster accountability at all levels.

Written in 2004, the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan includes strategies for assessing all courses and programs, as well as procedures and timelines that encompass eight academic years from 2004 to 2012. It also includes methods and tasks for the assessment of general education. The initial emphasis of the plan was at the course level. Major impact courses in each academic division were selected by faculty to be assessed in the first cycle. Assessment priorities are now focused at the program, as well as continuing at the course level.

The SLOA cycle at HCC is a continuous cycle of plan, do, assess, and adjust - developing outcomes, assessing the outcomes and using the data obtained to improve student learning. Faculty in every academic division developed student learning outcomes for courses and programs. Working in teams, they determined and sought external validation for assessment instruments and methods to measure achievement of outcomes. In addition, academic divisions incorporate follow-up information on transfer and career program graduates into assessment reports and unit planning.

Continuous data-driven assessment occurs in both academic and non-academic units and provides for formative review of established targets, as well as an overall institutional effectiveness. Assessment activities and key performance indicators align with the Middle States accreditation standards. Specifically, Standard 7 addresses institutional assessment, Standard 12 covers general education and Standard 14 addresses student learning outcomes assessment.

The College's vision, mission, strategic goals, and annual institutional priorities serve as the foundation of HCC's integrated planning, assessment / evaluation and budgeting system. Through its planning process, the College ensures efficient utilization of institutional resources and receives significant feedback related to planning, assessment and resource allocation activities. The achievement of strategic goals commences with unit planning meetings, which involve each area of the College. As each unit addresses strategic goals and action plans delineated in the 2012 strategic plan, the unit planning system improves effectiveness, efficiency, the teaching and learning process, enhances communication, contains costs, and redirects resources to support mission-based priorities that have strategic importance.

The SLOA Leadership Team is comprised of five faculty members. The five faculty members of the team receive alternative faculty assignments (either teaching overload or a course release) each semester for their work. A major responsibility of the team is to serve as a

resource to faculty for outcomes assessment projects. The team supports, monitors, and directs the academic divisions' progress toward assessment goals. The team reports directly to and meets monthly with the Vice President of Academic Affairs. They also report monthly to faculty in two formats, division meetings and faculty assembly, which provides an opportunity for faculty to express their ideas and concerns. This provides assurance that each academic division is considered in the process. Student learning outcomes assessment processes are reviewed at many levels of the College – by the faculty, by the academic chairs and directors, by the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, and by the College President and Board of Trustees. SLOA is also a unit planning component for the Vice President and the entire division of Academic Affairs. Finally, an annual progress report is presented to the President and Board of Trustees. During each of these stages, the processes are evaluated and modified to align with the needs of the College.

HCC uses ten key institutional performance indicators (KPI) that are integrated into the College's strategic plan and its action plans. The documentation of the use of evaluation results closes the loop in the College's assessment and evaluation processes for academic and non-academic units of the College. Over 480 data measures that broadly demonstrate how well the College operates as an organization were developed to measure the ten KPI. The data measures are the foundation for institutional renewal, which is defined as the improvement and/or enhancement of effective teaching and learning, and educational and administrative support services. As outcomes results become available, they are analyzed at all levels to determine how the College can best direct its attention to achieving its strategic objectives. Assessment results are reviewed, analyzed and discussed as a part of the College's unit planning process. Additionally, analyses by groups such as the SLOA leadership team, academic officers and Academic Council, faculty and executive officers may result in revisions to strategies, increased or decreased resource allocations and further new or refined assessments.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The **Hagerstown Community College** report demonstrates two key strengths: specific examples of how assessment leads to improvements, and an effective multi-pronged strategy for communicating assessment results to students and faculty across the institution. In addition, Hagerstown has also developed strong learning outcomes, although these are not reflected in their report.

One example of the College's use of assessment shows how the Practical Nursing program faculty used assessment results as a basis for adding additional experience in clinical laboratories, with technological tools, and in cardiac medications. The report also describes how these changes led to increased performance on assessments in subsequent years. Another example discusses how assessment results led the English faculty to develop greater consistency in its standards and guidelines for faculty, and to adopt a textbook better suited to the learning outcomes being taught.

The college would do well to provide similar illustrations of the effects of its systematic program reviews on program operations, as well as the influence of these reviews on planning and budgeting. These effects are stated, but are not depicted in the report.

One of the most valuable elements of Hagerstown's assessment activities is its effort to communicate assessment resources and results to faculty and students. The SLOA leadership team facilitates individual and group development activities for faculty. Many reports, newsletters, and training resources are available on the institution's assessment website. This practice helps to share assessment resources with the campus community, and also provides support for faculty at other institutions. This is a best practice that should be emulated widely.

Hagerstown may also wish to consider posting its full SLOAR report on its website, so that other institutions may benefit from reviewing the details of its practices.

The college website also contains a more complete discussion of its general education learning goals. The learning goals provided in Part 2 of this report are very general, but the detailed version of these goals as posted on the website contains a number of specific and concrete objectives. These more detailed objectives are more meaningful than the goals as described in this report.

Finally, Hagerstown is building an assessment outcomes database. While the report provides a link to the database, the database itself is password-protected. There may be excellent reasons to protect the database, especially if student-level data are included. In that case, then, it would be helpful for the College to provide some illustration, either in its SLOAR report or on its website, of what the database will contain and how it might be used by faculty.

Harford Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

A summary of Harford Community College's student learning assessment activities is highlighted in the following pages. These activities align with Middle States Standards 7, 12 and 14 and Harford Community College's Strategic Plan. In addition, the organizational structure and institutional leadership for assessment activities are included.

Academic Program Review

Review of academic programs is a significant component of an overall educational effectiveness plan. Through self-analysis and peer review, program reviews lead to program improvements that are based on sustained information gathering and collaboration. They provide recommendations for needed resources and ensure superior educational programs that meet student and community needs. Program Reviews assess how well a program has achieved its objectives and outlines potential approaches to enhance this effort. Program Reviews also address and fulfill accreditation requirements as prescribed by Middle States.

The Program Review Process sustains Harford Community College's (HCC) Strategic Themes:
   I.   Exemplifies educational excellence and effectiveness;
   II. Provides comprehensive support to advance students' success;
   III. Embraces a diverse culture of learning;
   IV. Engages and collaborates with education, business, government, and community;
   V.   Develops resources and infrastructure to support its mission and vision;
   VI. Advances an understanding of its programs and opportunities.

Program Reviews also contain Assessment of Student Learning as recommended by Middle States' *Characteristics of Excellence, Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning*, including:
   1. Summary of core course and program-level assessment activities since last program review.
   2. Summary of how the program meets the College's Eight Academic Outcomes.
   3. Summary of Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Reports including evidence of improvement.
   4. Summary and analysis of core course and program improvements as a result of assessment activities and findings since last program review; evidence of movement toward improvement as a result of these activities.
   5. Summary and analysis of Employer Survey results for Career Programs.

Assessment of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment & Improvement Plan
Harford Community College 2006-2010

The Assessment Task Force met in April 2008 to review Harford Community College's Student Learning Outcomes Assessment & Improvement Plan. The task force consisted of two faculty members, two deans and the assistant to the Vice President for Instruction. All members attended at least one Middle States Assessment Workshop. The Task Force decided early on in the assessment process to critique the plan in terms of the nine Middle States Expectations, as reported in the MSCHE document, "Assessing Student Learning and Institution Effectiveness."

Highlighted in the report are actions the Assessment Task Force recommended to address Middle States Expectations, including evidence of support, identified gaps, goals and suggested actions. The plan was discussed during several Deans' Group meetings, including a half-day retreat on assessment, and after three revisions, came to a consensus on the assessment plan in April 2009.
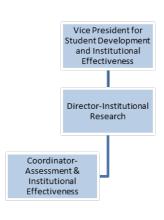
In the fall of 2010, two faculty members, a dean and the assistant to the VPI met to adjust the timeline of the Assessment of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment & Improvement Plan to include projected assessment activities for the years 2010-2012.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
Each faculty member is required to submit a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) report to their dean. The SLOA report identifies the student learning objective from the course syllabus, how it is assessed, and identifies the HCC Academic Outcomes that are supported. TracDat software was purchased in 2009 to facilitate compiling assessment activities across the institution. Annual evaluations ensure faculty are responsible for participating in the assessment process. Assessment is also a factor in the tenure and promotion process. The administration believes it is important to communicate to faculty that assessment of student learning is supported across the entire institution, and faculty should not feel exposed or singled out.

Organizational Structure and Institutional Leadership for Assessment Activities at HCC

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Assessment activity at **Harford Community College** is occurring throughout the institution. The college's report contains multiple examples of assessment results and processes from every division of the college. For instance, for the Oral and Written Communication outcome, examples were provided from six different academic divisions. But the quality and scope of assessment activity varies considerably from department to department.

One high-quality example comes from the Nursing & Allied Health Professions division. The report shows how faculty analysis of assessment results identified specific areas of content and skill education needing attention, as well as how pedagogical changes were made and how these changes led to improved results.

However, not every example met all of these criteria, and many examples manifested significant limitations. In some cases, faculty could not even begin assessment because they could not agree on shared outcomes. In other cases, no student outcomes data were assessed, and assessment was limited to faculty review of course materials and goals. While outcomes identification and syllabus review are essential preliminary steps in an assessment process, institutions must move quickly beyond this phase in order to engage in substantial outcomes assessment. In a few cases, the link between assessment results and pedagogical change is not articulated; assessment occurs and then change happens but it is not clear how the assessment led to the change. In some cases, results lead to recommendations for change, but there is no indication that the change has been made. In at least one case, the sample assignment appeared to have no relation to the general education outcome. Harford should work to ensure that all assessment activities assess student mastery of learning objectives, and also demonstrate that assessment results lead to changes in teaching and learning.

Howard Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Since it opened its doors in 1970, Howard Community College (HCC) has been committed to continuous improvement through data-influenced decision making. Guided by three strategic goals, seven general education competencies, and well-developed program and course objectives, assessment at HCC is not only valued and well-supported, but is embedded, systematic, and sustainable.

Learning outcomes assessment (LOA) at HCC is truly an institution-wide endeavor with leadership, guidance, and support from its board of trustees, president, vice presidents, planning, research, and organizational development (PROD) team, division chairs, faculty, staff, and students. The PROD team, which reports to the vice president of information technology, works with all the VPs and facilitates the design, implementation, analysis, and reporting across the campus and consists of an executive director of PROD, an associate director of PROD, an associate director of institutional research (IR), four research associates (two dedicated to faculty-led assessment projects), a research analyst (also supporting faculty-led projects), a research specialist, and one part-time staff member (see Appendix A). The size of the staff, alone, reflects the commitment and support of the institution to quality research and assessment.

Assessment occurs at every level of the college (course, program, division, and institution) and is tied to HCC's strategic initiatives (see Appendix B), general education competencies, and program and course objectives. Every full-time faculty member on campus is engaged in assessment each year, be it a one-year course-level teaching improvement project (TIP), or a more formal three-year LOA project. The vice president of academic affairs and her staff have created a five-year assessment plan and every year each division, assisted by PROD, begins two new course-level or one program/division-level formal LOA project(s). On average, 30 projects are underway each year on a three-year cycle. In addition to incorporating existing direct and indirect measures, for every project an attempt is made to find and use valid and reliable national or published measures, providing an opportunity for comparison and benchmarking. Approximately, one-third of the current projects use some form of external measure (i.e., survey, rubric, expert panel) or are benchmarked against the performance of other institutions and/or national norms. The remaining projects have developed locally-relevant instruments to measure institution-specific outcomes and variables. Assessment results from TIPs and formal LOA projects are used to evaluate and improve courses and programs, to inspire excellence in teaching, and to foster student success.

At the institution level, a variety of national and locally-developed measures are used to measure not only student progress on objectives and learning, but also student engagement and satisfaction. To evaluate its credit courses and student progress on relevant objectives, HCC uses the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) survey, developed and scored by the Kansas State University (KSU). The IDEA survey is administered in all courses taught by new and probationary faculty (full- and part-time) and approximately 50% of the continuing faculty each semester. Results are reported in three levels: institutional, divisional, and individual

course levels. Overall results are reviewed by the vice president for academic affairs who reviews these results with the division chairs. Division chairs in turn share division and course data with their faculty. Results are discussed and used to identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. IDEA results can be the basis for a new assessment project, for curricular revision, or for a teaching improvement or faculty promotion project. IDEA results inform discussion, decision making, and practice.

To measure its "value-added" at the institution level, HCC administers the Council for the Aid to Education's (CAE) Community College Learning Assessment (CCLA) bi-annually. Summary data is included in the "Critical Analysis and Reasoning" section. Using reports from FY2008 and FY2010, senior leadership has begun to monitor trends in student progress in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. These institution-level data have prompted further evaluation at other levels to foster improvement.

Engagement at HCC, and other Maryland community college campuses, is evaluated using the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Students at the college have participated in the CCSSE bi-annually since 2006. When asked to evaluate their "…*entire educational experience at this college*", 40.4% of students rated it as "Excellent", ranking second in the state. The CCSSE provides an opportunity to measure a college's results against all other colleges in the nation who have participated in the survey (658 community colleges in 2010), all medium community colleges participating (163), and all 16 Maryland community colleges. The items on the survey are aggregated into five major indicators of institutional effectiveness: Active and Collaborative Learning, Student Effort, Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction, and Support for Learners. On each of these measures, HCC has consistently scored at or above the benchmark with scores higher than the average benchmark scores of all community colleges, medium community colleges, and Maryland community colleges.

HCC has administered the Yearly Evaluation of Services by Students (YESS) survey annually since 1991 providing students the opportunity to rate their satisfaction with college services, instruction, and other aspects of campus environment and campus life. Each spring, students in randomly selected class sections are asked to participate in the survey. Faculty members administer the survey in class or ask students to return it at a later class session. In spring 2010, 95 sections (1,348 students) returned completed surveys, for a response rate of 55%. The results are used to recognize units that provide high quality service, to set goals for the coming year, to allocate resources, and to focus on improvement activities.

This report focuses on the evaluation of seven general education competencies, four identified by Middle States and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) as critical for student success (written and oral communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency) and three additional competencies assessed at HCC (information literacy, global awareness, and appreciation of the arts). The following sections of this report will examine each competency in turn, providing examples of the ways in which these competencies are measured at HCC, offering results from these assessments, and outlining the ways in which these results are used to improve student learning.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Learning assessment activities occur throughout the campus of **Howard Community College**. The college's assessment structure seems to ensure effective review and broad faculty involvement. However, the college should ensure that direct measures of learning are used, and that the use of long cycles between department reviews does not lead to diminished assessment activities.

There is a danger that the long review cycles can allow efforts to stall and yield little improvement. The college should maintain its efforts to ensure that assessment activities occur across the curriculum.

In several cases, student mastery is judged by the average score on an examination. Caution should be used when measuring achievement with averages, especially when the grade scale contains few points. The institution may wish to consider setting goals in which a substantial percentage of students achieve a minimum level of competency – for example, at least 80% of students earn a score of "meets expectations." Benchmarks such as these can also improve communication of expectations to students and faculty.

Much of the data reported in the report draw on broad measures (such as standardized examination results) and indirect measures (especially course grades). Although the report asserts that direct course-embedded materials are used, there are few examples that show how such assessments are used and lead to changes in teaching and learning practices. The college should provide additional examples in the future.

Montgomery College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Montgomery College's primary Student Learning Outcomes Assessment process is a faculty driven, course based approach that emphasizes authentic, course embedded assessments and college-wide participation. The College-wide Outcomes Assessment team(COAT), under the auspices of the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, oversees and guides the course assessment processes, but discipline faculty are responsible for determining which student learning outcomes (SLO's) to assess and developing assessment instruments as well as determining recommendations and action plans to use assessment data. The COAT is comprised of a faculty coordinator, a faculty committee drawn from each campus and a variety of disciplines, the Vice-President for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness and support members of her staff which include members from the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis (OIRA).

Our established assessment procedure currently requires courses with the largest enrollments, including any course that has 10 or more sections per semester, to participate in assessment at least every five years. At the current time the five year assessment schedule includes 81 courses from 28 different disciplines. In the average semester, these 81 courses comprise approximately 60% of all course enrollments (62.4% in Fall 2010 and 59.9% in Spring 2011). Additionally, we invite courses to repeat assessments more frequently or to volunteer to participate in the assessment cycle if they are not currently required.

Currently, the typical assessment cycle takes place over a two year time frame including a planning semester, a pilot semester, an implementation semester and a recommendations semester. This cycle allows for participation and conversations across the three campuses and the entire discipline. Discipline workgroups are charged with working collaboratively with the discipline, and all faculty teaching the course including part-time faculty, with determining what to assess, how to assess it and how to utilize the assessment data. In the Fall of 2011, we are eliminating the planning semester and thus shortening the assessment process to 3 semesters.

Courses typically complete a direct assessment of student performance on three SLO's and sometimes include indirect assessment of other important issues relating to student performance in the course. General Education courses which are part of the required assessment cycle are required to assess their two primary general education competencies, selected by the discipline, as part of their SLO assessment. During the implementation semester, all sections of a course are expected to participate using the common assessment and scoring instrument. If a course does not have a threshold of 85% sections participating, the course will repeat the implementation semester. Once the assessment is complete, the discipline develops specific, action oriented recommendations based on the student performance data submitted by the discipline.

The COAT provides support and guidance throughout this process by helping the discipline develop assessment plans and instruments, providing specific feedback on the assessment plans

submitted by the disciplines, and providing feedback and guidance during the recommendation process. The OIRA group compiles the data and provides some analysis of the student performance including comparisons of student performance and final grades, enrollment patterns and other standard data points. OIRA also provides expertise and guidance on interpretation of data. Assessment plans and recommendations are approved by the discipline lead dean; lead Vice-President/ Provost and the Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Services.

Under the guidance of the Middle States standards 7, 12 and 14, we are currently working with the General Education committee to expand our assessment process to include all courses with General Education designation. The General Education assessment expansion is under development and will be incorporated into the General Education course review process. In this assessment process, courses which do not fall into the current required course assessment cycle will be expected to complete course embedded assessments of their selected primary competencies using college-wide rubrics. Student performance data based on this assessment will be incorporated into the General Education course review process and will be compiled and reported based on each competency on a five year cycle.

Currently, the specifics of the General Education assessment and review process are being finalized. After the College revised it General Education program 2 years ago, all courses were asked to reapply for General Education status and indicate which two competencies (or one competency and one area of proficiency) the course primarily incorporates. An analysis of the results of the General Education reapplication process indicated that three of the competencies, Critical Analysis and Reasoning, Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning ,and Effective Communication were over represented, and two, Information Literacy and Technological competency, were underrepresented in the program. As a result, the COAT and the General Education Committee are working together to collect a more accurate picture of the extent to which each General Education course addresses each competency. This information will be used to develop an assessment and review cycle that will allow the College to assess students' performance on all the competencies.

Ultimately all General Education courses, regardless of enrollment, will be required to design and implement an assessment instrument to assess the General Education competencies in their course. College-wide rubrics have been developed for Written and Oral Communication as well as Critical Analysis and Reasoning. All courses will be using the same rubrics (and thus the same categories and scoring guidelines) so that we can compare students across the College in a variety of courses using the same rubrics. In the Fall of 2011, 8 courses from a variety of disciplines will be piloting the rubrics and process.

In addition to course based outcomes assessment, we are implementing procedures for program outcomes assessment. Outcomes for all programs are available in the College catalog. Over the past year, each degree, certificate, and letter of recognition was asked to match their outcomes to the required courses in the program. We are using our College Area Review process to create a venue for the development of programmatic outcomes assessment.

College Area Review is a comprehensive self-evaluative process of all academic areas and administrative units. The overarching goal of CAR is to provide critical college-wide information for strategic planning, assist in establishing priorities for resource allocation, and

measure overall institutional effectiveness. The process involves all College stakeholders; administrators, vice presidents, unit managers, unit directors, deans, faculty, staff and students. In addition, an online survey is administered to selected students to solicit their input regarding their course work. As our budget allows, we have also solicited input from external peer reviewers in particular disciplines. CAR operates on a five year cycle, reviewing on average fifteen academic units per academic year and three administrative units per calendar year.

In the next College Area Review cycle, each program that offers a degree will develop a plan for program assessment that best fits its program. In the year subsequent to the College Area Review, the College-wide Outcomes Assessment Team will coordinate with the program to implement the program assessment that has been developed.

The information obtained through assessment activities is shared college-wide with faculty workgroups, deans, chairs, Vice- Presidents/Provosts. We continue to examine ways to engage and inform the College community about institutional effectiveness and assessment activities.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Montgomery College has many strengths in learning assessment: a well-developed assessment process that ensures participation and review by a broad range of faculty and administrators, experience with assessing high-enrollment courses, and strong rubrics that can be used in multiple disciplines. The College should extend these strengths to ensure that assessment is robust and effective at all levels of the institution.

The college's decision to apply its process for assessing high-enrollment courses to general education and program-level assessment is a good one, and the college's experience with high-enrollment courses should allow it to expand quickly into assessing these other areas of the curriculum.

The appendix contains fine examples of rubrics for evaluating student work that can be applied in several disciplines. Similar rubrics should be developed for the other two competencies, Technological Competency and Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, to ensure that consistent expectations exist in those areas.

While it is appropriate for the rubric on written communication to examine student work in the light of "discipline and assignment expectations," it is essential that these additional expectations be clearly communicated to students and faculty alike in each discipline. Explicit guidelines for these expectations should be developed, if they have not already been developed, and examples should be provided in future reports.

The college has provided surprisingly few examples of assessment activity since the 2007 report. While it is likely that the college's reconsideration of general education standards has reduced assessment activities somewhat, the college must ensure that assessment is a regular and ongoing activity across the campus.

Prince George's Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

2007-2010
From 2007-2010 Prince George's Community College's (PGCC) assessment of student learning outcomes focused primarily on course outcomes and general education learning outcomes. The course assessment process consisted of three phases: planning, implementation, and analysis of results. Although the analysis of results phase was the only one that provided quantitative data regarding student performance on course outcomes, many qualitative results were gathered in the planning phase, and ultimately affected student learning. For instance, the committee overseeing course assessment at PGCC, the Academic Outcomes Assessment Committee (AOAC), required that all courses demonstrate how competency in "critical analysis and reasoning" would be measured through course activities and assignments. Thus, the faculty revised course outcomes to ensure that critical analysis and reasoning were embedded in the course outcomes. Also during this time PGCC conducted regular measurement of general education learning outcomes (*also called core or institutional outcomes*) using the Education Testing Service's Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). The MAPP was used as a post test to assess select general education proficiencies of students completing degrees and/or certificates. It was also used as a pre-test to determine potential gains by comparing incoming students' MAPP performance to that of graduating students' MAPP performance. During the 2009-2010 academic year, in-depth examination of the MAPP content was performed, suggesting the MAPP was not adequately measuring the general education outcomes as they were defined by PGCC. Concurrently, in 2009-2010 all credit courses were mapped to the college's general education outcomes. This mapping process followed a revision of those outcomes in 2008 - 2009 and was done to assess whether students were provided sufficient opportunities to meet the outcomes as stated. In April 2009, the Academic Council, the governing arm of Academic Affairs, established the Academic Affairs Assessment Committee to provide global academic assessment.

2010-2011
After reviewing the content of the MAPP test more carefully, a subcommittee of the Academic Council (the academic governance body) determined that the reported MAPP outcomes were not well aligned with the general education or core learning outcomes at PGCC. Also, examination of the Program Review process demonstrated that a closer connection between program and course outcomes was needed to obtain direct measurement of program outcomes. (It should be noted, however, that when programs conclude with a requisite licensure or credentialing exam, results of those examination processes were being used for direct assessment of program outcomes.) In the Fall of 2010, the newly hired Academic Affairs Assessment Coordinator began working with the Academic Affairs Assessment Committee and the Academic Council to identify an assessment model that would bring the three tiers of outcome measurement (course, program, and general education/core/institutional) into alignment. Throughout the 2010-2011 academic year a complete curriculum mapping process was engaged in across campus with all faculty involved with the goal of ensuring a tight alignment between course outcomes, program outcomes, and core learning outcomes (PGCC's institution-wide learning outcomes). This year-long process has brought about numerous modifications to course and program outcomes. It is

expected that bringing these three tiers of learning outcomes into better alignment across all academic programs will actually assist students as they progress through coursework. The newly embodied assessment practices and the impact they have had on the campus are more fully explained in "Section 3" below under the "evolution" of the assessment system at PGCC.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Prince George's Community College has clearly defined general education objectives, and has experience in conducting direct assessment of learning. Its efforts to revise its earlier assessment processes demonstrate a strong institutional commitment to learning from assessment results. The college should make better use of examples to demonstrate how its assessment activities reach across the institution.

The college's report contains a number of effective examples of course-level assessments and of how those assessments led to curricular change. The report would have been even stronger if it had also presented results of assessments on the changes themselves, with data that would demonstrate whether the changes led to the desired improvements in student learning.

The report also provides examples of assessment activities from a number of departments. While the scope of this report may prevent the college from providing data from every department, it will be important for the college to be able to demonstrate to other audiences that similar assessment efforts occur in all programs at the college.

The college should be well positioned to address these needs as its new assessment process is implemented. PGCC is commended for recognizing the achievements and limitations of its previous assessment process, and for taking steps to address the limitations, especially for ensuring a process for faculty across the institution to discuss and interpret assessment results at the institutional level. Its new process holds a great deal of promise for ensuring that assessment will lead to improvements in teaching and learning.

Wor-Wic Community College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Summary of Significant Institution Assessment Activities since 2007 SLOAR Report

Fiscal Year 2009
1. The academic program and administrative department assessment process was revised based on a modified version of the Nichols' model to better streamline assessment processes and the reporting requirements for annual program reviews. The Nichols' model, created by James O. Nichols (1995), is recognized for its columnar format which aligns learning and institution goals with assessment criteria and procedures, the results of the assessment measures, and use of assessment results to improve learning and institution effectiveness.

2. The institution assessment committee developed and approved rubrics to assess the annual program reviews, provided feedback to department heads and directors on their assessment efforts, and identified any steps of the assessment processes where the college needs overall improvement. (Areas that are identified as needing improvement are addressed by the director of assessment through professional development workshops and meeting with individual department heads, directors, and course coordinators.)

3. The institution assessment committee developed a coordinated timeline to better demonstrate the integration of assessment with strategic planning and budgeting processes.

Fiscal Year 2010
1. The board of trustees approved the purchase of a subscription to TracDat, an online assessment management system to further streamline the assessment process, better integrate the information with strategic planning and budgeting processes, and improve the storage and retrieval of historical and current assessment data. In addition, this tool will assist in the reporting requirements for accreditation purposes.

2. "Brown-bag" lunch sessions were added to the professional development offerings for faculty and staff to informally share their experiences with best practices in assessment on such topics as measuring non-academic outcomes, measuring affective outcomes, and using assessment results to improve learning.

3. The institution assessment committee completed its first assessment of assessment based on the rubrics created the prior year. The results of this assessment demonstrated that 70 percent of the criteria on the rubrics were achieved by 70 percent or more of the academic programs and administrative departments which met the benchmark set by the committee.

Fiscal Year 2011
1. The TracDat assessment management system (AMS) was fully implemented for the first time. All assessment processes were transferred to TracDat including identifying program goals/course

objectives, listing means of assessment and benchmarks, analyzing results and uploading supporting data, creating action plans for improvement, and describing progress on action plans.

2. The General Education Assessment Committee began revision of general education objectives and identifying sub-skills. This is a four year project to propose revisions to two objectives per year. Sub-skills will help to further clarify expected student outcomes related to the general education objective.

3. Three assessment professional development workshops were held for faculty and staff. One workshop focused on defining and measuring critical thinking skills as well as suggestions for helping students learn these skills. A second workshop focused on developing quality multiple choice tests, forming questions to measure higher order thinking skills, and how to use results for improvement. A third workshop examined the institution's recent Community College Survey of Student Engagement results and how faculty and staff can utilize that information for improvement.

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment at Wor-Wic is conducted every year as part of the annual program review process. In addition, every five years, the programs conduct a more comprehensive review of their respective majors, which involves greater emphasis on trend data, a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threat analysis, an environmental scan, and review of resources. The guidelines for completing the annual and five-year comprehensive reviews were updated during fiscal year 2009 by the assessment committee with input from the various divisions at the college through their committee representatives. The tracking and recording of the various components of the assessment process is completed through the commercial assessment management system, TracDat.

At the institution level, assessment of the general education program is coordinated by the Director of Assessment. At the program and course levels, assessment of academic programs and courses is conducted by the program department head and course coordinators. The process is the same for all three levels, each with their own unique set of learning goals, means of assessment (to measure student achievement of the learning goals), and benchmarks (i.e. established criteria for success). At the end of each fiscal year, the results from the means of assessment are analyzed and any means of assessment which did not meet its benchmark requires an action plan for improvement. Course-level assessment results and action plans are submitted to the department head for review, and approval and both course- and program-level assessment results and action plans are submitted to the divisional dean for their review and approval. Once the deans have approved the content of the reports, the reports are submitted to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs (VPASA) and the Director of Assessment. The Director of Assessment then conducts a review of the assessment reports and provides formal feedback to department heads for reporting criteria which are successful and also those which need improvement (i.e. assessing assessment). This process is cyclical and renews every fiscal year.

Institution Activities Aligning with Middle States Standards 7, 12, and 14

According to the Middle State's Characteristics of Excellence (2009), there are four steps in the planning-assessment cycle: (1) developing clearly articulated goals; (2) designing strategies to achieve those goals; (3) assessing achievement of those key goals; and (4) using the results of those assessments to improve learning, programs and services (p. 63). Wor-Wic Community College is in compliance with all phases of the planning-assessment cycle as (1) there are established and clearly articulated learning goals at all three levels of the college: institution, program, and course; (2) learning strategies are in place to achieve those goals, are identified on every course syllabus, and all course objectives are linked to institution level general education objectives; (3) assessment occurs at all three levels of the college for learning goals; and finally (4) results are analyzed every year to determine if benchmarks were met and action plans for improvement are created as warranted. In addition, under Standard 12 of The Characteristics of Excellence, Middle States identifies specific student learning outcomes for all of its member institutions, including: written communication, speech communication, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, information literacy, technological competence, and critical analysis and reasoning (p. 49). The eight general education objectives of WWCC encompass all of the Middle States' learning outcomes. Therefore, the learning assessment process at Wor-Wic is in alignment with the requirements of Middle States for Standards 7-Institutional Assessment, 12-General Education, and 14-Assessment of Student Learning.

Assessment Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of student learning assessment at all three levels of the College (institution, program, and course) is as follows:

Level	Institution	Program	Course
Responsible Person(s)	VPASA Director of Assessment Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee	VPASA Division Dean Department Head Program Faculty	VPASA Division Dean Department Head Course Coordinator Course Faculty
Learning Goals	General Education Objectives	Program Learning Goals	Course Objectives

Means of Assessment (MOA)	Collegiate Assessment of Academic
	    Proficiency (CAAP)
	Modules
	Course Embedded
		Course Embedded
		CAAP Results distributed by
		    major
			Final Exam Analysis
			Course Embedded

Benchmarks	CAAP Module=College Mean >
	    CAAP National Mean
	Course Embedded=Varies based on
	    MOA
		Course Embedded=Varies based
		    on MOA
		CAAP majors' mean >= either the WWCC mean or national mean for 2 year institutions
			Final Exam Analysis=70%
			    pass rate by course
			    objective
			Course Embedded= Varies
			    based on MOA

Institution Leadership for Assessment Activities

The responsibility for the leadership for assessment activities lies with the office of the Director of Assessment under the direction of the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (VPASA). This position reports directly to the VPASA. The duties of the Director of Assessment include: (1) oversight of the assessment process for the institution, (2) supporting faculty and staff with the various phases of the assessment process such as developing learning goals, means of assessment, data collection and analysis, and use of results for improvement, (3) chairing both the assessment committee and the general education assessment committee, and (4) coordinating accreditation activities.

The first of the two committees is the assessment committee, which supports the development and implementation of outcomes assessment techniques and processes that lead to institution effectiveness. This committee is comprised of four faculty representatives (two each from the occupational and the general education divisions); five administrative staff representatives (one each from student services, administrative services, continuing education and workforce development, the director of institutional research and planning [who is also a member of the institutional affairs division], and the director of the media center); the director of assessment (chair); and the vice president for academic and student affairs (ex-officio). The committee meets monthly from September to June.

The general education assessment committee is charged with implementing the general education assessment process and making recommendations for improvement based on assessment results, new testing development, and technological advancements. This committee consists of eight faculty members, four each from the two academic divisions. The committee meets two times per semester and also has the primary responsibility for administering the institution's standardized general education assessment, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). In addition to administering the CAAP exam, this committee also recommends policy changes, investigates different methods for assessing the institution's eight general education objectives, and annually analyzes results from the CAAP to determine if improvement action plans are warranted.

At the program and course levels, faculty also assume responsibility for leading assessment. All academic programs are lead by a department head who is responsible for annually reporting on results for program level goals and coordinating with department faculty to discuss results and formulate action plans for improvement. At the course level, all courses have a coordinator or co-coordinators who are responsible for annually reporting assessment results on course objectives. Course coordinators confer with faculty who teach the course to discuss results and create any action plans for improvement.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

There are many commendable aspects of the assessment processes underway at **Wor-Wic Community College**. Learning outcomes are in place at the institution, program, and course levels. Direct and indirect assessment methods are used in tandem to evaluate student learning. A carefully designed structure allows faculty to work across units to identify areas for improvement with the support of administrators and staff. The institution sets performance benchmarks and regularly compares progress against these benchmarks. In addition, the college increased its standards in 2008-2009, committing itself to higher expectations for itself and for its students. This revision of objectives is dramatic evidence of the institution's focus on improvement.

The college reports the development of a new process designed to ensure that resource allocations are connected to assessment results and a focus on improving learning. MHEC looks forward to future reports that contain examples of how this process works to affect resource allocation and further improvements.

Section V. Executive Summaries and Commission Evaluations:
Four-Year Colleges and Universities

This section presents the executive summary for each institutional report, exactly as submitted to MHEC by the institution. Each executive summary is followed by the MHEC review of the institution's full report.

Full institutional reports appear in Volume 2 of this report, which is available on the MHEC website.

Bowie State University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Since the 2007 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report, a number of changes in assessment practices have occurred. These changes, within and outside of the University, have resulted in an increasing awareness across the entire campus community of the importance not only of evaluating the quality of the student educational experiences, but also of assessing student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of student support services. The University's transformation in this regard was driven by its mission, vision, and strategic plan.

Bowie State University's strategic plan serves as a road map to advance the University's mission of providing an excellent education for all students. Through its undergraduate and graduate programs, the University is focused primarily on enhancing the quality and value of its offerings to students, alumni, and the community. In addition, the University's Core Values of excellence, civility, integrity, diversity, and accountability provide the foundation for decision making and for building a better University.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, the University has several supporting documents that form Bowie's assessment framework. These include the Academic Plan, the Enrollment Management Plan, and the Closing the Achievement Gap Plan. These plans provide the structure for linking Middle States Characteristics of Excellence standards 7, 12 and 14. In addition, external reports including specialized accrediting agency reviews and the USM academic program review cycle are integral components of assessment.

Presently there are two structures addressing assessment of student learning: academic program assessment and general education assessment. Prior to 2009, there was an informal process of programmatic assessment residing in each department. In fall 2009, BSU established a University Student Learning and Assessment Committee (USLAC), which received approval as a standing committee of the Faculty Senate. USLAC supports academic departments in the development and revision of program learning goals, assessment plans, assessment reports, and proposed use of results to improve programs. Based on the review and evaluation of assessment plans and reports, USLAC makes recommendations to the Director of Assessment, who prepares final annual assessment reports in consultation with the deans and the Provost. Going forward, USLAC will continue to provide permanent, faculty-level support for the assessment of student learning.

An essential component of the structure is the linkage with the General Education Review and Advisory Board (GERAB). The Chair of GERAB serves on USLAC and works in close coordination with the USLAC, the Director of Assessment, and the departments to ensure that effective measures and an appropriate assessment schedule are in place.

GERAB is an ad hoc committee of the Faculty Senate. In 2007-2008, GERAB proposed significant revisions to the general education student competencies in written communication, oral communications, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competence and information literacy. These will be discussed later in the document. In 2011, GERAB developed a comprehensive framework for general education assessment as part of its work to develop a systematic and sustained general education assessment process (BSU's Academic Plan Objective-6). The general education program is designed to meet certain competencies as required by COMAR guidelines, MSCHE guidelines under Standard 12, and BSU's Strategic and Academic Plans.

The University is currently using course embedded assessments, course evaluation surveys, and the English Proficiency Examination (EPE) as measures of learning outcomes. GERAB is working with faculty with an aim to accomplish the following within each general education course:

1) define student learning objectives in accordance with general education competencies (to be accomplished through a course) in a course syllabus;
2) use both direct and indirect measures of assessments;
3) employ multiple methods of assessment; and
4) utilize rubrics for assessment of class presentations, assignments, and participation, and test blueprints for traditional examinations to allow for content analysis of acquisition of general education competencies.

In spring 2011, Bowie State University completed its decennial Middle States review. The work of the University was recognized by the visit team who concluded that Bowie State University met **all** MSCHE standards. The University is fully committed to implementing its Academic Plan and self-study recommendation to systematize an ongoing process of general education assessment.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The university-wide structure in place since 2009 at **Bowie State University** is well positioned to facilitate assessment at the program and institutional levels. Assessment efforts throughout the university are overseen by standing committees of the faculty, with direct support from administrators and overall support from the president and provost. This campus-wide approach has also led to efforts to coordinate and improve tutoring efforts across the institution.

These campus-wide efforts are commendable. The university may also wish to supplement its workshop efforts with initiatives to share strategies and results among different departments and faculty members, as it continues to build its collection of assessment instruments and approaches over time.

In some cases, the university reported inconclusive results from assessment processes. In each of these cases, the university used indirect assessment methods such as overall course grades and passing rates and self-perception instruments. Greater use of direct measures will provide clearer results and directions for improvement. They are also more likely to lead to enhanced student learning.

Two examples in the report provide a useful illustration of the greater efficacy of direct measures. The Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning competency is assessed through a sequence of courses in Mathematics, while the Technological Competency measure is assessed through a sequence of courses in Computer Science. In both cases, course passing rates are used as an indicator of student learning. In the Computer Science sequence, this indicator is supplemented by data on individual test and quiz questions, on specific course objectives, on attendance at tutoring sessions, and on student self-perceptions. This more detailed approach allows for a more complete discussion of improvements to teaching and learning. By contrast, the Mathematics sequence provides more limited information, and the course passing rates by themselves reflect much smaller improvements in student success. The focus on passing rates alone makes it difficult to understand which strategies are used to improve teaching and learning, or even how this math sequence adequately enables students to demonstrate mastery of the competency as defined. The university should encourage units to use multiple methods and focus on individual course objectives, along the lines of the Computer Science report.

The university is well positioned to continue its successes in assessment in the future.

Coppin State University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

For the purpose of continued institutional renewal, faculty, staff, and administrators at Coppin State University (CSU) have committed to a culture of planning, research, assessment and accountability. In general, the University continues to engage its internal and external constituencies in study, planning, assessment, and development so that it will be well positioned to carry out its very visible urban mission. An on-going effort has been made to measure overall effectiveness towards the achievement of the University's mission and goals. With respect to assessment, Coppin relies on a broad range of means for measuring, evaluating, and assessing educational outcomes. In order to promote planning and assessment, Coppin relies on the Office of Planning and Assessment and the Center for Institutional Assessment to facilitate its strategic planning, research, and assessment efforts. Consequently, Coppin State University is committed to maintaining a working relationship with every student, faculty, and staff member; thereby, assuring every voice is heard.

The goal of the University assessment process is to encourage institutional self-awareness, self-understanding, and genuine self-improvement. In general, CSU institutes an aggressive campaign to assess student learning outcomes through Center for Institutional Assessment, Faculty Assessment Committee, and Assessment Steering Committee. During the academic year 2009-10, faculty attended professional development training offered by The Middle States, and sponsored by the Office of Planning and Assessment. The Director works closely with faculty and has responsibilities for the oversight of the Center for Institutional Assessment. The Center is a centralized University resource designed to inform planning and policy decisions in a wide range of academic and administrative areas. During academic year 2009-2010, the Center continued its focus on training and development, survey development, assessment, educational research around the use of technology in teaching, and strategic planning.

In conjunction with the Office of Planning and Assessment, the Center for Institutional Assessment has responsibilities for coordinating assessment efforts at Coppin. The Office of Planning and Assessment has unique responsibilities in establishing an institutional culture of assessment with the support of University constituencies. The new President, Dr. Avery, since his arrival in 2008, hired a new Vice President for Enrollment Management to improve student retention and increase graduation rates. Additionally, our new university Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs champions efforts to improve student retention and graduation rates by improving general education courses. The Provost challenges faculty to improve general education courses from two perspectives. One is to reduce the number of general education courses required by students at CSU from 46 courses to 40 courses by redesigning courses so that they are less repetitive and better capture the desired student learning outcomes. The other is to improve student learning outcomes in general education courses by developing a collective effort at addressing course level performance which includes the development of direct and indirect measures. The Provost initiated and headed a General Education Committee, which included the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, the Director

of Assessment, deans, chairs and faculty. This committee uses a faculty-driven process to map general education courses into general education learning outcomes group by group in an ongoing process. This has had a major impact on the engagement of CSU faculty in analyzing assessment to improve student learning outcomes on campus.

The assessment campaign is mission driven and dynamic as the University continues to evolve into a model urban comprehensive liberal arts institution. New assessment activities have been initiated. In 2009 the University participated for the first time in the National Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which measures the impact of institutional contributions to improvement of critical analysis and reasoning, and oral and written communication. The university has moved to utilize another survey, the ETS Proficiency Profile Test, which tests the same higher order skills as CLA, but also includes quantitative reasoning skills. This instrument was used in spring 2011 for senior students, and plans are underway to use it with freshmen in the fall. In fall 2010 we implemented the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey for new freshmen to give us insight into student high school academic backgrounds and attitudes. CSU has been using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for many years so we can use this as a measure of change for longitudinal studies. We participated in the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey for the first time in the 2010-2011 school year. We plan to use the results to improve the impact of pedagogy on the student experience, to identify professional development needs for faculty, to elucidate the faculty perspective on planning and policy analysis, and to learn more about faculty characteristics.

The CSU assessment process is inclusive of the following data components: comprehensive survey research, student perception of teaching quality, skill acquisition, and learning outcomes, technical infrastructure assessment, specialized studies, program level data, and institutional learning.

CSU has invested in technical infrastructure to develop analytical systems to provide indirect measures for the purpose of assessment. Due to the technological focus at CSU, infrastructure has been developed to warehouse institutional effectiveness indicators. The institution currently uses PeopleSoft and has developed specialized Assessment modules using I-Strategy for purposes of warehousing critical information. This data are then used in reporting to assess quality improvement by unit. Using the unit representatives, data are interpreted into useful information and then used in a continuous improvement effort.

Departments designed performance assessment systems that permit the unit to review the performance of students, faculty, and programs in a systemic manner. This performance assessment system prescribes a data collection process that can be used to make informed decisions concerning the improvement of services and programs. Departments have identified categories of goals, which have been aligned with the conceptual frameworks and strategic plan.

In summary, the University has adopted an institutional assessment model that incorporates assessing student learning outcomes at the institution, program, and course levels. Both the institutional and program levels are informed by the strategic plan which provides a useful blueprint for the future direction of Coppin State University.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Coppin State University has established a process to support decisions from learning assessment. However, the report includes no results from direct learning outcomes assessment and no evidence of changes to teaching practices resulting from such results.

While learning objectives have been developed for all general education competencies, several objectives are very broad, creating difficulties for both students and faculty. Outcomes related to "understanding" and "awareness" and "responsibility" are difficult to demonstrate and therefore difficult to assess. Greater specificity, and an emphasis on actions demonstrable by students, would improve these objectives.

Another crucial issue is that the university has provided no evidence that direct assessment methods are being used to assess student learning. Indirect methods such as course passing rates and the CIRP and NSSE surveys provide useful information, but indirect measures must be used in conjunction with direct measures. The report refers to the university's map of learning outcomes as evidence of direct assessment. However, the act of assessment is not the same thing as student mastery. Neither the fact that a course has one or more learning outcomes, nor the fact that a course assesses one or more learning outcomes, constitutes evidence that students have mastered those outcomes.

The university's map of learning outcomes indicates that various competencies are introduced and developed across the curriculum, but contains very few places where mastery can be assessed. It is also not clear whether the mastery courses are required for all students.

The university's experiment with the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) was commendable, not least because the university was able to determine that the instrument was not suited to the needs of the learning assessment process. It would have been helpful for the university to explain how that judgment led to the adoption of the ETS Proficiency Profile Test, and to specify the goals that the latter instrument would be able to address.

This experiment, like the university's report as a whole, demonstrates an institutional commitment to ensuring that suitable assessment processes are used throughout the curriculum. Now the university must carry out that commitment by fostering the development of meaningful direct and indirect measures across the campus.

Frostburg State University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Institutional Assessment

Frostburg State University's 2006 draft Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP) was designed to support and facilitate the University's strategic plan at the time. With the development of a new strategic plan and planning process in 2011, the University has set aside major aspects of the draft IAP. Presently, assessment work at the University is supported by the Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research and takes two important directions. The first focuses on the University's new mission statement, strategic goals and priorities and assessment at the institutional level. The second direction is at the divisional level and involves the assessment of academic and student programming, as well as the assessment of student learning outcomes. At both levels, significant and careful efforts have been made to integrate assessment efforts with the strategic planning work of the institution.

Assessment of Student Learning

One of the major priorities of the University and its colleges has been to strengthen assessment of student learning. Each of the colleges has moved to establish, strengthen, and expand its efforts in this area. An overview of the student learning assessment in each of the University's colleges is presented below, followed by a discussion of the assessment of student learning in the General Education Program.

The College of Education

In the College of Education's (COE) 2007 National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) reaccreditation visit, the visiting team indicated that there were "no areas for improvement" in relation to the college's assessment system.[3] The COE system includes methods for identification and use of assessment results as a means of informing and improving educational practices. This is accomplished by having a group that annually reviews and summarizes the assessment data. This information is then used by the College of Education to identify areas for improvement.

The College of Business

The College of Business (COB) is accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB International) and has developed and maintains a comprehensive assessment program that focuses on the teaching and learning activities that reflect its mission and the Assurance of Learning Standard.[4] The fundamental components of

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[3] NCATE Board of Examiners Report, April 21, 2007

[4] Fifth Year Maintenance of Accreditation Report for AACSB International, Academic Years 2006-2010, July 20, 2010

the assessment program are the learning goals for the bachelor's and MBA degree programs. The goals, which reflect institutional learning goals, were developed with faculty, student, administrator, advisory boards (executives, students), and other stakeholder input. Assessment activities have been ongoing for several years commencing in 2001 at which time curriculum review across all COB programs and courses took place. Learning goals and objectives were established and matrices were prepared that demonstrated how instructional activities of various courses supported the learning goals. An Assurance of Learning Committee (AOLC) was established in 2003. In 2006, an Assurance of Learning (AOL) plan was prepared by the AOLC and accepted by the faculty. An assessment coordinator position was also created at that time to support the work of the AOLC.

Since its establishment in 2003, the AOLC, using both direct and indirect assessment methods, evaluates student achievement each semester relative to established COB learning goals. Direct assessment tools include tests and a variety of course-embedded tasks and activities, with much of the embedded assessment work accomplished within capstone courses in the bachelor's degree program and in the MBA program. The end goal of all of these efforts is to promote continuous improvement and student learning. To ensure that this occurs, multiple efforts have been made to use data mined from AOL processes to improve upon current learning.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Academic programs within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) have made significant progress on student learning assessment. By March 1, 2011, all of the 34 continuing academic programs achieved a "green" assessment rating, having established effective student learning assessment plans (see below).

The CLAS Assessment Council was formed in fall 2007 to improve student learning assessment within the college, as recommended in the 2006 Middle States Evaluation Report. The council's role is to provide CLAS programs with guidance and feedback on establishing and implementing effective plans that link program objectives and learning goals with the University's institutional learning goals. The council collected assessment plans, reviewed them using a standardized checklist, and met with program representatives to provide feedback. Programs were ranked according to the following categories:

- Green rating – The program has developed a student learning assessment plan that addresses all assessment categories.
- Yellow rating – The program has made progress in establishing an assessment plan and has addressed most assessment categories.
- Red rating – The program's assessment plan needs improvement, or no plan is submitted.

Through partnership and collaboration with CLAS program representatives, the percentage of green-rated programs has increased from 29 percent in AY 2008-2009 to 56 percent in AY 2009-2010 to 100 percent in AY 2010-2011. The council has also begun collecting data and updates from programs that have already met this goal to ensure that assessment data is being collected, reviewed, and used to enhance student learning outcomes.

Assessment of the General Education Program

In August 2009, the assistant dean of CLAS was charged with devising and implementing assessment strategies for the General Education Program/Core Skills courses. (Rhodes, 2010)

Direct assessments of student learning include written work, performances, presentations, portfolios, exams, etc. Scores on locally designed multiple choice and/or essay tests, such as final examinations in key courses, comprehensive exams, or pass rates on appropriate licensure/certification exams, may be appropriate. While it is important to respect the fluidity of assessment mechanisms and methodologies as they are applied to courses across a wide spectrum of disciplines, assessing the University's GEP/Core Skills courses must demonstrate their linkage to institutional expectations.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Frostburg State University has provided evidence of a comprehensive assessment plan for the institution. The university's plan shows signs of effectiveness, but the plan must be extended to reach all faculty at the university in order to realize its promise.

The core of the general education assessment program, as described in the report, is a process in which selected sections of general education courses are evaluated by faculty colleagues to determine the validity of the course's assessment process, including course objectives, evaluation rubrics, course assignments, and evaluations and other feedback. This type of peer evaluation is a valuable step in learning assessment. However, it must be followed with additional efforts in two directions.

First, the process must extend beyond selected sections of general education courses to all sections of all general education courses. The report does not describe how the sample sections were selected, nor does it explain how the results from the sample sections are to be applied to other courses or even to other sections. Sampling can be very useful in an institution-wide evaluation process, but the university must ensure that evaluation of student learning is happening comprehensively and not idiosyncratically.

Second, the process must go beyond the review of faculty work. Syllabi, assignments, and rubrics are all produced by faculty, and therefore they cannot provide evidence of whether students are actually mastering the objectives set before them. The university must conduct direct measures of student learning, analyze the results of those measures to determine whether students are achieving the goals set for them, and use those results to improve practices in teaching and learning.

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MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (continued)

The report indicates that the College of Education and the College of Business are conducting assessment efforts at the college and program levels. Although the focus of the SLOAR is general education objectives, and evidently these two colleges have little connection to the university's general education program, a broader discussion of learning assessment processes and results in these two colleges would be helpful. In addition, it would likely benefit the university to draw on the expertise of faculty and administrators in these colleges to support general education assessment efforts. It is possible, of course, that the university is involving the College of Education and the College of Business in this way – for example, these schools may be providing the faculty colleagues who conduct the peer review of general education courses – but there is no evidence in this report of this sort of collaboration. The College of Arts and Sciences appears to have exclusive responsibility for assessing learning in the university's general education program.

As the university extends its assessment efforts it must work to use direct measures to demonstrate student learning, to inform curricular and pedagogical changes, and to evaluate

Salisbury University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Salisbury University (SU) continues to engage faculty, staff, administration, and students in discussions and activities that create a culture of assessment. In fact, assessment has now been formally added to the University's Strategic Plan. As a result, the campus has been using data about student learning outcomes to effect curricular and programmatic changes, from the creation of an elected faculty assessment committee, to a revision of the Academic Program Review (APR) process, to a comprehensive review of the Student Learning Goals (SLGs) that were mapped to the existing General Education (Gen Ed) curriculum.

The University Academic Assessment Committee (UAAC), an ad hoc committee at the time of our previous SLOAR, became an official elected Faculty Senate committee during academic year 2007-2008. One of the UAAC's primary responsibilities is to articulate a coherent plan for ongoing assessment of the Gen Ed curriculum. This is done in collaboration with the Office of University Analysis, Reporting, and Assessment (UARA) and the Provost's Office.

The two major ongoing institutional assessment activities are APR and a course-embedded Gen Ed assessment. APR provides a periodic opportunity for rigorous academic evaluation that advances programmatic excellence. Every program must complete an APR at least every seven years. Part I of the APR includes an assessment plan and summary where programs describe their current student learning outcomes, assessment methods, data collected, and data use by the academic program. Part II includes a critical internal and external evaluation of program curriculum, resources, and other information. (See http://www.salisbury.edu/iara/APR/APR%20home.html for an overview.)

In addition to this program-level assessment, the entire campus has engaged in several Gen Ed assessment activities since the last SLOAR cycle. The UAAC and UARA Director spoke to key University governance groups and hosted a Gen Ed Retreat in June 2009 to communicate the rationales behind curriculum mapping and outcome-based assessment of student learning and to seek the input of faculty members.

During the retreat, faculty members were divided into sub-groups based on how the Gen Ed courses they taught fit into the University's common Gen Ed Groups. These sub-groups articulated specific outcomes for the SLGs aligned with Gen Ed courses. As a result of the retreat, a comprehensive Gen Ed curriculum and outcome map was produced. (See https://secureweb.salisbury.edu/iara/Assessment/DRAFT%20GE%20Assessment%20Plan.xlsx.) In spring 2010, the Gen Ed curriculum and outcome map was presented to the Faculty Senate, which endorsed the documents. The UAAC created a subcommittee to oversee the assessment of Gen Ed, the Gen Ed Assessment Council (GEAC). The GEAC has recommended a five-year pilot of a course-embedded Gen Ed assessment which begins in fall 2011, which the Faculty Senate has also endorsed. During this pilot, each of the Student Learning Goals (SLGs) will be assessed. (See Appendix A for a more detailed timeline.)

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Salisbury University has established sound learning outcomes for general education competencies, extended its central assessment organization, and solidified and enhanced faculty involvement in learning outcomes assessment. Its strengths include a communications strategy centered on an assessment website, and effective rubrics for assessing written communication and critical thinking. Some rubrics need further attention, and the university must take care to ensure that its review cycle leads to effective improvements in teaching and learning.

The university's report contains links to the university's assessment website, which provided resources and illustrated various aspects of the assessment process. However, one of the links provided in the report led to a secure page that is accessible only by members of the university community. The university should not include such secure links in its report, and should either post these documents in accessible locations or provide the documents among its appendices to the submitted report.

The university should also consider using its website to communicate assessment strategies and results across the institution. It is often difficult to communicate about assessment across the institution, and a website with links to reports, newsletters, and artifacts created by colleagues can be of considerable help. Of course, faculty assessment committees and assessment offices play important communication roles, and the university should pursue any communications strategies that are suitable to the needs of the institution.

The university uses different methods to evaluate general education competencies. One of the strongest features of Salisbury's system is its rubrics for evaluating written communication and for evaluating critical thinking as reflected in student essays. These rubrics identify different components of the overall learning goals and allow faculty to identify and target particular aspects of writing and critical thinking.

The university's reported efforts to assess mathematical and technological competency are less effective. In these two areas, the university relies principally on indirect measures to evaluate student learning: in quantitative reasoning, the measure is course pass rates; in technological competency, the measure is student self-evaluation. Moreover, the reported assessment process in quantitative reasoning deals only with entry-level assessment and course placement, and does not deal at all with teaching and learning at the university. Salisbury must ensure that it uses direct measures of student learning to evaluate its pedagogical practices.

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MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report, continued

The university's plans to implement course-embedded assessment may address these problems. However, Salisbury's current plan to roll out course-embedded assessment over a five-year period is cause for some concern. This is illustrated by the results of the university's multi-year program to assess its Command of Language Student Learning Goal. As described in its report, this time-consuming effort produced few changes. In one department, the results from the multi-year study led only to the formation of a committee to conduct further study, while in another department the results induced the faculty to decide to address a problem of which at least some instructors had been aware for several years. The institution must shift from an apparent bias toward study and reflection to a bias toward making changes and improvements. In order to lead to improvements in teaching and learning, assessment must be continuous and not episodic. The five-year timeframe for the course-embedded project will be useful if it allows institutional resources to be used intensely in specific departments, if it helps different departments enter a continuous cycle of assessment, and if it allows departments to build on the efforts of other departments. But if it leads only to further study, improvements will be few and far between.

Towson University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Student learning is at the core of Towson University (TU). The university is committed to providing students with educational experiences that are intellectually rigorous and pedagogically effective so that they "acquire the intellectual and social preparation to achieve their potential as contributing leaders and citizens of the workforce and a complex global society." The competencies associated with these expectations are first articulated in Towson's general education program. General education learning outcomes are grouped in two basic categories: I. *Skills for Liberal Learning,* and II. *Contexts for Liberal Learning*. Courses in Category I emphasize useful tools for gathering, evaluating, valuing and shaping information and ideas. Category II identifies social, historical, cultural and scientific contexts wherein knowledge finds active meaning, and emphasizes the need for understanding interdisciplinary relationships among the different ways of knowing. Courses are approved to specific requirements of the two categories. These include the following:

Gen Ed I. Skills for Liberal Learning	**Gen Ed II. Contexts for Liberal Learning**
Writing for a Liberal Education	Scientific Inquiry
Using Information Effectively	American Experience: Arts and Humanities
College Mathematics	American Experience: Contemporary Issues
Advance Composition	Western Heritage: Arts and Humanities
Creativity and Creative Development	Western Heritage: Social and Behavioral Sciences
	Western Heritage: Cultural Plurality and Diversity
	Global Awareness: Non-Western Cultures, Traditions, Issues

The competencies associated with TU's expectations for student learning are also well articulated in undergraduate courses and programs. Students are expected to develop the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, organize and analyze data, acquire knowledge across disciplines, work as members of a team, make informed decisions, solve problems, adapt to a rapidly changing society, understand and appreciate diverse cultures and perspectives, acquire technological skills, and become lifelong learners. Assessment of student learning outcomes includes both direct and indirect measures. Direct measures are collected at the course and program level, while indirect measures occur at the course, program, department, college and university levels.

The Office of Assessment has responsibility for and oversight over all university-wide assessment practices that pertain to student learning. The assistant vice president for Assessment (AVPA) works closely with the University Assessment Council (UAC) to guide and support all student learning assessment initiatives. The UAC members include faculty from each of the colleges, key administrators and students. The council is composed of three subcommittees that focus on as on the assessment of general education courses as well as undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Subcommittee on General Education Assessment (SGEA) monitors student learning outcomes in general education courses. General education requirements are designed to help students gain essential intellectual skills and knowledge that will be important throughout their lives. These skills include successful speaking and writing, the gathering and evaluation of information, the appreciation of diverse points of view, and the ability to understand and formulate ideas and values. The overall goal is to provide students with: 1) the flexibility and resourcefulness required to adapt successfully to rapid social, economic and technological change, 2) the understanding and tolerance necessary for informed citizenship and social action, and 3) the interest and curiosity essential to the pursuit of learning throughout the whole of life. General education courses are reviewed every five years to determine their effectiveness in meeting approved outcomes. If all outcomes are addressed adequately, the courses are recertified for five years. The subcommittee reviews, analyzes and rates each course in four key areas*: learning goals, teaching/learning strategies, assessment methods*, and *use of results*. SGEA rates each area according to three rubrics*: best practice, meets standard*, and *needs attention*. These ratings, along with qualitative feedback, are designed to encourage programs to identify optimal ways in demonstrating continuous improvement in student learning.

The Subcommittee on Undergraduate Program Assessment (SUPA) and the Subcommittee on Graduate Program Assessment (SGPA) are charged with supporting the design, evaluation, and promotion of undergraduate and graduate program assessments. All undergraduate and graduate academic departments and programs are expected to have student learning assessment plans in place. Measurement tools vary and include analysis of student work products which may include portfolios, research projects, labs, faculty ratings of student performance, essays, papers, tests, etc. In addition to direct measures of student learning, indirect methods may include exit surveys of seniors regarding their development of particular skills or the quality of graduates as assessed by their employers. Data are collected annually and are analyzed at the program level. Every three years, programs are required to document student learning outcomes and provide assessment data and results for the majors they offer in self-study reports. During the intervening years, each unit is expected to report any modifications or improvements to their assessment protocols and/or how they used their assessment data to improve student learning. These reports are submitted to SUPA and SGPA for review. These subcommittees rate the program protocols in four key areas: *learning goals, teaching/learning strategies, assessment method*s, and *use of results*. Each area is rated according to three rubrics: *best practice*, *meets standard*, and *needs attention*. These ratings, along with qualitative feedback, are designed to encourage programs to identify optimal ways in demonstrating continuous improvement in student learning.

External program review for all academic degree programs takes place every seven years. The program review process is extensive and consists of an internal self-study report of the degree program as well as an assessment by an external reviewer. Each program under review identifies an action plan to improve practices based on the recommendations of the external reviewer, including ways progress will be assessed. In addition, academic departments and colleges have assessment protocols and practices pertinent to their disciplines. Degree programs accredited by external agencies such as NCATE for the College of Education, and AACSB for the College of Business and Economics, develop assessment practices that align with accrediting agency standards.

An additional way that TU assesses student learning is assessment of co-curricular activities. The Student Affairs Assessment Subcommittee (SAAS) examines assessment efforts related to co-curricular learning. This occurs through a variety of methods and the results are used to inform program offerings and make changes to co-curricular activities as necessary

Assessment at Towson not only involves internally developed processes in measuring data, but also includes externally developed data sources for use in benchmarking and comparative purposes. Towson participates in a number of nationally-normed, standardized surveys. These instruments include the National Survey of Student Engagement, the College Student Survey, the CIRP first year student survey, and the EDUCAUSE Center of Applied Research (ECAR) Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology. These surveys facilitate Towson's understanding of the student experience and allow us to compare our results to those of peer institutions across the nation as well as augment and support the assessment data we collect through campus-based initiatives. Results from these national surveys provide indirect evidence of student learning at both the programmatic and general education levels as well as student perceptions of their university experience. Towson has also administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment—a measure of value-added learning—to a sample of first year and senior students as part of its ongoing efforts to understand and improve student learning on campus.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The report submitted by **Towson University** provides a number of high-quality examples of how learning outcomes assessment is being used to improve teaching and learning. Towson has formally adopted learning outcomes at the university level, and effectively mapped its learning goals to statewide general education competencies. In addition, the university's assessment report cycle is designed to ensure that all departments are reporting assessment results on a regular basis within the next few years. However, some units are employing assessment more effectively than others, and the university must work to ensure that faculty follow the institution's best practices in designing and reporting meaningful data on learning outcomes.

Outcomes assessment of Towson's general education goals is decentralized. This ensures that outcomes are assessed at multiple points, which strengthens faculty attention to these concepts and improves student achievement in these areas. It also allows departments to assess those goals that are important to them. But this approach also has some hazards. One is that it is difficult to ensure the integration of outcomes assessment across the institution. Towson does not describe a process for aggregating results of different assessment activities around common themes or for facilitating collaboration across departments. The university's new course recertification process for general education courses will probably mitigate this risk. However, the university should provide additional processes that allow the institution to examine learning at an institution-wide level.

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Some departments have reported average scores or percentages of students mastering concepts, but these figures are provided without any referents, making it difficult to determine, for example, whether the university regards an average score of 5.01 on a seven-point scale as a good thing or a bad thing. The university's NSSE results are similarly presented without referents, so that it is not clear whether Towson is content with its scores or whether it seeks to improve them. The university and all departments should follow the example provided by the Family Studies program, in which the department begins with a baseline measure and then sets a goal for improving outcomes.

However, establishing standards for achievement does not always eliminate errors in design. For example, the Mathematics department scores student mastery of learning goals on a three-point ordinal scale, and then attempts to express the overall result by calculating the mean of all student scores. Because an ordinal scale gives no indication of the degree of difference between measurements, a meaningful arithmetic mean cannot be calculated. In addition, the target could be reached if nearly half of all students demonstrated complete misunderstanding of the problem. The department would do better to set goals for the percentage of students demonstrating at least adequate mastery of the concept; it is already tracking this percentage and should use it as the referent for accomplishment.

Towson has included several examples of how assessment results led to changes in teaching and learning. In some examples, however, changes have not yet been implemented, and in other examples, the results have led only to suggested changes or possible changes. In future reports, the university should present data to demonstrate that assessment results are used across the institution to improve teaching and learning.

University of Baltimore

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

A number of important assessment activities emerged and are at varying states of completion. These activities align with the framework of pertinent Middle States Standards of Excellence:

General Education (Standard 12)	Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14)	Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness (Standard 7)
The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.	Assessment of student learning demonstrates that an institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals, and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.	Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness demonstrates that the institution achieves its mission and goals in compliance with accreditation standards.
UB Alignment: Widely agreed upon learning outcomes are established throughout the curriculum. Assessment activities completed or near completion include developing clear statements of learning goals, including expected learning outcomes, for all general education areas and for information literacy, a UB graduation requirement.	UB Alignment: Assessment of written and oral communication and quantitative competency has progressed through the "closing the loop" stage: assessment results are used to improve student learning and advance the institution. For scientific competency, critical thinking, and, to a more limited extent, technological competency, organized and sustained assessment plans have been developed.	UB Alignment: MSB successfully completed its AACSB accreditation processes, which included substantial learning outcomes assessment in all 4 critical competencies. Assessment data informed two successful grant-funded course redesign projects.

The report below explains and describes these activities in much greater detail.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The **University of Baltimore** has made substantial progress since the 2007 SLOAR. The university has created clearly defined outcomes and processes for the four general education learning competencies, and it has provided some evidence of the use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning, especially at the general education and developmental levels. The university must now engage the task of expanding good assessment practices across all departments and units of the institution.

Although the report states that the university also assesses the four major competencies in upper-level courses within the major, the report provides no evidence of this upper-level assessment, no discussion of student results at either the program or university level, and no indication that these assessments are used to improve teaching and learning. The university should provide these details in future reports. The four-stage scale that the university has created to analyze assessment readiness for general education outcomes can also be applied to program-level goals.

In addition, the report states that assessment of scientific reasoning occurs within science courses, but provides no description of the methods used and no discussion of any results or changes in teaching and learning. This omission must be rectified in future reports.

In some cases, assessment efforts to date focus only on indirect measures. For example, oral communication objectives are assessed through surveys of alumni and of employers of graduates. The university must ensure that direct measures of student learning are conducted and are used for making improvements.

It is not clear from this report how the university ensures that all graduates have mastered all learning objectives. Nor is there any discussion of how assessment results are reviewed by the faculty as a whole to ensure that assessment is leading to improvements in teaching and learning. The institution should ensure that it also reviews teaching and learning at the institutional level, ensuring that outcomes are reached and that assessment leads to enhanced student learning.

In recent years the university's assessment processes have been disrupted by changes in personnel. The university should work to strengthen its processes and structures so that learning outcomes assessment can continue even in the face of personnel changes.

The university has made great strides, especially as it has revised its developmental courses. It is well positioned to continue similar work in required credit-bearing courses and in general education as a whole.

University of Maryland, Baltimore

The University of Maryland, Baltimore is exempted at present from the requirement to submit the SLOAR.

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

UMBC engages in the assessment and evaluation of its academic programs and administrative activities on a continuous basis. In 2008, our campus developed an Assessment Plan for improving institutional effectiveness through the shared governance process and convened the UMBC Assessment Committee, composed of faculty and staff representatives of Academic Affairs and other administrative units, to guide the campus in its initial stage of implementation. Building on UMBC's history of assessment, the plan established a better documented approach to assessment than existed at the time of the *UMBC 2007 SLOAR*. UMBC's Assessment Plan consists of plans from each college and school, the general education assessment plan, and the assessments plans of all administrative divisions and academic support units. In addition, all academic departments created program-level plans for student learning outcomes assessment, which were approved by the dean prior to implementation on a biennial schedule. UMBC now has a comprehensive process to ensure that our administrative units and academic programs are assessed on a regular basis and that the results of these assessments are used to ensure continuous improvement. The results of these efforts are decisions related to program content, program delivery, administrative practice, and/or allocation of resources to ensure improved institutional effectiveness. Assessment has been institutionalized as a component of regularly scheduled activities that occur annually and periodic academic program reviews that are conducted on a seven-year cycle with a subsequent internal third-year progress review.

Overall responsibility for implementation of the *UMBC Assessment Plan* rests with the Provost; the Vice Presidents assume responsibility for assessment within their divisions, and the Deans oversee implementation of assessment plans within their academic units. To support comprehensive assessment, the UMBC Faculty Development Center provides departments and faculty with resources and guidance for the development of effective program-level and general education course assessment. In addition, the Office of the Provost has sponsored a series of workshops guided by external and internal experts to support the development and implementation of effective assessment. Workshops held in 2008 helped department chairs and faculty members understand the process and develop program-level assessment plans. Additional workshops were held in 2010 and 2011 to guide administrators, departments and faculty in the use of direct evidence in course-level assessment of general education functional competencies. The Division of Student Affairs also has sponsored a series of assessment workshops and hosts an assessment and research committee.

The UMBC General Education Committee (GEC) is responsible for monitoring general education assessments and results. In collaboration with the Council of Deans (COD) and the Assessment Committee, the GEC reviews assessment data and provides reports regarding general education and UMBC's Assessment Plan to the Provost and the COD. The Provost and the COD disseminate the Committee's analysis and recommendations to the academic departments and the campus community for discussion and policy-making purposes. The section below outlines a streamlined process that was adopted at the recommendation of the GEC to

efficiently and effectively integrate general education student learning assessment with the institutional processes that are already underway.

General Education and Assessment: A Streamlined Process
(Approved by the Provost April 2009; Amended by GEC March 2010)

Initial and Continuing Course Review for General Education Designation (UMBC Assessment Plan, II.F)

- Initial course review for general education designation is conducted by the GEC. The review focuses on: 1) accessibility to a broad undergraduate student community; 2) whether the course meets criteria for the proposed distribution area; and 3) whether the course addresses a minimum of one of the five functional competencies.
- Continuing review of general education courses is conducted by the GEC in accordance with the seven year Academic Program Review (APR) cycle. The department will resubmit GEP courses which have not been reviewed since the last APR.

Review of Course Level Learning Outcomes (Assessment Plan II.G)

- As part of the biennial submission of department assessment reports, departments will provide a summary of learning outcomes for one general education course.
- Course selection will be made by the department to ensure that, over time, a sample of courses addressing the various functional competencies is represented
- Information submitted will include: 1) summary of how the course addresses the distribution area(s) designated; 2) summary of how the course addresses and measures each of the functional competencies designated; 3) examples of learning activities and assessment criteria for measuring designated functional competencies; 4) summary of assessments results on student learning outcomes regarding designated functional competencies; and 5) changes made or proposed to improve student learning.

Review of Program Level Learning Outcomes

- As part of the seven year APR cycle, departments will provide a summary of assessment of an identified sample of general education courses.
- The report will summarize information on: 1) assessments and outcomes that are consistent with the review of course level learning outcomes; 2) strengths and weaknesses of the courses; and 3) changes made or proposed at the course and/or program levels to improve teaching and enhance student competencies.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Learning outcomes assessment is underway throughout the **University of Maryland, Baltimore County**. UMBC's assessment processes appear well positioned to foster the use of assessment results at the university and program levels. However, the university does not present any data from assessment results or discuss any specific changes in teaching and learning arising from assessment efforts. This omission should be rectified in future reports. In addition, more detail on the university's institution-level review processes should be included.

Learning outcomes have been defined by the university, although in a few cases the learning outcome is not well defined in terms of student behavior. For example, students are expected to "understand" or to "recognize" elements of intellectual activity, rather than something more concrete such as "demonstrate an understanding" or "describe" those elements. These exceptions should be revised and improved.

The report provides a number of examples of assessment activities using direct and indirect measures, most of which led to proposed or planned changes in curricular and pedagogical strategies. However, there were no reports of changes that were actually made, and no reports of assessment results demonstrating the effects of the changes. More detail should be provided.

The university asserts that it has a process to ensure that all programs are reviewed annually and periodically. It would be useful to see a schedule of this assessment cycle. In addition, the report states that the university's General Education Committee (GEC) reviews assessment results on general education and makes periodic reports to the provost and deans. A more detailed discussion of the GEC's process and its reports and recommendations would also be helpful. There is some evidence in the report that these items are fully discussed in the university's assessment plan and other similar documents. If these documents have been posted on the university's website, the university should provide links to these documents in its report, or include them as appendices.

The matrix titled "Progress in Departments Using Assessment to Drive Changes to Practice" is an especially helpful tool for providing an institutional overview. It shows where departments have been effective at using assessment to propose changes, designing and using direct assessments, and connecting changes to direct measures – and it also shows where departments, schools, and the university must make greater efforts in the near term. The university appears well equipped to undertake these actions.

University of Maryland, College Park

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

At UMD, assessment practices have become embedded in the institutional culture, and have led to the following: Periodic review and revision of plans with regard to improving student learning; establishment of a cyclical review process; establishment of structural processes for informing the campus with regard to assessment results; and the incorporation of assessment results in short-term and long-term campus planning.

The assessment of student learning in academic programs is coordinated through the Provost's Commission on Learning Outcomes Assessment, established in 2003. Charged by the Provost to work with all campus units as they develop learning outcomes and to establish a new standard for assessment at the University of Maryland, the Commission consists of three interacting groups of UMD faculty and administrators, and is chaired by the Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies.

- The Planning Team establishes the agenda for and oversees the work of the entire Commission, and is comprised of leadership in Undergraduate Studies and Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment.
- The Deans' Steering Committee, comprised of six college deans, serves as an advisory board for the Planning Team and meets as needed to discuss and decide policy issues.
- The College Coordinators serve as liaisons between the planning team and their respective deans and colleges. Each college designates one or two faculty members or academic administrators to serve as coordinators.

The assessment of student learning has been an institution-wide collaborative process focused on learning outcomes at course and program levels. Through this process, learning outcomes and assessment plans were developed for each undergraduate major and graduate program offered at the University. The assessment of student learning in each program has progressed over the past several years with the following highlights:

- In fall 2005, faculty in each degree program established program learning outcomes and the assessment methods that would be used to measure them. The Provost established that each program would assess the stated learning outcomes by March of 2010 and subsequently at least every four years.
- During that first cycle of assessment, programs submitted their plans for assessment in the fall, and submitted results and analysis the following spring. Concurrently, program and college assessment committees reviewed the assessment results and made recommendations for further action as appropriate. The College Coordinators submitted assessment results and subsequent curricular actions and changes on behalf of their deans to the Provost via the Commission.
- The College Coordinators acted as peer reviewers at the institutional level and used rubrics to review and provide peer feedback for each program. These reviews were

conducted on behalf of the Provost; at the conclusion of each year, the Chair submitted a summary report to him, along with each set of program feedback, which the Provost subsequently shared with each Dean.

- At the conclusion of that four-year cycle, each Coordinator summarized the assessment of student learning process in their college and provided analysis of how it would be improved.
- In this academic year (Fall 2010), the cycle of review has changed. From this year forward, each program will submit one report in the fall which summarizes the changes they have made in the past year due to assessment results, the results of assessments they administered in the past year, and a plan for assessments in the upcoming year. The peer review of those documents by the College Coordinators will continue.

The materials shared in Part Two of this document will exemplify this campus-wide and embedded process. Due to the size of the institution, and the responsibility each program has to state its programs goals and objectives based on disciplinary needs, the assessment of student learning resides mostly at the program level. Therefore this report represents each competency by way of a sampling from across campus of projects that investigate those areas. There are two notable exceptions to this decentralization of assessment. One is the assessment of the general education program, an example of which is included in one of the competency areas, and the future of which is detailed in Part Three. The other exception is our University Libraries, which has taken on the responsibility of assessing information literacy at the campus level.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

At the conclusion of its report, the **University of Maryland, College Park** says that it is "incredibly proud of our progress in the establishment and assessment of student learning outcomes, and in the way that the importance of student learning has been integrated into the fabric of university processes." This pride is entirely justified. The structures for conducting and reviewing assessment activities at the program and institutional levels are well integrated and appropriate.

The full report contains a number of excellent examples of learning objectives, methods of assessment, standards for achievement, data resulting from assessment, decision-making processes, and the effect of changes to teaching and learning.

The report acknowledges the importance of ensuring that assessment happens across all disciplines. It would have been helpful to see examples from departments that are not closely associated with a particular goal – for instance, an example on demonstrating written and oral communication in a senior chemistry seminar, an example on quantitative reasoning from an anthropology seminar, or an example on technological competency from a history seminar.

The university reports that its work on learning assessment has informed its current revision of its general education program. The university is excited about the possibilities for this program, and that excitement is easily shared. The university is encouraged to continue to build on its substantial achievements to date.
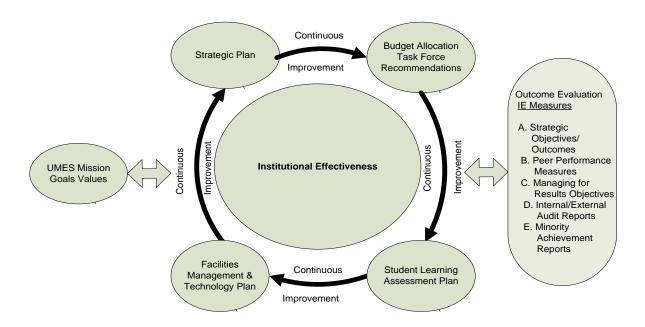
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

This section provides an overview and analysis of the UMES' assessment process based on institutional assessment (Standard 7), General Education assessment (Standard 12), and assessment of student learning (Standard 14) as they relate to Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

UMES utilizes an Institutional Effectiveness Management Model (see Figure 1) grounded in shared governance to ensure buy-in from and implementation by the University community. This process is also a tool for guiding implementation and evaluation of the overall effectiveness of UMES in fulfilling its mission including resources; leadership and governance; administrative structures and services; institutional integrity; and assurance that institutional processes and resources support appropriate student learning and other outcomes. Considered in a continuous cycle of planning and evaluation, the model considers four key components-Strategic Planning, Budget Allocation Task Force recommendations, student learning assessment planning, facilities management, and technology planning. Mission, Goals and Values drive the institutional Effectiveness Management Model of UMES. The current mission statement, goals and core values were developed through a participative process by the entire University. As an integral part of the Institutional Effectiveness Management Model, the Student Learning Assessment Plan is a comprehensive process that focuses on the contentious improvement of student learning. Every component of the UMES Institutional Effectiveness Model is designed to facilitate the University's accomplishment of its mission.

The assessment of institutional effectiveness includes four major components, they are: (1) developing clearly articulated goals, (2) implementing strategies for achieving the goals, (3) assessing the achievement of the goals, and (4) using the results of the assessment. The process of assessing student learning outcomes is analyzed under two-sections for improvement, General Education assessment (Standard 12) and assessment of student learning in the programs/majors (Standard 14).

Figure1. 1: UMES Institutional Effectiveness Management Model

Assessment at UMES is a systematic, proactive, data/informed and collaborative process. This process occurs at different levels—course, program, department, school or institutional level. Direct and indirect measures used include strategic operational plan outcomes, student learning, and Discipline Specific Accreditation outcomes measures. Student learning assessment is monitored by the University Assessment Council, comprising of all academic department chairs, and a student representative. Members meet twice every semester to monitor the student learning assessment plan outcomes and make recommendations for change in the University-wide assessment process and policies. Student learning assessment involves systematic collection and analysis of program assessment data within the major and in General Education. Every academic program offered by UMES developed an assessment plan that includes program Mission (always tied to the University Mission), goals, and student learning outcomes with a clear process for measuring them and using the results to improve the teaching and learning process.

The University's General Education courses are adequately structured and delivered through the Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) mandated six curriculum areas: Area I:Arts and Humanities, Area II: Social and Behavioral Sciences, Area III: Biological and Physical Sciences, Area IV: Mathematics, and Area VI: Emerging Issues. The University's General Education requirements provide students with the ability to develop a comprehensive educational foundation that will effectively support a student's choice of major. Each graduate should be a competent communicator in both written and spoken language, and competent in reasoning, (quantitatively and scientifically). Students should have an appreciation and understanding of the arts and an awareness of the contemporary issues trends. Additionally, each student should be competent in utilizing technology as a tool to produce word processing documents, spreadsheets/graphics, databases, and PowerPoint presentations. In addition, using technology communicates ideas and evaluates the ideas of others (Standard 12). The University has developed operational definitions for the five competencies identified by Middle States: (1) Written and Oral Communication, (2) Critical Analysis and Reasoning, (3) Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning, (4) Technological Literacy and (5) Information Literacy and has

developed a course mapping matrix that identifies in which courses these competencies are taught. Direct measures include internal comprehensive examination for oral communication skills, external national Educational Testing Services (ETS) examinations for general education, national Accuplacer examination for written communication, and national Certiport (IC^3 FastTrack) examination for technology assessment

UMES uses the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Process* (SLOAP) for assessing students in their majors. SLOAP uses a set of guidelines established in 2005 by the Assessment Council that provides each academic department with a format for planning and implementing an effective assessment process. The program requires that each assessment plan have clearly articulated expected student learning outcomes, aligned with program goals, core courses/capstone experiences, and assessment methods that yield meaningful results to be used for continuous improvement of student learning and instruction. The results and/or recommendations from academic programs assessments become critical inputs for the Strategic Plan, the budget process, facilities management, and technology plans.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** has well-defined learning outcomes and a comprehensive system for learning outcomes assessment. The university has effectively mapped its general education course requirements to its learning outcomes. The university is unusual in that it depends heavily on standardized exams that are apparently not linked to courses, but the structure appears sound. However, care must be taken to ensure that faculty play central roles in evaluating assessment results, ensuring student learning, and planning and implementing improvements in teaching.

The report contains little evidence of assessment results being used to make changes in pedagogy. This is certainly affected by the long period in which the existing system was developed, and so it is not surprising that there are relatively few results so far. The preparation process should result in comprehensive improvements by the time of the next report.

The university asserts that learning outcomes assessment drives resource allocation, but this process should be made clearer. In addition, it is not clear why the Facilities Management & Technology Plan should have an effect on resource allocation. It is important to ensure that changes of teaching and learning processes should be able to produce resource reallocation in areas other than facilities and technology. This should be clarified in a future report.

The university's report does not discuss program-level learning outcomes assessment. For the purposes of the SLOAR report, which is focused on general education, this type of discussion is not required. But it is an expectation of Middle States that institutions conduct learning assessment at the program level as well, using assessment results to inform change to teaching and learning as well as resource allocation. UMES should ensure that this program-level assessment takes place, if it is not doing so already.

University of Maryland, University College

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Introduction

This report accounts for learning outcomes assessment activities at the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) since the 2007 SLOAR. UMUC has moved its assessment process forward through the following institution-wide efforts:

- changes in organizational structure and institutional leadership
- a new curricular and assessment design
- advances in assessment methods
- investments in professional development

Collectively, these efforts create a process to improve student learning. Each of area of activity is delineated below. Further details regarding assessment efforts at UMUC are available in the 2010 revision of the Institutional Plan for Learning Outcomes Assessment.[5]

Organizational Structure and Institutional Leadership

During 2008, the administration of assessment in the School of Undergraduate Studies (SUS) was re-designed to be embedded at the program level, with the goal of more deeply engaging academic directors and faculty in the assessment process. A newly created position, Assistant Director, Outcomes Assessment, now works with directors and faculty to implement assessment at the program level; the Assistant Director also coordinates assessment efforts directly with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. An assessment committee of academic directors also has responsibility for assessment within SUS. A team from the Office of Evaluation and Assessment, within the university's Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), further supports the school's assessment work. The OIE team offers technical expertise regarding assessment methods, instrument creation, data analysis, and management of the assessment system. Finally, at the institutional level, the university has designated an assessment oversight committee, which includes undergraduate and graduate, OIE, and faculty advisory council (FAC) representatives.

New Curricular and Assessment Design

In 2008–2009, all undergraduate degree programs reviewed and revised program-level learning outcomes. SUS then held workshops with program directors to develop plans and set timelines for assessment development. Program directors and faculty collaboratively created plans. In 2010, SUS began a curricular revision process, Supporting Educational Goals for Undergraduate Excellence (SEGUE).[6] All programs have undergone revision and refocusing through SEGUE. Alumni, employers, hundreds of faculty members, and administrators informed outcomes and a curricular design that reflects what students need to do outside of UMUC. New program

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[5] Institutional Plan for Learning Outcomes Assessment: http://www.umuc.edu/outcomes/pdfs/Inst_Plan_2010.pdf

[6] SEGUE - For more information, see http://intranet.umuc.edu/segue/index.shtml (username and password available on request); or contact segue@umuc.edu.

outcomes led to new program maps, and courses were revised to match the new maps. Key assessment points for program outcomes and general education hallmarks (corresponding to general education outcomes that MHEC terms competencies) provided a basis for the new assessment maps. Assessments and rubrics were developed with clear alignment to the outcomes. Appendix B provides an example of a "Program Outcome Guide" (POG) that shows the program outcomes, related courses, and assessments developed during the SEGUE redesign process. Every program developed as part of SEGUE has created a similar POG.

Advances in Assessment Methods
The standardized ETS Proficient Profile (EPP, formerly MAPP) is used to conduct institutional-level assessment. EPP assesses written communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical reasoning and analysis. Scores for EPP are reported as norm and criterion referenced. In Part II of this report, the criterion scores are presented as percentages at each skill proficiency level. A new sampling method was used for EPP implementation. The method allowed for propensity score matching[7] as a more advanced (than descriptive statistics) approach to calculating value-added in learning. For students graduating from UMUC, EPP scores are correlated with students' GPAs and the percentage of general education they completed at UMUC. Those correlations support the use of EPP scores as a valid indicator of student learning.

To provide more meaningful program- and course-level assessment, beginning in the summer of 2009, there has been a systemic shift to using authentic assessments: assessments based on real-world tasks and skills. Such assessments ask students to produce a project, report or some performance similar to those they would be asked to produce in their field of work. Developing student competencies through authentic applications helps students apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that are crucial to their careers.

Finally, in 2009 the undergraduate school developed a computer-based test item data bank (TIDB). Directors and instructors developed new test items for course final exams to build a database of quality multiple-choice, short answer, and essay items used by faculty to develop various versions of the final exams. The items were developed according to specific directions, including alignment to course outcomes and multiple levels of cognitive skill.

Investments in Professional Development
UMUC has made a number of professional development opportunities related to outcomes assessment available to faculty and staff. These have included: from 2008 to 2011, training sessions held by nationally recognized experts (e.g., Dr. Trudy Banta and Dr. Peter Facione) who presented on the development of assessment practices, including testing critical thinking, methods of assessment, and designing an outcomes driven curriculum; from 2007 to 2008, trainings conducted 2008 on assessment concepts, development of assessment plans, design and use of rubrics, and aligning assessments with mission and outcomes; the 2009 Faculty Summer Institute, which for selected faculty provided a focus such issues as classroom assessment, rubric norming, and reliability; a series of training sessions in 2009 to 2010 on test development and item writing to improve course-based tests; a 2010 Faculty Summer Institute track focused on

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[7] Propensity score matching (PSM) is a statistical method used to identify causality in research that cannot be conducted as a true experiment. PSM creates an unbiased estimate of the treatment group mean. UMUC used PSM to match incoming students (control group) to graduating students (treatment group) for value-added analysis.

outcomes driven curriculum and assessment; and a 2011 workshop with expert, Dr. Darren Cambridge, on e-portfolios.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

The **University of Maryland University College** faces unusual challenges in learning outcomes assessment because of its distributed learning model. The university has successfully designed a structure and methodology suited to its conditions.

The university depends more heavily on standardized exams than other institutions, as might be expected, and it has developed a sound strategy for using them. The use of an optional placement examination is a promising approach for ensuring that sound benchmark results will be obtained, especially when coupled with an optional post-test to demonstrate to students, as well as faculty, how much skills and knowledge have improved. These results are especially useful when combined with results from rubric-based assessment methods.
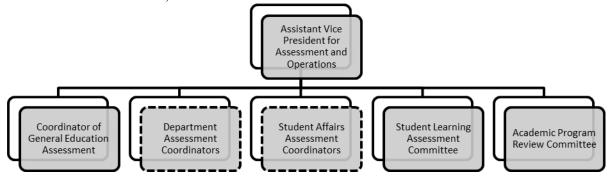
The report is not clear about how expectations for students are communicated, nor how the assessment results relate to those expectations. For example, in critical thinking, 9% of students were found to be "proficient." On the face of it, 9% does not appear to be a particularly high score, even when compared to the national average of 5% or the initial entry score of 7%. The report should explain how the exam score methodology relates to the university's learning outcomes requirement and what its standards for achievement are.

The report provides little or no evidence of changes to pedagogy or curriculum deriving from assessment results. Some changes at the course level are described, but none at the institutional level. It is important for the university to ensure that improvement in teaching and learning becomes a regular focus of its assessment efforts. The university faces distinctive challenges in this area because of its unusual faculty arrangements. But because the university's teaching model provides so much promise for expanding the audience for education, it must demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that the educational experience is of the highest possible quality.

Morgan State University

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Assessment at Morgan State University supports the strategic mission of the institution by overseeing the *evaluation* of student learning on campus, facilitating the *interpretation* of data collected through these evaluations, and leading the *application* of assessment results to decision making, continuous quality improvement, and excellence in the student experience. This is accomplished through the Morgan State University Center for Performance Assessment, under the Office of the Provost, Division of Academic Affairs:

MISSION AND GOALS

The Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Operations directs assessment activities across campus, including the administration of Morgan's Comprehensive Assessment Plan, the work of the Student learning Assessment Committee, the direction of Student Affairs Assessment Coordinators and Department Assessment Coordinator, and the office of General Education Assessment. All work is focused on the **evaluation** of student learning, the i**nterpretation** of data collected through these evaluations, and the **application** of assessment results to improvement. These three components comprise the comprehensive assessment process at Morgan, as described below.

Evaluation. The Center for Performance Assessment works with the Student Learning Assessment Committee, the Vice Presidents, the Deans, Faculty, Students, and Staff to examine the student experience at Morgan University, to identify areas of excellence and to focus on opportunities for improvement. This work is accomplished through multiple assessment methods including standardized testing, an annual cycle of undergraduate and graduate program assessment, program review, surveys, course evaluations, accreditation requirements, and special assessment projects.

Interpretation. Morgan State University's focus on assessment centers on understanding and analyzing the results of our campus wide assessment. Working with members of the campus community, The Center for Performance Assessment facilitates analysis and interpretation of data and supports the work of the campus in understanding the student experience at Morgan. Assessment Office staff are available to provide guidance in developing, implementing, collecting, and understanding the results from assessment projects. Serving as a clearinghouse for campus assessment tools and data, the Office incorporates external benchmarks and internal

norms to ensure timely, accurate, and data supported interpretation of assessment results.

Application. Closing the loop on assessment means utilizing the results and findings to further improve the student experience at Morgan. Assessment results are only as good as the extent to which they are useful and utilized. The Center for Performance Assessment works with members of the campus community to maximize the utilization of assessment data within the context that the data were originally collected to address. The time and resources required to collect useful assessment information are justified by the application of these data to continually improve the student experience at Morgan. Assessment results are collected, analyzed and then utilized. The Center for Performance Assessment serves to guide and support the implementation of assessment plans and programs and to facilitate the application of data for improvement within these programs, driven by the objectives and outcomes for institution-wide assessment at Morgan.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The Morgan State University Center for Performance Assessment promotes excellence of the student experience through a campus culture of self evaluation and improvement across the institution by

- Developing a systematic and sustainable process of institution-wide assessment
- Using national, state, and locally developed assessment measures and benchmarks
- Ensuring compliance with Middle States, MHEC and professional accreditation standards for excellence
- Implementing academic assessment, program review, and assessment of the student experience
- Supporting data-based decision making and improvement
- Modeling best practice research methods and analyses
- Conducting assessment training and workshops

MSU COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PLAN

The Morgan State University Comprehensive Assessment Plan provides a structure for and guidance of all assessment activities across campus. These activities include assessment of the student experience, assessment of institutional effectiveness, and assessment of programs, units and processes. Assessment of the student experience takes place within Academic and Student Affairs through annual department assessment plans and reports, through standardized and locally-developed testing, and through participation in nationally-normed and locally-developed satisfaction and engagement surveys. Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness occurs quarterly and annually within a balanced scorecard model, in response to state and federal reporting requirements, and as the core of Morgan's new strategic planning process. Assessment of programs, units and processes takes place within the Annual Program Review format, the Six Sigma guidelines, and the Baldrige criteria, and occurs on a cyclical basis according to a standardized scheduled and identified institutional needs. Data are collected, maintained, analyzed and disseminated for use in improvement and decision making by the MSU Center for Performance Assessment and affiliated offices and staff. This report focuses on the assessment of student learning outcomes, as directed by the Comprehensive Assessment Plan, facilitated by the Center for Performance Assessment, and built from the following MSU student outcomes, wherein, upon graduation, students will be able:

- To read and listen with understanding and express themselves effectively in written and spoken standard English;
- To think critically and analytically;
- To gather information through research and use of the library and report that information responsibly;
- To solve mathematical and computational problems;
- To demonstrate knowledge of problem-solving methods and of the historical development, present-day applications and cross-disciplinary connections of mathematics and information structures;
- To demonstrate integrated knowledge of problem-solving techniques in the basic concepts and principles of the biological and physical sciences, of the history and philosophy of science, and of ecological, personal and social issues related to the sciences;
- To demonstrate integrated knowledge of the major contributors, masterpieces, history, criticism and theories of literature, philosophy (including religion), art and music from the ancient to the modern world, as they developed in western civilization;
- To demonstrate integrated knowledge of the heritage, culture, social structures and accomplishments of autochthonous African cultures and African-American civilization;
- To demonstrate a global perspective and integrated knowledge of the heritage, culture, social structures and accomplishments of one non-western civilization;
- To demonstrate integrated knowledge of the political, social and economic development of American society in relation to the world, of the history and geography of America and the world, of civic affairs and responsibilities, of personal, interpersonal, inter-group and intra-group relations, and of learning, work habits and career choices;
- To demonstrate integrated knowledge of health as a personal, group and social issue, of healthful living, of physical fitness and of optimal body functioning, general wellness, stress reduction and recreation;
- To demonstrate habits of courtesy, friendliness, honesty, integrity, civility and orderly conduct; and
- To demonstrate a sense of discipline that lends itself to good study habits and a sense of purpose that leads to beneficial and maximal use of university resources.

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Morgan State University's report supplies strong evidence of a high-level commitment to using assessment to improve learning and teaching. Learning outcomes are well defined, and a rich variety of direct and indirect methods are used to assess learning outcomes. However, the university should work to integrate more direct measures and fewer indirect measures of learning, and ensure that faculty have a central role in learning outcomes assessment.

Although the university's report contains many examples of assessment results, the balance tilts a little too far in the direction of indirect measures. The university should provide more results of direct assessment in future reports. For example, the report notes that "All departments report challenges… from minor to extensive" for both written communication outcomes and critical thinking outcomes. These statements could have been expanded to reveal patterns in the data involving common challenges around particular sub-skills, as well as examples of change strategies developed and employed by departments.

The role of the faculty within the university assessment structure is not entirely clear in this report. It is essential that faculty play a key role in planning assessment, analyzing results, and planning future action. The university must ensure that faculty take this role if it is not already doing so, and depict faculty leadership in future editions of this report.

The university should also strengthen its description of the connections between assessment results and changes in teaching. It is clear that assessment activities are being conducted, and it is also clear that curricular and co-curricular changes are taking place, but it is not clear how assessment results led to the changes, or how the changes will address specific identified problems.

St. Mary's College of Maryland

Institution's Executive Summary of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

Assessment occurs with guidance and support from the President, the President's Council, and the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs leads the assessment effort at the College utilizing various campus entities such as the SPC, academic departments, and administrative units. This drives the Colleges efforts to continue previous processes or the development of new assessment activities to monitor and guide its programs and operations. These assessment activities range from department and unit assessment reports to entering first-year student placement exams in foreign language and writing. Guided by the Mission Statement and the five-year Strategic Plan, St. Mary's College has been implementing assessment activities that not only provide descriptive data but also act as guides for implementing changes needed to ensure St. Mary's College is fulfilling its mission.

On May 14, 2010, St. Mary's College completed and submitted to the Middle States Council on Higher Education the Periodic Review Report (PRR) in which the College describes its assessment activities since the last Self-Study in 2005. The PRR focused on three key efforts: strategic planning and the mission statement, the Core Curriculum, and the assessment of student learning and institutional effectiveness. The PRR provided examples of ongoing St. Mary's College assessment activities and highlighted assessment processes for evaluating and revising institutional practices. The following gives a summary of the PRR focus as it is relevant to this Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report (SLOAR).

Strategic Planning and the Mission Statement

Assessments of 2004-2009 Strategic Plan Implementation. Using a system of publicly available documents and through presentations to various groups within the campus community the Dean of Faculty chronicled the progress made in the metrics associated with the 2004-2009 Strategic Plan. The SPC used this analysis to begin its work on formulating the next strategic plan.

2007-08 Mission-based Assessment Instrument. During the 2008-09 academic year, academic departments and administrative units completed an assessment instrument designed to evaluate contributions toward the accomplishment of Mission objectives. After submissions were evaluated, a summary of progress proved daunting. The consistency of the data and the narrative submitted by each department varied widely and the College has since decided to explore alternatives to document our progress toward accomplishing the mission. The College will use what was learned from this process to design a more straightforward instrument in the future.

Feedback on 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. The SPC, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, drafted the priorities of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan. All faculty, staff, and students had an opportunity to read and comment on the priorities. The SPC revised the priorities based on feedback received. Tactical teams were created which consisted of representatives of the SPC and additional students, faculty, and staff. These teams utilized the revision to draft tactics to

help St. Mary's College achieve the priorities. These revisions were then shared with the campus for feedback. The draft was revised again and has been shared with the new President.

Core Curriculum

A new Core Curriculum was implemented in fall 2008 in which four fundamental skills (critical thinking, information literacy, written expression, and oral expression) are emphasized. St. Mary's College believes these four skills are the cornerstones of a liberal arts education and are essential to an integrative curriculum. Assessment activities of the Core Curriculum have initially focused on the First-Year Seminars and the issues have ranged from training faculty to student learning and satisfaction. The results of these assessments include the following: identifying best practices by using student assessments to identify sections where students report skill development; changing training extensively in response to individual feedback and surveys distributed to faculty; and changing the ePortfolio component of the First-Year Seminars in response to a pilot program. In addition, the Core Curriculum Committee has identified two additional directions for continual assessment of the Core Curriculum. The first will be a coordinated effort to identify student-learning outcomes for the Core requirement of "Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World". The second will be in assisting academic departments to assess current and future approaches to teaching the four fundamental skills within departmental course offerings.

Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness

St. Mary's College continues to progress in using the College's Mission Statement to link assessment and decision making. In addition there is an increased expectation about assessment in academic departments and administrative units throughout the College. St. Mary's College continues its development of a comprehensive, institution-wide assessment plan that focuses efforts to improve sharing applicable information widely, increase awareness of the types of assessment being done among interested constituencies, and the promotion of the communication of how assessment guides decision making. The College must increase support of assessment-related activities, both financially and administratively. Below are examples of activities employed by St. Mary's College to assess student learning and measure institutional effectiveness:

- Implementation of academic department student-learning assessment plans
- Implementation and analysis of course evaluations
- Assessment of learning objectives of the four skills in First-Year Seminars and within departmental course surveys
- Academic department distributed student, senior exit, and alumni surveys
- The review of output from coursework (assignments, artistic products, papers, journals, oral presentations, lab reports, student portfolios, exams, etc.) in academic departments
- Judicial sanction papers
- Assessing skills and knowledge in the Core Curriculum and majors through the use of pre- and post-tests
- Analysis of program and workshop evaluations (e.g., DeSousa-Brent Scholars, Career Development workshops, New Student Days and Orientation, Teaching Excellence Workshops, programs in the residence halls)
- Residence Life survey "Bridging Academic and Social Experiences"

- The review of the capstone senior research of the St. Mary's Projects (at the departmental and College-wide levels)
- The review of the evaluations from the student leader training sessions (e.g., Resident Assistant, Orientation Leader, Student Government Association, First Responder, Multicultural Achievement Peer Programs, Judicial Board)
- Alumni surveys (1-, 5-, and 10-year administrations)
- Client satisfaction surveys in the Counseling Center
- Judicial statistics (including recidivism rates for alcohol and other drugs)
- Participation levels (e.g., program attendance, community service completed by students, library journal usage, appointments at Counseling and Health Services, New Student Days and Orientation events)
- Senior exit survey
- The evaluation of efforts of professional development for faculty and staff (e.g., Teaching and Learning workshops, Student Affairs retreats)
- The analysis of the Faculty Climate Survey
- Implementation and analysis of national benchmarking instruments (NSSE, BCSSE, NCHA, EBI, etc)

MHEC Staff Review of 2011 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report

St. Mary's College of Maryland has worked diligently in recent years to develop its assessment activities in curricular and co-curricular areas. Unfortunately, most of the college's report is comprised of vague and unsupported descriptions of assessment results and changes resulting from them. For example, in the section on written and oral expression, the report asserts, "Many departments adjusted teaching approaches to enhance the quality of the expression of an argument within coursework and presentations, as this is a familiar theme in the annual assessment reviews." However, this statement is not followed by any examples of such adjustments, nor by any description of any data or evidence collected from direct learning measures at either the department or college level that led faculty to the conclusion that teaching practices needed to be changed.

Although the college asserts that direct measures of student learning are used, no data are presented and no results are discussed; although the college declares that learning assessment has produced changes in pedagogy and curriculum, no specific examples of change are described. The college must ensure that faculty are using direct methods to assess student learning, that the results of this direct assessment are leading to improvements in teaching and learning, and that the college's SLOAR report provides specific examples of change. Both volumes of this report provide examples of all three activities.

(continued)

The only examples of evidence presented in the report are the results of indirect measures, especially surveys. College-wide surveys include the survey of first-year seminar students, feedback from employers and alumni, and the NSSE. These are complemented by a number of department-level surveys of student attitudes and self-perceptions. Instruments such as these reflect student and employer opinions, but a reliance on student perceptions of learning displaces the faculty from its rightful authority and obligation to evaluate student learning directly. Indirect measures can have an important place in a system of learning assessment. But direct methods must be at the heart of any such system.

Although Part Three of the college's report presents some examples of teaching changes, many of these alterations are attributed to results from indirect measures, and even the changes that might have derived from direct methods are vaguely asserted, rather than demonstrated or described in detail. In future reports the college must provide examples of specific evidence resulting from direct assessment and specific changes to teaching and learning resulting from that evidence.

It is also not clear from this report whether the college has established clear expectations for what students are expected to learn. The learning outcomes presented for each of the competencies are very broad, and they are not clarified by rubrics or any descriptions of specific student behaviors. The report says that results from student surveys attest that the students themselves believe their skills have "improved," but nothing in this report suggests that students have achieved a certain level of mastery, or even that they have improved "enough."

There is little in the report to suggest that assessment results are analyzed at the institutional level. Although the report refers to an Assessment Council, this body is not described, nor does it appear on the college's website. Although the Dean of Faculty is said to require assessment plans from academic departments, there is no indication that the Dean is involved in reviewing these plans or the assessments, or in ensuring that resources are allocated to support changes indicated by these results.

The college's well-earned reputation for academic excellence makes the shortcomings of this report particularly disappointing. However, that same reputation suggests that the college is capable of moving rapidly to ensure sound practices in the assessment of teaching and learning. The college should draw on all the resources available to it, including other Maryland colleges and universities, other members of the Council on Public Liberal Arts Colleges, and MHEC, to ensure that it can serve as an exemplar of strong efforts to improve teaching and learning.