

**1998 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT
REPORTS**

MARYLAND PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

CAMPUS SUMMARIES

SEPTEMBER, 1998

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background.....	p. 1
Summary.....	p. 2
Guidelines.....	p. 5
Community Colleges.....	p. 11
Allegany College of Maryland.....	p. 13
Anne Arundel Community College.....	p. 15
Baltimore City Community College.....	p. 17
Carroll Community College.....	p. 19
Catonsville Community College.....	p. 21
Cecil Community College.....	p. 23
Charles County Community College.....	p. 25
Chesapeake College.....	p. 27
Dundalk Community College.....	p. 29
Essex Community College.....	p. 31
Frederick Community College.....	p. 33
Garrett Community College.....	p. 35
Hagerstown Community College.....	p. 37
Harford Community College.....	p. 39
Howard Community College.....	p. 41
Montgomery College.....	p. 43
Prince George’s Community College.....	p. 45
Wor-Wic Community College.....	p. 47
University System of Maryland.....	p. 49
Bowie State University.....	p. 51
Coppin State College.....	p. 53
Frostburg State University.....	p. 55
Salisbury State University.....	p. 57
Towson University.....	p. 59
University of Baltimore.....	p. 61
University of Maryland Baltimore County.....	p. 63
University of Maryland, College Park.....	p. 65
University of Maryland Eastern Shore.....	p. 67
University of Maryland University College.....	p. 69
Morgan State University.....	p. 71
St. Mary’s College of Maryland.....	p. 75

BACKGROUND

As part of the state's performance accountability process prior to 1996, Maryland's public colleges and universities had to develop a plan for the assessment of undergraduate student learning outcomes and to submit annual progress reports to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. However, a new accountability system adopted by the Commission in 1996 gave the governing boards of the public campuses primary responsibility for monitoring student learning outcomes, although the Commission retained the option of seeking progress reports on this subject.

In approving the new process, the Commission requested that the Secretary of Higher Education work with the heads of the public segments to develop a formal reporting schedule for the submission of these status reports. Agreement was reached that the public campuses would provide the Commission with a report on their progress in improving student learning, instructional effectiveness, and curriculum every three years, beginning in 1998. The Secretary invited the public higher education segments to name representatives to an ad hoc committee to work with the Commission staff in establishing a common format for these reports. These guidelines, which were approved by the Commission in October 1997, are included in this document.

This document contains summaries of the progress reports received from each Maryland public college and university. University of Maryland, Baltimore was exempted because its enrollment consists predominately of graduate and professional students. The summaries follow the organization of the reports, which were to be prepared in two sections. In the first, the institutions reported on the most significant ways in which the assessment process at their campus has produced innovations and changes in undergraduate learning and teaching, the quality of programs and curriculum, academic planning and decision making, the allocation of resources, and policies, procedures and structures. In the second, institutions focused in-depth on one particular assessment activity: the evaluation of writing competencies. The summaries from each campus are accompanied by a short analysis by the Commission staff.

SUMMARY

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The campus reports were quite diverse in their format and presentation. Some institutions discussed assessment processes at the course and program level, others gave overviews of campus wide activities, and a few did both. Some institutions, such as Anne Arundel Community College, Towson University, and Salisbury State University, have tied their assessment process directly to their strategic plan or priorities. Many campuses, such as Chesapeake College, Frederick Community College and Harford Community College, provided detailed descriptions of various assessment activities at their institutions. Others focused their discussion on specific areas: Prince George's Community College addressed how assessment outcomes in the area of remedial education led to major academic program decisions, including a pilot project called the R³ Academy which is geared to enhancing the thinking skills and academic competencies of at-risk students. Morgan State University has concentrated its assessment efforts primarily on strengthening existing academic programs and improving retention and graduation rates.

Institutions varied in their level of experience with assessment. The report from Bowie State University described a campus that is in the process of totally reviewing its assessment procedure, having recently hired a Learning Outcomes Assessment Director. The receipt of the prestigious Bellwether Award by Howard Community College this year reflects the accomplishment of an institution that has had assessment procedures in place for several years and is now experiencing positive results of this system. The Bellwether Award recognizes the effectiveness of outcomes programs in promoting both institutional change and value reassessment at the college.

Several campuses described innovative projects which have emerged from their assessment activities. These are a few examples:

- At St. Mary's College of Maryland, assessment efforts have resulted in the St. Mary's Project, a revised honors curriculum. Scheduled to be mandatory for all students by 2002, it is intended to enhance academic skills and engender responsibility and personal growth among students.
- At the Merrick School of Business at University of Baltimore, students are encouraged to prepare portfolios that demonstrate their mastery of five core competencies (communication, teamwork, problem solving, information technology, and career readiness) and use them to compete for progress awards. The use of this Student Competency Assessment, which includes the involvement of corporate sponsors, will be expanded in the coming year.
- At University of Maryland Eastern Shore, administrators and faculty have established the General Education Assessment Project which identifies desired student outcomes for general education and an assessment mechanism for these outcomes. Among the accomplishments that have emerged so far from this project are the establishment of a faculty-centered campus advisory committee and the creation of a student learning outcomes course match matrix.

Surveys are given a high level of importance in the assessment process. Student and graduate surveys tend to give faculty high ratings whereas student services frequently get the lower ratings. This seems

to be particularly true for the areas of financial aid and advising. Towson University, which discussed in its report areas of “high importance and least satisfaction” for students, used an appropriate term to describe the problems uncovered through assessment of the student services area by referring to it as “Eliminating the Run-around”. While other institutions did not use this term, most of the reports noted these areas as needing attention and have addressed these problems. Examples include the creation of one-stop registration, tutoring labs, and dormitory computer hookups.

Several institutions noted that full support from faculty is necessary for assessment measures to succeed. It apparently has been a challenge in several cases but the institutions seem to have been successful in resolving this problem. Many institutions have put additional resources into faculty training and now include faculty at all levels of assessment planning. Two year institutions frequently noted the need for greater communication between full- and part-time faculty and most have programs in place to meet this need.

Another area frequently mentioned is the impact information technology and high tech course offerings are having on student outcomes. Keeping up with the fast pace of computer technology was mentioned by virtually all institutions. Distance learning, self-paced courses, interactive video, and course offerings on the Internet are all being incorporated into the curricula. However, information technology was not universally acclaimed. Catonsville Community College offered an example of what they referred to as going from “high tech to high touch.” The success rate of two courses was decreasing and assessment measures indicated that the students needed a more traditional mode of instruction. The decision was made to return instruction to the traditional classroom, and student achievement and satisfaction went back up.

Developmental education is of particular interest, more so to the two-year schools. Several institutions made the point that incorporating initiatives to help these students succeed can only be effective *if* the students use these services and accept the offered advice and services. More than one institution commented that those students taking advantage of such programs and services are much more likely to remain enrolled and graduate.

Another recurring idea at both two and four year institutions is the implementation of an introduction to college course for entering freshmen. These courses utilize all the assessment information that has been gathered regarding the difficulties encountered by new students and attempt to assist students in adjusting to college life, thereby increasing retention and graduation rates.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

In 1995, instructors of freshmen writing, representative of Maryland’s two- and four-year public institutions, formulated a Statement of Expectations regarding English composition. This statement is contained in the guidelines to the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment reports. With few exceptions, the Statement of Expectations has been accepted and incorporated into freshman English courses and represents the expected competencies. A few institutions have a two-course requirement but the most common English requirement is the introductory English composition course. Two-year schools are more likely to offer developmental English prior to the credit English course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Portfolio assessment is becoming a more common method of assessing writing competencies. In those institutions where it is not already in place, it is frequently the method being evaluated for development and implementation. Other methods include instructor assessment, essay evaluation, meeting course requirements/standards, and exit exams. Steps are taken through the establishment of norms to ensure consistency in grading within a department. The Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition document, which a statewide group of faculty who teach writing developed at the request of the chief academic officers of Maryland public campuses, is being reviewed for inclusion into the curriculum for many of the institutions. This report recommends criteria in determining whether a paper should receive a "C" grade in college-level English composition.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Many institutions did not address this area. However when addressed, Writing Across the Curriculum programs were the most frequently mentioned. These programs encourage faculty in all disciplines to use writing assignments in their courses and to grade students in part on their ability of expression. Approximately a third of the institutions reported that Writing Across the Curriculum is already being used; several others reported it in the developmental stage or under consideration.

Staff Analysis

It is apparent from reviewing the institutions' reports that all have adopted assessment measures, and more important, are actively using these results to improve teaching, learning, and/or the quality of academic programs and services. The institutions' reports were wide ranging and often enthusiastic regarding changes that are occurring at their campus. The results of assessment have resulted in a great number of significant efforts to improve the education process for students at Maryland public colleges and universities.

GUIDELINES

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
Progress Reports on Student Learning Outcomes Assessment
Reporting Guidelines

Background

As part of the state's performance accountability process prior to 1996, Maryland's public colleges and universities had to develop a plan for the assessment of undergraduate student learning outcomes and to submit annual progress reports to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. However, a new accountability system adopted by the Commission in 1996 gave the governing boards of the public campuses primary responsibility for monitoring student learning outcomes, although the Commission retained the option of seeking progress reports on this subject.

In approving the new process, the Commission requested that the Secretary of Higher Education work with the heads of the public segments to develop a formal reporting schedule for the submission of these status reports. Agreement was reached that the public campuses would provide the Commission with a report on their progress in improving student learning, instructional effectiveness, and curriculum every three years. Since the last student learning outcomes report was in 1995, the public campuses will provide the Commission with an update of their activities in 1998, with successive reports submitted on a three-year cycle. The Secretary invited the public higher education segments to name representatives to an ad hoc committee to work with the Commission staff in establishing a common format for these reports.

The following guidelines represent the results of these efforts. The reports, which shall be due at the Commission on June 1, 1998, will have two parts. In Part I, institutions are asked to describe specific ways in which the assessment process at their campus has produced innovations and changes. In Part II, institutions are asked to focus in depth on one particular assessment activity: evaluation of writing competencies. Other competencies, notably math and quantitative skills, will be added in future reports. The entire report should not exceed six pages, and it will be presented to the Commission as submitted by the campuses without staff editing. However, the report will be accompanied by analysis by the Commission staff.

Part I. Institutional Impact of Assessment

Campuses will prepare a succinct description of the *most* significant ways they have used (or plan to use in the immediate future) what they have gleaned from its assessment efforts to improve undergraduate teaching and learning, the quality of programs and curriculum, academic planning and decision-making, the allocation of resources, and policies, procedures, services and structures. Emphasis should be given to those outcomes that have had specific educational benefits for students.

These can include actions that have resulted from an examination of information obtained from a variety of methods. Examples:

- *Head Counting*, including data about enrollments; graduation, retention and transfer rates; and graduate and professional school admissions.
- *Survey Findings*, including those surveys of graduates and current students to determine their perception about the quality of their education.
- *Test Data*, including the results of licensure or certification examinations, program completion tests, diagnostic tests in discipline content areas, basic skills proficiency tests, and follow-up studies of remedial students.
- *Other Approaches*, including exit interviews with graduates, review of a portfolio of students' work, and students' evaluation of teaching.

Part II. Assessment of Writing Competencies

In 1995, a representative group of faculty who teach freshmen writing courses at Maryland's public two- and four-year campuses formulated a "statement of expectations" regarding English composition. This statement was developed in response to the Maryland Higher Education Commission's guidelines for statewide general education. There are plans to make the statement consistent with the high school core learning goals in English being developed by the Maryland Department of Education. A copy of the statement of expectations is appended to this document. Institutions should include the following in their report:

- A description of the writing competencies expected of freshmen who complete the first general education writing course (English Composition), the fit between these competencies and those outlined in the "statement of expectations", and any actions that have been taken or are planned to address differences that may exist.
- A description of the methods for and/or the results of assessing the writing competencies of students at the conclusion of their first general education writing course and any actions taken or planned to achieve improvement. Institutions which have not undertaken an assessment of the writing skills of freshmen, but which intend to do so in the future, should describe these plans.
- A description of the methods for and/or the results of any assessment activity aimed at measuring the writing competencies of undergraduate students beyond their first general education writing course and any actions taken or planned to achieve improvement. Institutions which have not undertaken such an assessment, but intend to do so in the future, should describe these plans.

STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

Freshman Writing

On Aug. 11, 1995, instructors of freshman writing, representative of Maryland's two- and four-year public institutions, met to formulate a statement regarding English composition. The following statement was developed in order to clarify the English component of the Chief Academic Officers' response to the Maryland Higher Education Commission's guidelines for statewide general education. This was the third meeting held, and it followed a review of freshman writing syllabi from the two- and four-year campuses.

I. Each institution will develop a freshman writing program, which may include a sequence of courses, consistent with the needs of its student population and its mission. However, the freshman writing course (or an equivalent course) designated by the institution as completing the general education freshman composition requirement should:

- be informed by current research in composition and rhetoric
- advance students' understanding of themselves as writers, including understanding that they participate with others in public discourse and have moral and ethical responsibilities in that discourse

II. Students who complete the designated composition course should write well-organized and balanced expository prose. They should be able to:

- formulate and support a thesis
- inform, argue, and persuade
- address a range of audiences effectively
- employ advanced conceptual skills: analyze, synthesize, evaluate, formulate
- support claims with adequate and pertinent evidence
- support generalizations with legitimate specifics

III. To achieve these goals for students, the designated composition course should be designated to promote students' ability to:

- understand writing as a recursive process as well as a product
- manage that process through skills of sorting, drafting, revising, and editing
- recognize stylistic options, their range of choices among them, and the reasons for using each
- use the conventions of standard written U.S. English and manuscript presentation
- understand the primary principles of scholarly inquiry and research, including how to identify appropriate issues, formulate appropriate questions, find relevant information, and effectively incorporate findings in their own writing
- respect and use the conventions of documentation
- craft an extended piece of expository or persuasive writing

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

ALLEGANY COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

Allegany College of Maryland presented a detailed view of their approach to assessment and strategies. The discussion was divided into five major categories.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Enrollment and Access. Through studies of enrollment data, the College determined that enrollment has slightly declined since 1993. The population most involved in this decline is the in-county, non-traditional, part-time, evening and career students. The College has created several initiatives to counter this decline. These include a task force created to develop marketing and student services for evening programs targeted to the working adult, increased financial assistance, scholarship programs targeted at the low income, working adult, and developing Distance Education.

Placement and Developmental Education. As a result of the study on the effectiveness of academic placement and the developmental education program, the College has instituted a student development course for those assessed as needing developmental reading and English. Additionally, the revamped developmental tracking systems revealed problems with registration and advising that are now being addressed. Students will now be guided in registering for needed developmental courses in the proper sequence.

New retention techniques are now being piloted. These include a six-credit developmental math course to be completed in one semester, special "developmental advisors" for students requiring remediation in three different areas, the piloting of a "learning communities" project and innovative ways of using tutors.

Retention and Graduation. A prime concern of the College is that students do not leave the institution for reasons other than goal achievement. Student survey data indicates that

- financial consideration is a major factor in a decision to discontinue studies,
- there has been an increase in the time needed to complete a degree, and
- there has been a slight decline in the percentages of matriculating students who transfer to a four year college within a four year period.

Therefore, the College has instituted new strategies to improve the retention, graduation and transfer success. The College believes that the improvements in the developmental education and the financial aid areas will improve retention and graduation success. Also, a Women's Center has been established to respond to the needs of non-traditional female students. Allegany College is working with Frostburg, its main transfer partner, to identify transfer course patterns.

Instructional Environment. The assessment of the instructional environment receives high ratings in most areas but the campus distance learning network indicated some student dissatisfaction. The College now has a full-time Distance Education Coordinator and is staffing classrooms with distance lab assistants. To assist the distance learning faculty, orientation programs and faculty development workshops have been instituted.

Program Evaluation. The College uses internal reports in addition to Maryland Higher Education Commission reports to assist in the evaluation of programs. It has been noticed that due to depressed

local economic conditions, the graduate employment rates are not as high as other community colleges in the state. A permanent Job Placement Office and annual career fair have been established to address this problem.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Allegany College offers three freshman level writing courses that satisfy the Maryland general education requirements. The course is centered around several student writing projects and emphasizes skills needed to write the brief essay. At least one essay required by the course must be written in class, under exam conditions. The course is designed to meet each criteria listed in the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The division chair inspects the course syllabi each semester to ensure that they are compatible with course guidelines, which are based on the Statement of Expectations. To assess outcomes, the College relies primarily on grades, course evaluations and graduate self-assessment of the degree to which the College helped to "improve writing skills". Allegany College is studying the adopting of uniform assessment tool such as the one described in Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition. Parts of this report have already been adopted; for example, the guidelines for evaluation of student essays. It is likely that many of the remaining recommendations will become College policy in the near future. The plan is to institute a pilot project to determine what types of assessment methods can work at the College.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The College has no formal system to evaluate competencies gained in the first English course or beyond, besides grades issued in subsequent course work and student assessments of their own achievement.

Staff Analysis

The College presented an interesting, informative report with many details that cannot be covered by this summary. It describes the areas of concern and lists the way they are being addressed. The College is to be commended for its multi-faceted approach to assessment.

ANNE ARUNDEL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Anne Arundel Community College has established seven strategic priorities to accomplish the goals of their vision statement: student success, meeting community needs, teaching and learning, technology, professional development, human resources, and funding. Various measurable outcomes have been developed to assess these priorities. The strategic priorities that directly affect students are discussed in the outcomes report.

Institutional Impact of Assessment:

Student Success. Since 1995, the College has undertaken outcomes studies that have resulted in major changes to improve student success. In fall 1997, a mandatory pre-registration testing policy for degree or certificate seeking students was established. The College introduced a "nondegree" admit status code to differentiate between students pursuing a degree and students taking courses for personal enrichment. It is hoped that the nondegree code will allow for more accurate assessment data in retention, graduation and transfer rates.

In fall 1998, a new grading system will be implemented to assist in determining whether lack of student success in a course is due to not meeting course objectives or to non-attendance. The results of this new grading system will allow AACC to develop strategies for targeting information about the withdrawal process to those populations most likely to receive a failing grade. Additionally, it will give the College a tool to determine if curricula need to be examined. The student referral system has been streamlined to allow for most students to be contacted within 24 hours of a referral. In fall 1998, the college will be piloting an orientation course to introduce the student to the college community. The success of these students will be matched against a matched cohort of students from fall 1997.

Meeting Community Needs. The College expanded Weekend College to include degree and certificate options thereby allowing students to attend class at a convenient time and get a degree. New programs, Business Support Specialist and Telecommunications, were developed as a result of a workforce development questionnaire and focus group. The Continuing Education division works with local business and industry to be responsive to the county's needs.

Teaching and Learning. The College offers a series of professional development activities to educate faculty in the value of assessment and in various techniques for evaluating assessment. The College has developed standardized core questions for course evaluations; increased internship and practical opportunities; established peer tutoring; and created supplemental instruction sections. Concrete statements of rationale and the purpose and methodology for assessing learning must be included in course proposals for general education courses, computer courses and interdisciplinary courses.

Technology and Professional Development. The "Designs of Learning " program supports faculty teams to work on projects that will integrate technology and/or alternate pedagogies into existing programs. Distance education courses and on-line courses are alternative formats being used and assessed. The College continues to study the effectiveness of its distance education offerings by surveying students taking these nontraditional courses.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

English 112, which fulfills the general education freshman composition requirement, and English 111, a prerequisite to English 112, demonstrate a fair match to the competencies listed in the Statement of Expectations. These two course competencies will be revised to more closely correspond with the Statement of Expectations in the specific areas of advanced conceptual skills, supporting details, and writing as a recursive process. Although these skills are taught in these courses, the language will be revised to more clearly demonstrate this match.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The method of assessment for the general education writing course and its prerequisite credit writing course is embedded assessment. The purpose of the embedded assessment approach is to improve consistency of students' writing outcomes by requiring each instructor to assess clearly identified competencies. Instructors assess each required competency by direct observation of the student's work while in progress and in the evaluation of the final draft. Instructors are encouraged to use a departmentally agreed upon description of grading standards to assess mastery of these competencies in the final paper.

Every semester the English and Reading Department Head and the Part-time Faculty Coordinator check the syllabi and other course materials of all faculty for appropriate inclusion of the required competencies and assessments. They also review substantial and representative sets of student compositions for appropriate inclusions of competencies and for quality and consistency in the instructor's assessment.

The English and Reading Department plan to adopt the following measures to improve instruction and consistency of standards:

- improved mentoring and support for part-time faculty through reorganization of supervision.
- continued improvement of quality of instruction among faculty by seeking increased opportunities for faculty development.
- improved consistency of standards of assessment among faculty.

This can be accomplished through the pursuit of college resources to support a program of blind holistic assessments of selected compositions; norming sessions to achieve consistency of grading standards based on the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition, and tracking of outcomes.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in this report..

Staff Analysis

The College discussed its strategies and how they have resulted in improved student success. It has incorporated assessment into the seven areas they discussed and are using the results of assessment to improve services offered as well as initiate new innovative ideas. Of particular interest is the nondegree status code that the College feels will allow for a more detailed and accurate assessment process.

BALTIMORE CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Baltimore City Community College has implemented a planning and decision-making model that looks at and is responsive to both qualitative and quantitative data and reports. The report discusses significant ways that assessment initiatives have affected the college's decision making process to meet its central focus of teaching and learning.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The College is working intensively on its Developmental Education curriculum as part of a Title III grant. Information from student and faculty surveys in this area have guided the focus of instruction training sessions on course relevancy and student attendance.

The College has allocated resources to strengthen the programs of Dietetics, Nursing and Respiratory Care. The pass rates for these programs have not increased at the desired rate as set by benchmarks in the Institutional Performance Accountability Report. Initiatives have been developed by faculty to enhance efforts and improve pass rates for these programs.

BCCC has implemented a faculty-guided process through the Program Evaluation Committee. Each degree program is evaluated once every four years, using student outcome data such as retention rates, transfer success and job placement. The Committee recommends actions to the Vice President for Academic Affairs as a result of this assessment analysis. The goal of this process is to ensure that programs are strong, viable and meeting the needs of the students.

Student assessment of faculty is part of the College's faculty evaluation process. Full-time faculty are evaluated annually. Results of these assessments are used to develop programs for the annual Faculty Development Days.

Surveys of graduates are collected annually to gather information to be used to improve programs and services. The quality of instruction receives high ratings. The quality and quantity of laboratory equipment receive the least favorable ratings, which the College is addressing through the use of Perkins funding. BCCC is also seeking to improve academic advising as a result of the student ratings.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Eng101 (English Writing) is the College's freshman composition course. Students must produce four polished essays of graduated complexity. Polished essays refer to those essays that have been processed through invention/discovery, draft, peer and instructor review, and revision. They have been edited and graded. Guidelines exist for the grading of the polished essays. The course syllabi mirror the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition and support the same goals.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The four polished essays must achieve a 70 percent proficiency in order to pass Eng101. Essay grades are not averaged. Instructors provide students with at least two opportunities to revise their work for higher grades after returning the graded essay. Guidelines for grading the essays include:

- essays are typed and submitted with the invention/discovery work, rough drafts, and peer reviews.
- polished essays should discuss subjects appropriate for college writing.
- instructors should respond to essays with the goal of guiding students to improve their writing.

Grading can differ depending upon the emphasis of the assignment. However common standards have been set by the College.

Students must pass the Eng101 Exit Exam. This requires that the students compose an essay in an arena setting (impromptu, timed, three hours) based on prompts from a set of previously identified readings from the textbook "Who Are We". The student must demonstrate that they have attained a level of writing proficiency that will assist them in succeeding both academically and professionally. Essays are evaluated by faculty other than the classroom instructor using grading criteria that are set for the Exit Exam.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Since all BCCC students must pass an exit exam as part of the requirements of Eng101, the College has not instituted a second writing exam for upper level students. One of the guidelines for general education courses is that they include a variety of written assignments and a goal of clear and effective communication skills. Workshops have been offered over the last few years that have involved faculty from across the College. The workshops dealt with developing better ways of integrating reading and writing skills collegewide.

Staff Analysis

The College presented an overview of assessment policies currently in place. It was indicated that results of assessment in such areas as faculty, facilities and academic programs have generated new guidelines and procedures. The College has been moving forward in incorporating assessment into its mission.

CARROLL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Carroll Community College briefly reported on the specific ways the assessment process at the college has produced innovations and changes.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Carroll Community College has established a process for reporting instructional outcomes within program reviews. This process has been streamlined with the introduction of new program review questions and should be more productive in the future. Program reviews have resulted in specific changes in twelve programs.

CCC has developed a faculty- student evaluation instrument that is shared with the faculty and their chairs. A baseline of data is being established from these student evaluations and will be used to promote instructional improvement.

Enrollment trends are carefully observed to accommodate the changing needs of students. Based on several years of data, new marketing strategies have been developed. Weekend College, an Honors Institute and new course offerings using interactive video and on-line web-based courses are some of the results of enrollment trend assessment.

Utilizing Maryland Higher Education Commission data on retention, the College has embarked on a new retention effort. Additionally, CCC has redesigned the developmental education program.

The College also uses MHEC data for job satisfaction and transfer preparation. Strategies are in place to maintain current levels of satisfaction.

To promote diversity in its teaching ranks and upper management, the College is making systematic efforts to enhance its performance in attracting more minorities.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Carroll Community College is inaugurating its writing competency assessment program in fall 1998. The College will be using the portfolio approach. Multiple readers will be used to assure agreed-upon standards are met.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Students completing the composition course will be able to:

- formulate and support a thesis
- address a range of audiences effectively
- employ advanced conceptual skills
- support claims with adequate and pertinent evidence
- support generalizations with legitimate specifics.

Systematic analysis of portfolios will identify persistent areas of difficulty. The results of these analysis will be used to improve the writing course to correct these areas.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in the report

Staff Analysis

The report very briefly discussed several innovations and changes that have been a result of assessment; there was no discussion as to what these strategies include, sources used in generating these changes or the implementation plans. More descriptive information was needed in this report.

CATONSVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Catonsville Community College reported specifically on six programs and/or courses that have been assessed. The discussion covered the actions taken from the assessment, the consequences of these actions and future plans.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Revision of the Nursing program. Assessment of attrition and graduation rates indicated problematic admission issues. An admissions panel addressed the problem and multiple revisions to existing admission standards, and initiatives have been implemented. These include stricter math requirements, providing independent study and reinforcement of skill development. Methods used to accomplish this includes tutoring, individual advising and increased number of clinical faculty. The college has found that the students who most need to take advantage of all the special programs that have been put in place are the students who most resist taking maximum advantage of these opportunities. Therefore no major impact has been realized in increasing success. Future plans now include early intervention, alternative teaching strategies, revising some courses, and introducing computerized teaching and learning support in the Allied Health Technology lab.

Revision of Occupational Therapy Assistant and Mortuary Science programs. Since these programs require certifying exams, student outcome assessment results in an on-going process. Continual revision occurs to ensure that the programs are meeting the needs of students and employers.

Revision of developmental mathematics courses. Developmental courses are revised based on the success rates in subsequent courses. In 1996-97 the Mathematics Department reorganized the content of existing courses and implemented a new series of modules to allow more entry points for students needing developmental work to allow for more in-depth coverage before tackling credit courses.

Revision of teaching strategies. The offering of classes via interactive video or by self-paced individualized learning mode are two methods being used with much more frequency. Two courses using these modes of instruction were altered after assessing the outcome of the courses. One course, offered via interactive video at four sites, was re-evaluated after student complaints and poor performance. After meeting with students, the instructor agreed to make site visits and actually conducted the class at a local site. This change resulted in more student involvement in the course and a more conducive learning environment. A second course, a feeder course into all upper level courses in this program and offered in the self-paced mode, was assessed as having lower completion rate and lower grades than expected. Changing the course's delivery to be offered in the traditional mode has resulted in increased student persistence and an overall positive effect, not just on the course but the entire program.

Revision of Technical Studies programs. Each year the Technical Studies faculty assess their programs to determine what is needed to enhance the students' employability and the current needs of the business and industry community. The most recent assessment generated new courses, particularly in the computer field, the elimination or reduction of options in some programs/courses and the offering of technical courses as both credit and non-credit.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Students enrolled in the first general education writing course, The Craft of Composition, are expected to demonstrate all the competencies listed in the Statement of Expectations. Throughout the course, instructors emphasize the skills which writers employ during various states of the writing process. A research unit addresses basic research skills.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Writing competencies are evaluated throughout the course via six essays, ranging in length from 500 to 1000 words. The essays employ a variety of modes of compositions such as exemplification and comparison/contrast. Instructors evaluate these essays for unity, development, coherence, correctness, and style. Currently the English department is revising its student evaluation procedures to bring them into line with the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not discussed in this report.

Staff Analysis

The report dealt with the specific activities within individual programs. This would indicate that the College is evaluating and assessing each program individually. Of the programs listed, the methods of delivery and the results have been addressed. The staff would be interested in a follow-up on the status of the nursing program in future reports.

CECIL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In 1994, the College established a task force named the A-Team to develop an outcomes assessment plan. The team initially received intensive training in the assessment process. Subsequently, six more faculty have been trained to increase the assessment leadership pool. In 1996, the Dean of Instruction mandated the use of classroom assessment techniques in the annual faculty evaluations. Student outcomes assessment has been implemented in phases using assessment focus groups.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Faculty assessment focus groups have been created for Nursing, General Education, Student Development, Arts and Sciences degrees, Continuing Education, Business Administration and Visual Communications. Assessment plans for five of these areas have been developed and implementation will begin in late summer 1998 using a one year time-line. Steps include

- Setting or reviewing purposes and goals
- Identifying learning to fulfill goals and criteria to measure goals
- Developing implementation plan
- Participation by pilot groups
- Administer assessment
- Review and evaluate data
- Develop strategies for improvement based on data

Additional areas will begin assessment in spring 1999. The College will continue with this plan until all areas are involved in on-going assessment.

Other Outcomes Measures

Student evaluations are required in every class for every semester. Prior to graduation each year, Graduate follow-up surveys and retention surveys are distributed. The graduation follow-up surveys have shown very high student satisfaction with faculty instruction and with meeting student goals. Some areas, such as advising, have slightly lower satisfaction rates. In an effort to eliminate complaints about lack of access to support services, the College has created an Information/Call Center to assist students with scheduling, advising, and financial aid.

The retention surveys indicated that scheduling and financial problems seem to have the most negative effect on student retention. As a result of this survey, the College developed and implemented a Weekend College in January 1995. Increased enrollment each year indicates that it has filled a need. Scholarships were developed for students by the College Foundation to meet the financial problems. The Financial Aid Office works with high schools to inform students and parents regarding the availability of financial aid. The College Improvement Steering Committee meets regularly to ensure that support areas of the College are working effectively. As a result of surveys of the Facilities, Computer Services and Instructional Administration, strategies for improvements have been developed.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

English 101 is the first general education writing course at the College. The expectations of writing competency necessary for passing the course are codified in a number of General Course Goals and Specific Course Objectives that appear on the course syllabi.

Of particular importance, the research paper is required of all students. The semester long project gives students an increased awareness of the techniques needed for effective research from initial planning to final submission. It is felt that the research paper trains students to understand principles of inquiry and research, including how to identify appropriate issues, formulate appropriate questions, find relevant information, and incorporate these findings effectively into their own writing. The College's expected writing competencies are consistent with those outlined in the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The faculty of the College anticipate that portfolio assessment ultimately may be the means used to incorporate assessment on a course wide level. Under this model, students beginning the course would submit a diagnostic writing essay that would be scored holistically. Over the duration of the semester, a portfolio would be developed. That portfolio, combined with the diagnostic essay, would provide assessors with a sense of the student's growth as a writer. Portfolio assessors would follow the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The English faculty of the College, working in cooperation with faculty in other disciplines, plan to integrate course-embedded assessment of writing into courses across the College curriculum. Portfolios would be submitted at mid-semester and the end of the semester and assessed to determine the students' growth as writers from matriculation through graduation.

Business, Nursing and Visual Communications programs have been identified as pilot areas for the actual collection and interpretation of assessment data. Beginning in fall 1998, course-embedded assessments of student competencies, including writing competencies, will be made a required part of all courses taught in these three programs. Course-embedded assessment will be introduced into other programs in spring and fall 1999 semesters. The English faculty anticipate that such a framework for assessment will require a great deal of front-end work. They realize that assessment may transform the entire way in which English is taught at the College.

Staff Analysis

Cecil Community College is in the process of integrating assessment throughout the College and will be including faculty and staff input. Assessment plans are in place through 1999. The commitment of the College via committees and plans indicates its commitment to creating an optimal educational environment.

CHARLES COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Charles County Community College uses several assessment activities to enhance the quality of instructional delivery and further promote student learning.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Each semester, twelve to fifteen introductory level general education courses have been selected for a course-specific survey. Course sections are chosen on a random basis and students are surveyed regarding their thoughts on values, skills and knowledge as presented by the instructor. The college has a rating system that allows for those courses not meeting standards to be flagged for further investigation.

Since 1995 a general education competency survey has been taken of all associate degree candidates each spring. When a sufficient database is in place, these surveys will be analyzed by program to determine if any systematic deficiencies need to be addressed.

Currently the college is relying on Maryland Higher Education Commission reports on student retention, graduation rate and transfer patterns. Data have indicated that students are enrolled at the college longer which could explain the slow rise in the transfer and graduation rates. Development of a longitudinal student tracking system is underway and pilot testing is scheduled to end August 1998. This database will allow the college to identify potential dropouts early and provide appropriate support services. The College believes that this early identification and intervention will increase degree completion and transfer rates.

Two projects to enhance the quality of teaching by part-time faculty, started as pilots in 1994, are now a regular part of faculty development:

The Certification Project offers a series of workshops and other activities to provide part-time faculty with information and practice for improving classroom performance, curricular design and evaluation procedures.

The Mentoring Program pairs inexperienced teachers with the more experienced teachers with a goal of providing a support system during the new teacher's first semester of teaching. This program is also available to faculty needing more information on procedures and policies.

The most recent Student Satisfaction Survey was conducted during the 1997-1998 academic year and covered the areas of evaluation of services, evaluation of hours of operation and student demographics. Changes as a result of this survey include increased course registration times for more convenience and revised scheduling of classes to be more user-friendly.

The 1996 Graduate Follow-up survey conducted by MHEC indicates that the students are satisfied with the quality of their educational experience.

The Student Satisfaction survey was conducted during the 1997-1998 academic year. Areas covered were evaluation of services, evaluation of hours of operation, and student demographics. Results of this survey brought about such changes as:

- increased number of course registration times to improve convenience for the students

- revision of schedule of classes publication to make it easier and clearer for students.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

CCCC currently does not have a formalized freshman writing assessment. All of the college's degree programs require an English composition course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

In 1990 the faculty developed a list of values, skills and categories of knowledge which shape the development of general education courses. Fourteen skills are directly tied to college-level reading and writing. Five of these skills are:

- write complete sentences;
- conceive ideas, select materials and organize contents effectively for purpose;
- choose style and contents appropriate to audience and purpose;
- write a unified coherent academic essay, correct in structure and mechanics , which supports a clear, limited thesis; and
- write a coherent research paper, including gathering information, taking notes, quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing and documenting properly.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The writing competencies listed above are incorporated into over twenty general education courses. Graduate follow-up surveys indicate highly positive ratings by the students regarding their writing, reading and comprehension skills. Employer surveys rate the graduates as good or very good in these areas.

A task force composed of faculty, writing specialists, a learning assistant specialist and administrators is currently investigating an effective writing assessment program. One of the major struggles of this task force is to assess effectively students' entry-level writing competencies without too many intrusions.

Staff Analysis

Charles County Community College seems to be in the process of developing an in-depth assessment program. While dependent upon many reports from MHEC, the College is in the process of developing an in-house database.

CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE

Chesapeake College presented a very detailed, in-depth report on the impact that assessment has had on the College. The new president launched an intensive strategic planning process after his appointment in 1997 and the College has been engaged in developing a set of strategic initiatives. The report covers expected impacts of the developing plan and ways the College uses or will use outcomes from on-going assessment activities.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Surveys are conducted of both students enrolled in general education courses and spring graduates as well as the biannual follow-up survey one year after graduation. The College uses both student and peer evaluation to assess teaching. Results of students' evaluations are used for curriculum planning, faculty performance evaluation and as feedback to the division and the instructor for programmatic and professional improvement. Some of the changes that have resulted from the surveys include

- a new Study Abroad program initiated in spring 1998
- computer training for students offered at more times and more widely publicized.

Chesapeake College uses a five-year cyclical schedule of review of each of its degree and certificate programs using established guidelines. As a result of an in-depth assessment in 1997-1998, department chairs of several programs made specific recommendations in their programs. These included such changes as

- more effectively coordinate course content among associate faculty
- revising courses or course descriptions
- use a wider variety of course delivery systems.

Student and faculty survey results often form the basis for the recommendations.

In a cooperative effort with the local school systems, the College has agreed to serve as a pilot test site in 1998-1999 to test a new computerized assessment service called PASS. High school students will take the high school version of a college level computerized placement test and learn of deficiencies that may need to be remedied before they get to college.

As a result of surveying high school students, distance learning offerings will be extended to additional counties. Additionally, student surveys were used to enhance the distance learning classroom presentations.

As a result of the planning-related internal assessment, the College has budgeted for a new technology fund, endorsed by the five supporting counties in recognition of the need to support state-of-the-art instructional and administrative technologies.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The Communications department at the College has designed an introductory writing course that will prepare the student to communicate effectively and concisely in the written medium. In the course of a semester, the student will read a variety of essays, stories and other scholarly works for the purpose of sharpening their critical reading and analytical perceptions.

The competencies required in this course meet those described in the Statement of Expectations. They are also designed to reflect the College's General Education competencies in the areas of communications in oral and written English, reading with comprehension, critical thinking, abstract reasoning and using bibliographic resources.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Toward the end of the English composition course, the instructor assigns an in-class essay that is drafted during one class period and revised the following class period. Instructors also use an objective exam to assess the writing process and research methods.

English faculty are in the process of evaluating current course design and may include student portfolio evaluations in the near future. To ensure greater consistency in grading across all course sections, full-time English faculty plan to meet more frequently and regularly with associate faculty.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Started in 1986, the College's Writing Across the Curriculum program has been successful in incorporating writing throughout the curriculum as a tool for learning. This program offers resources, organized within the college's Writing Center, to assist faculty to incorporate writing in every discipline and to assist students with writing assignments.

The General Education capstone course, the Nature of Knowledge, requires that students maintain a journal as a means of demonstrating comprehension of reading material and for developing ideas that can be applied to class projects.

Results of the College graduates' survey confirm student self-reported satisfaction with writing skill improvement.

Staff Analysis

The College presented a well written, detailed discussion of the impact of assessment upon all areas. The new administration has done a very good job of incorporating assessment strategies into its revised vision and mission statements.

DUNDALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dundalk Community College reported specifically on programs and courses that have been assessed. The discussion covered actions taken, consequences of the actions and future plans.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Business and Industry Contract Training. The College has a contract with Bethlehem Steel Corporation beginning in spring 1998. The goals of the contract were not stated. Student assessment has led to the inclusion of advising and the teaching of developmental courses in the contract. The College also advises students regarding skills and courses needed to move towards a degree. Plans are to follow up on the participants to determine retention and career advancement. The College also will be working with local businesses to encourage their participation in funding their employees' training to specifically include courses that are recommended as a result of student assessment. Faculty from areas other than business and industry are also involved in this project. Plans are to follow-up the contract participants to determine retention and career enhancement.

Technical program assessments. The College has considered specific assessments of skills necessary in technical programs. The directors of the technical studies program have developed a draft of a skills assessment survey and are considering a pilot project in fall 1998. It is anticipated that through the use of this instrument accurate course recommendations will be made through intensive advising that will result in higher retention. Plans are to conduct a retention study.

Revision of developmental mathematics courses. Review of the developmental education math courses resulted in establishing a new math course. The revisions generated a review of all developmental education math courses. As a result of the revisions, new assessment scores and new advising procedures are in place along with the new course. A study of performance and retention in the new course and upper level math courses will be conducted.

Paralegal Legal Studies program rectification - American Bar Association. In May, 1998 rectification for the Paralegal program was received. The Admissions and Student Services section of the report addressed assessment process, advising consequences and placement recommendations. Rectification facilitates graduates with successful transfer or career placement. It is planned to continue the admission requirements and procedures and to do a follow-up survey of the graduates and their employers.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The goals and objectives of English 101 include the following:

- Analyze specific subject, audience and purpose for each written assignment and adopt an appropriate voice and language for the assignment.
- Apply a variety of re-writing strategies for developing ideas.

- Write effective multi-paragraph essays using a variety of rhetorical forms.
- Write essays that employ concepts of clear thesis, supporting paragraphs and effective conclusions.
- Recognize errors in reasoning when they occur.
- Apply strategies for revision.
- Proofread

A comparison of the goals and objectives of the College's course with the Statement of Expectations indicates that the course meets the Statements guidelines.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Writing competencies are assessed through evaluation of student portfolios or written works and a post test on grammar, mechanics and usage skills. The portfolios are evaluated and assigned grades by the instructor according to specific criteria derived from the course objectives. The goals of the course include:

- ability to write formal and informal prose
- apply three phases of writing process to the development of formal essays
- write seven multi-paragraph essays.

The College has not undertaken a systematic, longitudinal study of the result of assessment methods. However in the past the department did meet on an annual basis to evaluate a sample of essays and norm the evaluation criteria. The plan is to re-establish these annual evaluations. The spring of 1998 saw the introduction of a networked, computerized classroom offering a variety of software packages to teach writing. The responses to this new system will be evaluated.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in this report.

Staff Analysis

Dundalk Community College presented a very generalized overview of four areas. Additional details would have made the report more informative.

ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Essex Community College reported specifically on the computer science and mathematics instruction and the allied health curriculum's areas. The report discussed actions taken as a result of assessment, consequences of the actions and future plans.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Revision of Computer Science and Mathematics instruction

A two year project, named the "Classroom Computer Laboratory and Student Demonstration Stations for Active Learning in Introductory Mathematics and Computer Science Courses" provided information regarding the effectiveness of computer software, graphing calculators, and small group learning in the targeted courses. As a result the department will standardize minimum computer and calculator use in each course. It will also offer seminars for faculty to demonstrate the use of computers/calculators in teaching concepts. The department will also gather information regarding former students now attending four-year colleges to determine their success as a result of their mathematics experience.

Analysis of students' completion rate in remedial mathematics was done to determine enrollment time, final grade distribution, and the number of tests taken. As a result of this analysis, which indicated low scores and grades, the department is evaluating textbooks and the self-paced format. Faculty members are writing new mathematics materials and software. New intensive summer programs have been instituted.

A semester-long use of interactive software for classroom and computer laboratory interaction in computer science classes led to favorable student responses. The department determined that instructors need to vary activities in the classroom and to engage students during lectures. Department plans are to upgrade computer labs.

Revision of Allied Health Curricula

Mental Health/Human Services The faculty in this program used data from a variety of surveys. The annual curriculum review conducted by the faculty evaluates the information and revises course objectives and content accordingly.

Physician Assistant The PA certification/Program Review Committee analyzes data from a variety of sources as part of a self-study process. Using the results of the self-study process, the committee makes recommendations for both short and long term curriculum and course changes.

Radiography Information from the evaluation of outcomes such as retention rates, ARRT pass rates and scores and evaluations, teaching strategies in classroom and clinical instruction are adjusted as needed. Recent changes due to the outcomes assessment include revision of curriculum and addition of four new clinical sites.

Respiratory Care Therapist The faculty in this program gather data from a variety of resources such as graduate surveys, exit interviews, employer surveys and student evaluation of teaching and courses. The faculty then uses self-study to develop an action plan that is implanted and evaluated for effectiveness.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Currently students successfully completing the first required writing course, English 101, take a second English course which introduces them to literature. It requires continued demonstration of improvement in writing ability with the submitting of three essays and the taking of exams that include essays. Faculty teaching the second course believe that those students completing the first English course are able to write at the college level.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The College recognizes that this informal evaluation of the results of assessment is far from ideal. At present each instructor is responsible for assessing the competence of students at the end of the semester. Faculty workshops are held periodically to insure all instructors are using the same evaluation standards. There is concern that the current system does not insure uniform standards, especially with the increasing percentage of sections now being taught by part-time faculty. The College participated in the development of statewide guidelines and is now making plans to implement these guidelines, beginning in fall 1998. The English department anticipates that they will elect to evaluate all or at least a sample of portfolios each semester. Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition will be used as a guide.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in the report.

Staff Analysis

Essex Community College presented very generalized information on two areas. Additional details would have made the report more informative. The College is to be commended for its plans for implementing assessment of freshman English.

FREDERICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Frederick Community College reported that a variety of student outcomes and satisfaction data are now routinely analyzed. Institutional comparisons to similar-sized and other Maryland community college are continually made. The College has been active in assessing many areas and implementing programs and procedures in response to their findings.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Two recent additions have been made to the college's learning outcomes assessment efforts: (1) the development and implementation of a process known as C.A.P., the Comprehensive Assessment of Programs, and (2) the adoption of viability criteria for the evaluation of individual instructional career programs. C.A.P. is a detailed individual assessment analysis of instructional programs that will occur every five years. The assessment of career program viability occurs annually. Multiple initiatives have resulted from these review processes.

Outcome indicators and measures pertaining to overall student goal attainment have traditionally been positive for the College. However, retention rates have not improved substantially, and the College is aggressively pursuing enrollment management strategies to address student needs that eventually will manifest themselves in retention issues.

Frederick Community College feels that one of the most successful strategies has been the development and inclusion of a course offering entitled Success 100. The course addresses both the informational and affective needs of students. Success has been realized with 94 percent of the students remaining enrolled the following semester. The course has also been extremely successful in creating a learning community among its students.

The Nursing program review has resulted in several program modifications. Examples are on-going curriculum revision to reflect current trends in nursing and the seamless transition between the practical nursing and associate degree nursing programs. The Nursing program continues to surpass the state average for first-time success rates on the licensure examinations. Almost 95 percent of their graduates are hired within 6 to 12 months.

The College recently completed its first longitudinal study of traditional age entering freshmen. The tracking data suggests that a key factor in successful student outcome is the enrollment in and successful completion of required developmental courses. The result of this assessment has generated two new activities: an in-depth review of all course failures and an extensive review of all course prerequisites.

The college is working with the Frederick County school system and the Maryland Partnership for Teaching and Learning K-16 Work Group. Assisting the student in academic preparedness for college is now occurring at both the high school level and the college level.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

English Composition, EN101, is the general education writing course required of all the College's graduates. All students must meet established standards of competency determined by the English Department and measured by achievement on course assignments standardized across all sections. The course requires five assigned papers with the fifth being a research paper of greater depth that requires incorporation of previously developed skills and builds on the students' previous writing.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The core learning outcomes of the course are consistent with the Statement of Expectations. The College has also adopted the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition, developed by a statewide committee. Norming sessions within the department are expected to begin soon. Seven alternative formats are now available to meet the first English course requirement. They include computer-assisted sections, EN101 with supplementary instruction, EN101 linked to a honors speech fundamentals course, EN101 Weekend College specifically for adult learners, and EN101 TV which is televised.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Although the college has a long-established writing across the curriculum initiative, there are no uniform college-wide procedures for assessing students' writing competencies beyond the first writing course.

Staff Analysis

Frederick Community College produced a well presented, detailed overview of assessment activities at the College and the results of these initiatives. They are focusing on student success in several areas and have utilized the results of assessment to implement changes and implement new programs. Particular interest has been given to developmental learning and retention.

GARRETT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Garrett Community College presented a brief report discussing the two primary measures used to improve the overall effectiveness of academic programs and to determine additional related education benefits for the students.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The two primary measures are the results from the Student Satisfaction and Graduation Student Surveys conducted annually at the college. The College analyzes responses to individual questions contained in these surveys and conducts trend analysis of responses to like or similar questions contained in the surveys for proceeding years.

The College listed some of the more significant results of these surveys:

- Admission conferences with students have been initiated to alleviate anxieties many students expressed about the placement testing.
- More late afternoon and evening classes have been scheduled to better accommodate students.
- Hours of library and computer labs have been extended to provide more accessibility to students.
- New introductory level courses have been developed in response to students' requests and instructors' assessment of student performance.

Several additional improvements are now planned as a result of the information gleaned from college assessment efforts. Some significant actions listed are:

- More flexible developmental program requirements will be implemented.
- More flexible course pre-requisites will be established, especially for part-time students.
- Guarantees will be established to ensure certain courses will not be canceled due to low enrollment.
- A more remote area for smokers will be designated to reduce clutter near doorways and disruption to students.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Writing competencies have been established for the first general educational writing course, Composition I, an expository and research-based writing course. These competencies augment those of the Statement of Expectations.

Some of the expected competencies are:

- an understanding that writing is a recursive process as well as a product.
- the ability to conduct scholarly inquiry through print and non-print sources.
- confidence in applying critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Exit criteria have been established to assess the writing competencies at the conclusion of the course.

They include:

- completion of all writing assignments with an average grade of "C" or better.
- completion of required research papers with an average grade of "C" or better.

- completion of a grammar/punctuation exam with a score of 75 percent or better.
- Passage of an impromptu essay writing assignment with no more than seven errors.
- A grade of "C" or better in the course.

Failure to meet all of the exit criteria requires repeating the course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Writing competencies of students beyond their first English Composition course are assessed principally through the application of competency expectations established and written into the syllabus for each course. A program has been established to require writing in every major program area of the college. Plans are under consideration to establish a central focus for augmenting and expanding upon present assessment activities.

Staff Analysis

While it is evident from the report that outcomes assessment is used in the decision-making process at the college, additional details would have made the report more informative.

HAGERSTOWN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The College report summarizes the institutional activities and progress in assessment since the 1995 report.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Student evaluation of teaching is the primary method of assessing faculty performance. Evaluations are conducted throughout the year with the schedule determined according to faculty tenure and full-time/part-time status. In FY 98, a project was established to facilitate the interaction of full-time and part-time faculty to focus on the quality of teaching and to improve student achievement through diverse instructional strategies.

In spring 1997, 32 percent of the student body completed the Student Assessment of the College Environment survey. The purpose of the survey was to obtain student perceptions concerning the college climate and to establish priorities for change base upon those perceptions. Overall the responses indicated a healthy campus climate. However a concern regarding the extent to which students have the opportunity to evaluate teachers was identified. The College responded by increasing the number of teacher evaluations by 10 percent.

The College's curriculum and program development structure is based upon student requests and the service area's business needs. Before changes occur, including adding, modifying or deleting a program, a community-based needs assessment is done to insure that the action taken is consistent with market demand. A result of this community-based needs assessment was the reactivation of two programs, financial services and marketing, and a new program in paralegal studies to be introduced within the next two years.

Each instructional program undergoes a formative assessment at least every five years. A variety of sources are used in this assessment, including data, faculty from feeder high schools, employers and the Program Data Monitoring System produced by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Twelve programs have been reviewed since the last outcomes report.

The Enrollment Management Steering Committee was established in 1996 to examine, monitor and assist with enrollment and retention. Several proactive ideas were initiated to better serve students and enhance retention. An academic calendar that mirrors the University of Maryland System was recently adopted to benefit visiting and dual-enrolled students taking classes at area four-year colleges as well as at Hagerstown. A student guide to faculty teaching styles and delivery of instruction has been developed. Customer satisfaction cards are located at strategic points on campus and reviewed monthly.

Program advisory committees give input and provide information to ensure that curriculum design, program content and learning outcomes are aligned with employer needs. As a result, revisions to course content have occurred, especially in curricula that are based on computer applications.

Two programs, Radiography and Nursing are accredited by third party agencies. Graduates of both programs are successful in achieving licensure because of ongoing emphasis on assessment and reinforcement of theory and practice.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Departmental objectives for English composition have been in effect for 15 years. The required sequence of two English courses, Composition and Literature and Technical Writing, fulfills the Statement of Expectations guidelines.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

All part-time English faculty receive "A Handbook for Part-Time English Faculty". The handbook includes information on testing and placement, departmental objectives for English 101, sample syllabi for all writing courses and a commitment to Writing Across the Curriculum.

Research papers receiving an "A" grade are reviewed periodically to validate the consistency of grades and the quality of papers.

The College is in the process of formalizing assessment programmatically. Assessment will be based upon the portfolio process described in recommendations for Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition. Initial implementation steps will begin in fall 1998.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in this report.

Staff Analysis

Hagerstown Community College submitted a report discussing several areas impacted by assessment. It was well presented. The college is incorporating assessment into several areas such as faculty performance, curriculum and program development and student retention.

HARFORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Harford Community College utilizes a number of processes and procedures to provide for regular assessment of undergraduate learning. The assessment process is multi-faceted, dynamic and institution-wide.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Assessment efforts at the college that have resulted in improvement of the quality of programs and curricula include:

- A formal, five year program review process containing a detailed guide to assist faculty in performing a comprehensive review of the academic programs. This has resulted in the development of new courses, updating of existing course content and objectives as well as changes in degree requirements.
- Various tools and strategies to assess the need for new programs have resulted in the development of four new programs since 1991.
- The identification of eight categories of academic outcomes by faculty. New courses and course revisions now require a statement as to how the course will address each of the outcomes. These outcomes include communication, critical thinking, science and technology and personal and self-management skills.
- Curriculum advisory committees, composed of local representatives of private industry, government, local schools and universities as well as private citizens have had a significant influence on curriculum creation, development, revision, and update.

Assessment efforts directed at teaching/learning process include:

- Initial student assessment of skills in English, mathematics and reading to ensure appropriate placement in college level courses. Data indicate that students taking two developmental writing courses performed considerably better in college-level courses than those who took none.
- Results of faculty committees have included multiple changes. Examples include changes in the physical classroom environment, the structure by which current and future technological needs are determined and the offering of faculty workshops based on assessment of faculty instructional needs.

Additional assessment activities:

- Retention studies have resulted in the development of a tutoring/writing center with full-time staffing.
- Significant policy revision occurred as a result of review and evaluation of current academic policies.
- Ongoing review and evaluation of current academic policies to foster policy revision and development for the improvement of student academic success. This process has brought about significant policy revisions.
- Assessment of advisors and their work brought forth enhancements to the Center of Counseling and Career Development as well as appropriate professional development for advisors.
- Evaluation of enrollment services led to the development of a college-wide computerized information management system.

As a result of the above mentioned activities, there was a significant impact on resource allocation throughout the college. As a result of program reviews, resources were allocated for renovation of facilities, purchase of new equipment and equipment upgrades.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The course objectives of English Composition 101 indicate that students must demonstrate competency in writing effective prose in a series of at least six 500-800 word themes, including one process essay, one research essay and one final in-class theme. Students are expected to progress through the course in a sequential manner with their work assessed at each stage.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Departmental examinations are not given. Grading standards are reviewed routinely. When any instructor has questions regarding a student's work meeting established standards, one or more faculty members review the student's work.

Attention is given to unifying standards used by both full-time and part-time faculty. The adjunct faculty receive a procedures manual, attend department meetings and are involved in requirement standards at all stages in their association with the department. New adjunct faculty are evaluated each semester while returning adjuncts are evaluated on an evaluation cycle.

Prior to 1993, the department required a "C" or better to be the passing standard for the introductory English course. In 1993, after a departmental assessment that "soft C" grades were being awarded to students actually deserving a "D" grade, the "D" grade was reinstated. However a "C" grade is still a prerequisite for English courses beyond the initial writing course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The policy on college-wide requirements' states that students must meet certain minimum compositional requirements for written work submitted in all courses. The requirements include:

- Papers demonstrate a reasonable degree of skill in presenting material in a clean and logical manner.
- Papers demonstrate college-level competence in grammar and the mechanics of composition, spelling and punctuation.
- Graduates must attain at least a "D" grade in composition or pass a standardized college wide writing examination.

The Writing Resource Center has been established to assist students with writing assignments regardless of the student's discipline. College wide workshops are held to assist faculty in all disciplines to evaluate student writing.

Staff Analysis

Harford Community College presented a well-written, all-inclusive report of assessment activities and the effects campus-wide. They have integrated the assessment process into many areas of the college. As they indicated, their assessment program has in fact been implemented institution wide.

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In 1998 Howard Community College was awarded the "Bellwether Award" for its outcomes assessment program. This prestigious award recognizes the effectiveness of the outcomes program in promoting both institutional change and value reassessment at the college.

The college uses outcome indicators in five areas to monitor institutional effectiveness: Learning and Teaching Excellence, Student Access; Customer and Community Service, Management Excellence and Valuing Diversity. Sixty data indicators, as defined by the Board of Trustees' Information System, measure performance of goals and objectives. The report described the outcomes indicator system and several detailed projects that have led to improvement in student learning outcomes.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

During the past year trends in the indicators helped to identify 14 areas of particular concern. These areas were then given higher priority in the budget and in the plans and activities of individual units at the college.

In addition to the program of institution-wide assessment of basic skills and general education, each academic division currently implements two new assessment projects each academic year. These projects are conducted over a three year time period, starting with assessment, followed by implementation of recommendations for change and concluding with reassessment to determine improvement.

Results of the assessment projects are seen throughout the curriculum. General education cores have been revised. Coordination of full- and part-time faculty has received greater emphases. Departmental exams are more common in certain disciplines. Common course syllabi and expectations exist throughout the curriculum. Consolidation of content and the increase in cognitive levels has occurred since outcomes assessment began.

Several divisional/discipline projects were cited in the report. To date, 52 projects have been completed, including ten reassessments. Faculty involvement has been maintained despite some resistance to the process. Changes have been directly related to instructional improvement.

Anatomy and Physiology II. The tool used to assess this course was produced by the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society. The College's students performed at a slightly lower mean (48) than did the normed group (51). A striking factor was the difference between the performance of students in evening sections versus day students. Day students attained a mean of 51.5 while evening students scored a mean of 44. Recommendations were for measures to reinforce the integration of material, coordination of implementation among various faculty and the institution of a departmental exam for the course.

General Psychology This course, part of the general education core, serves about 500 students per year. Assessment focused on critical thinking and the results from over three semesters have not yet

reached a satisfactory level. Currently, the faculty are making a concentrated effort to improve the teaching of critical thinking skills and developing materials and strategies that support the enterprise.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Howard Community College has adopted a two-course (EG101 and EG102) sequence for writing, with the second course being the transfer writing course. The Statement of Expectations serve as the course objectives for the second course (transfer).

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Both English courses were recently implemented and assessment is at an early stage. Assessment of EG101 was recently completed and received a lower than desired level assessment score. A more in-depth analysis of writing errors has now been completed. It is expected that a portfolio approach to assessment of this course will be used in FY99 to determine outcome levels. Assessment of EG102 was completed in spring 1998 and results are not yet graded and analyzed.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Writing intensive courses have been developed and implemented. Results of the writing intensive program were assessed in 1995 and 1996. In 1995, the mean post-test score was 3.8 on a 6-point scale; in 1996 the mean score was 4.1. In both assessments, the grading indicated that the average score of students who completed three or more writing intensive courses was higher than the minimum standard for college writing (4.5 in 1996). Follow-up assessment will be scheduled in FY99.

Staff Analysis

The College is justifiably proud of being award the national "Bellwether Award" for its outcomes assessment program. The report presents an informative overview of the methods used for assessment and the college-wide impact, as well as specific examples of assessment at the course level.

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Montgomery College utilizes the "selected topics" design for the College's Middle States' Self-Study and issues assessed include:

- selected topics of teaching and learning deemed most critical to the academic success of a diverse student population.
- selected topics of admission, assessment and advising.
- basic College operations directly related to mission and presenting evidence of institutional effectiveness and outcomes.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Efforts to Improve Undergraduate Teaching and Learning

The College has made a concerted effort to have faculty that reflects the diversity of the student population. The College budgeted for 14 new faculty positions for FY99 to raise ratio of full-time faculty from 57% to 65% to meet its target of 60%.

Professional development of faculty is important to ensure they have skills and knowledge to deliver high quality instruction and advising. The Humanities Institute created with the Smithsonian Institution enables faculty to participate in museum based research fellowships and seminars led by Smithsonian scholars to assure professional development.

The College has budgeted for training to enable faculty and staff to teach and use state-of-the-market hardware and software.

A partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools has been developed that focuses on preparation for college level work. The goal of this program is early intervention at the middle school level to encourage and support these students to attend college.

The College is concluding the development of a research model to predict student success. The expected result is a significant increase in student success for students who follow the advice provided by counselors.

Efforts to Improve Quality of Program/Curricula and Improve Quality of Academic Planning and Decision-Making

The College has prioritized plans for FY99 and FY 2000. The two top priorities are to implement the Information Technology Strategies Plan, then to address the need to increase the recruitment and retention efforts of the College. The College is now offering alternative methods of course instruction, including television courses, interactive television courses and on-line courses on the College's bulletin board system and the Internet.

Efforts to Improve Policies, Procedures, Structures and Resource Allocations An analysis of how students are taught has demonstrated that the college was limited in the use of advanced technology in the classroom and laboratories. This initiated the creation of the Information Technology Strategic Plan and the budgeting of more funds for information technology. An Information Technology Institute was to provide those courses in high demand by area

employers. An analysis of space dedicated to teaching on the Takoma Park campus resulted in a new Facilities Master Plan and major capital request to increase space.

Efforts to Improve Services to Students Several changes are being implemented in the Financial Aid Office. Many of the functions of the office have been redesigned. The resulting improvements include creation of a financial aid brochure, a student employment handbook and more extensive distribution of financial aid information. Improvements are planned for FY99 to further assist the student with applications and financial aid.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Montgomery College has a two-level sequence to meet the expected freshmen writing competencies. There are two levels of English courses. Both meet the General Education requirements and transfer to the University of Maryland. However one is designated for students needing additional support as determined by placement testing or prior English grades. The Statement of Expectations is met by both courses. The courses at both levels promote the student's ability to achieve the goals as stated in the Statement of Expectations but do have a different emphasis for some goals.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Every student is expected to turn in a portfolio which is collected at the end of each semester. The portfolios are reviewed to ensure consistency of standards. A College-wide syllabus is shared with faculty and students and has a set number of writing assignments. With the College having a two-semester sequence, part of the assessment occurs in the first semester. A College-wide composition competency exam occurs in class during the eleventh or twelfth week. Scoring is done holistically. Before the exam is finalized faculty members are given an opportunity to review the prompts. A scoring workshop is done on each campus every semester to review holistic scoring and review the scoring ranges.

At the beginning of the fall semester, the English department establishes committees to review various aspects of the English program. Most recently one committee reviewed and revised the College-wide EN102 syllabus; another committee is currently reviewing the Competency exam.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The College does not have a program of writing courses beyond the first general education writing course and does not plan to add additional competency exams at this time.

Staff Analysis

The report was well written and presented in an in-depth manner, covering a variety of areas being affected by the assessment process. Montgomery College has set Information Technology as a priority, an area of constant growth that requires state-of-the-art hardware and software to effectively teach students. The College has also invested effort in its faculty and their training.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Prince George's Community College specifically addressed the area of remediation in their report. Assessment findings have indicated that two of three students entering PGCC need remediation in at least one area. Those students completing needed remediation achieve at the same rate as students not needing remediation. The primary reason for low achievement rates is that only one in six students completes the developmental education courses. These findings led to two major academic program decisions: (1) to significantly enhance the college's developmental program and (2) to pilot test a comprehensive, learning community approach to assisting at-risk students. These actions are discussed in detail in the report.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Developmental Studies Program Enhancements, Fiscal Years 1996-1998

The developmental studies program is a coordinated effort of formal classroom instruction, laboratory work, advising and tutoring. Among some of the actions taken:

Formal Instruction:

- improved full-time to part-time faculty ratio
- maximized classroom instructional time
- appointed four developmental mathematics coordinators
- appointed a language arts textbook review committee

Learning Laboratory:

- implemented computerized courseware to meet needs of adult learners
- invested over \$300,000 in instructional technology to upgrade hardware and software
- hired additional instructional program coordinators and computer specialists
- provided network access to developmental studies software

Advising and Tutoring Services

- developed handbook for all developmental studies students
- instituted mandatory orientation sessions for all math developmental students
- paired counselors and developmental faculty in teams to develop interventions
- established a tutoring center exclusively for developmental math students

Comprehensive, Learning Community Approach To Assisting At-Risk Students

A two-semester, fast-track program called the R³ Academy (Reasoning, Readiness, Real World) was implemented on a pilot basis in fall 1997. It is for students who have tested into intermediate level developmental mathematics and developmental reading or English. The Academy utilizes a learning community approach and coordinates developmental and credit instruction. A team of faculty, counselors and advisors provide direct instruction, enrichment programs, mentoring, advising and student advocacy in solving problems. The pilot program enrolled 38 students and of these, 97 percent returned in the spring. Results of the pilot program thus far are encouraging, although no definite conclusions can be made until the program has been in effect for a longer period of time.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The College has adopted both the Statement of Expectations for Freshman Writing and the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition. The department has held training sessions for full- and part-time faculty to help the implementation of the standards.

PGCC initiated a pilot study in spring 1997 that added a writing sample to the Descriptive Test of Language Skills examination. Using a series of cut-off scores, students are given recommendations as to which English course meets their needs:

- English 100 - a three credit course that does not fulfill requirements for graduation or transfer.
- English 111 - a one hour research and computer-assisted writing laboratory offered concurrently with English 101, the standard introductory composition class.

Various combinations of these classes can be taken, and recommendations are made according to student scores and writing samples. Students are not required to follow the advice. The English department plans to have adequate data by the end of spring 1999 to determine if a writing sample will be required for placement along with a computerized test.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The College attempts to ensure students have attained adequate competencies through assessment testing (confirmed by writing sample evaluations), placement into appropriate courses and grading practices that reflect the department's commitment to the standards adopted statewide.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

PGCC has implemented four programs and activities to assist students in improving their writing competencies. A brief description of each follows.

Writing Center The Center provides free tutoring in higher-level skills to any student working on a writing assignment in any course at the college. Faculty tutors work individually with students to improve the organization, argumentation, documentation and style of their writing. On-line tutoring is also available via the campus email system.

Grammar Center. Established in spring 1998, the Center assists students with basic grammar, sentence structure and usage skills. Free individualized tutoring is offered to the students by two faculty.

Writing Across the Curriculum The program works with faculty to develop writing assignments and outcomes measures applicable to courses outside those offered by the English department.

Student Writing Contest - First sponsored in academic year 1997-1998, the contest encourages and rewards excellence in writing across the college. Three awards are given for excellent writing in each academic division of the college. The grand prize for the best student writing at the college is a \$500 scholarship.

Staff Analysis

Prince George's Community College's report contained a thorough examination of the use of assessment techniques in evaluating the outcomes of at risk students taking remedial coursework. A variety of changes and initiatives have been instituted in the remedial area. Particularly noteworthy is the creation of the R3 Academy. The staff would like to obtain a follow-up on the results of this pilot program in subsequent years.

WOR-WIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Wor-Wic Community College reports that specific significant innovations and changes have occurred over the last three years from implemented assessment efforts. These innovations and changes have been in four general areas: credit programs, community and continuing education, services for students and facilities.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Credit Programs

The College utilized assessment information from several areas, including annual program reviews, program advisory committees and local advisory councils. Additional information is obtained when each prospective associate degree graduate is tested to determine level of competency achieved concerning general education skills.

Articulation agreements have been established in five areas to assist with transition from high school to Wor-Wic and from Wor-Wic to four-year academic institutions. The College received grants for developing distance learning centers with Salisbury State College, UMES and public high schools. Another grant allowed for implementation of compressed video instruction and teleconferencing.

Some additional highlights:

- new associate and certificate programs to meet area's needs.
- revised diagnostic testing materials and procedures.
- use of ACT CAAP test for general assessment to compare students against other college populations and evaluate college-developed general education assessment tool.

Community and Continuing Education

Input from Advanced Technology Center advisory committee and continuing education and credit advisory committees among others contributed to changes and innovations in this area. These innovations have increased contract training and open enrollment computer courses to help meet the area business needs. Some highlights:

- developed Advanced Technology Center with state funded grants.
- two additional positions to enhance opportunities with business and industry.

Services for Students

State data reports, local advisory committees and college surveys contributed to changes and innovations in this area. Several changes occurred, including a new required course on technology, new software and hardware availability, efforts to improve student retention, and cooperation with local county high schools to increase student interest in attending college.

Some highlights:

- teaching students how to retrieve information and use technology.
- extensive data analysis of student population in credit courses to improve retention.
- implementing new and expanding existing tutoring sessions.

Facilities

Wor-Wic officially opened its campus in 1994 and reduced the amount of leased space from 60,000 to 21,500 square feet. Recognizing the need for growth, the college has:

- purchased additional land.
- started construction plans for Allied Health and Science building.
- submitted educational specification package to MHEC for additional facilities.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The objectives, assignments and classroom activities of Fundamental of English I reflect the guidelines of the Statement of Expectation and share the same goals, skills and tasks. Students are expected to produce ten journals selected from a broad range of topics: three 500 word essays consisting of one narrative, one comparison-contrast, one cause-effect and one 750 word research-based argumentation essay.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Student writing is evaluated by portfolio method. For the first half of the semester, two formal essays and two 45 minute in-class writings are produced. One of each essay is chosen for the mid-term portfolio. All instructors of this course then participate in a full-day holistic scoring session with each portfolio being read by two instructors who are not the classroom instructor for the writer. The student receives the results of the portfolio assessment. The second half of the semester results in a second portfolio with the scoring done by the same method. Students are allowed to submit other formal essays if they feel they strengthen the portfolio.

Norming sessions occur prior to each scoring session. Inter-reader reliability analysis shows that the readers attain high levels of agreement. The greatest reliability exists between full-time faculty with least agreement occurring between part-time faculty members.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The report specifically addressed Fundamentals of English II. The major writing assignment for this course is a seven to ten page research paper. The paper is assessed using six categories: preliminary stages, use of research materials, content and organization, mechanics, format and evidence of following the process. In addition students are required to write one essay based on a work or literature. The essay is graded using statewide guidelines and composition goals. This course also shares the same goals of the Statement of Expectations guidelines.

Staff Analysis

Wor-Wic Community College presented a snapshot of the results of its assessment activities and how these have been incorporated into many areas of campus life. The College has increased its ability to communicate throughout its large and diverse market area with the new technologies available through distance learning, Internet and teleconferencing.

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY

The Bowie State University report gives an historic perspective of assessment measures used during the past decade, and presents the approach being developed and implemented at this time. In 1993, the University discontinued the administration of standardized tests to graduating seniors. The assessment program was focused on cognitive abilities as measured by the Millers Analogies Test, the GRE and the GMAT. Participation was required but had no bearing on graduation eligibility. The students appeared to have limited motivation to perform well on the test, which likely contributed to the unexpected outcomes of low performance levels. The standardized tests results were viewed as uneven and invalid as a broad measure of student performance.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The assessment strategy adopted by Bowie is a comprehensive approach. It begins with the faculty articulating program goals and objectives linked to the University's goals and identifying indicators of student learning. Both qualitative and quantitative measures will be incorporated into an assessment plan for each academic department and the general education program to determine learning outcomes for undergraduate students.

Each assessment plan will document departmental instructional objectives, expected learning outcomes, measurement strategies and data collection methods. The assessment plan will also contain a series of performance indicators that reflect the student's skills and abilities in relevant areas of study. Plans will also include a dissemination method for results and details for how resulting information should be used.

Development of these plans began in fall 1997, with workshops held for faculty and staff. For the remainder of the 1997-1998 academic year, the assessment plans were to be refined with the aid of consultants. Each academic department will have an approved Student Learning Outcomes plan by June 15, 1998. Implementation will be monitored by the Office of Academic Affairs under the leadership of the newly hired Learning Outcomes Assessment Director.

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING COMPETENCIES

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The University re-formulated its general education requirements for the 1998 academic years. It was decided that undergraduate students would be best served by requiring two writing courses during the freshman year. A specialist in composition and rhetoric was hired to direct the freshman writing program. The writing competencies for the first English course fit the Statement of Expectations. These competencies are further developed in the second English course, which emphasizes argumentation, logic, style and research. Students who do not score 70 percent in either of the freshman writing courses must repeat the course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The final grade for the first English course is a compilation of essays, final departmental exam and class participation. Essays are graded according to the standards detailed in the department's Essay Grading Criteria. Five components are included in the evaluation: thesis, organization, development, effectiveness and mechanics.

The final essay for both English courses are graded holistically, anonymously and department-wide using two readers other than the course instructor. A passing performance is determined by holistic evaluation scores of 70 percent or greater, which consisted of several writing components. The department continuously monitors and assesses its freshman composition courses and makes changes as required.

Faculty within the department provide individualized assistance programs for students experiencing writing difficulties. The programs are specifically tailored to the needs of each student.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The University requires a English Proficiency Examination for graduation. It must be successfully completed after the freshman year and is assessed in the same manner as freshman English courses. Since 1997 full-semester workshops have been offered to assist students in preparing for the exam. These workshops are in addition to the two-day workshops which have been offered for many years.

Bowie's University College of Excellence is in the process of hiring a Writing Across the Curriculum specialist who will coordinate the undergraduate initiative that will ensure substantive writing components for each academic discipline.

Staff Analysis

Bowie State University is in the process of totally revising their assessment process. The University has demonstrated its commitment to developing and implementing a comprehensive assessment plan as indicated by the hiring of a Learning Outcomes Assessment Director.

COPPIN STATE COLLEGE

Coppin State College has an ongoing outcomes assessment process which consists of data collected in four broad categories: internal program review, external program review, formal and informal testing and follow-up studies.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Coppin has set as its number one priority the improvement of graduation and retention rates. Evaluation of procedures, the effectiveness of programs, and implementation of new innovations are being used to achieve the new benchmark established by the school. The College has set a goal to improve its graduation rates to 35 percent and retention rates to 75 percent.

Academic programs are reviewed on a predetermined schedule and information taken from these reviews assist in determining steps that should be taken to strengthen viable programs or delete low-productivity programs.

Recent administration of formal instruments (1995 and 1997), including ACT-Comp, did not have large enough numbers to allow a consensus to be drawn but did indicate some patterns regarding the need for additional help and observation in the areas of critical thinking, reading and mathematics.

In the area of formal and informal testing, several changes are taking place. A new diagnostic/placement test is now administered to all newly admitted students. With the change to this test, new policies and procedures pertaining to entering students were established.

Several strategies have been implemented to raise the pass rates for teacher education majors who are required to pass NTE tests to qualify for certification. These include such strategies as course modifications, special workshops, and the development of courses to enhance test-taking skills.

In an effort to increase mean SAT scores, the College limited admission of students with low SAT scores in 1997, resulting in a decreased count of first-time freshman. However the improved retention efforts still resulted in an increased overall enrollment.

New procedures in the distribution and collection of alumni surveys have doubled the response rate. Tracking and reporting these data have provided the impetus for a better evaluation method of program and support services and the implementation of changes as necessary.

Faculty and course evaluations are given in the fall and spring semesters which allow students to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and instructor. The results are shared throughout the institution and used when considering modifications in course content. The evaluations are also used in the process of granting merit pay.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

New students to Coppin are given a writing examination to determine whether they will be placed in English Composition (English 101) or Developmental Writing (DVWR100). The two courses are identical in content with the developmental course being a five hour course rather than three hours. Students successfully completing the developmental course may take a challenge exam which they must pass with the same score as English 101 in order to move on to the second required freshman English composition course (English 102).

The second English course has been designated by the department as the course which completes the general education freshman composition requirement. It offers an introduction to research and academic writing. This second course has the more complete fit with the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

At the conclusion of the first English Composition course, students are assessed by an exit exam, an extemporaneous essay test. Students who have completed all course requirements are eligible to take the exam which is scored by the entire English faculty. To pass the Exit Exam, students taking English 101 must score a 4 and developmental students must score a 3 from instructors other than their own. Students are allowed to retake the exam only once; if they do not pass the second time, they must repeat the course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The Writing Across the Curriculum Committee in the Arts and Sciences Division has been re-established. Some of its objectives include:

- redeveloping a division-wide writing standards document;
- continuing to demand writing in all courses beyond required composition courses;
- evaluating the current status of writing across the curriculum;
- identifying types of assignments at the College;
- encouraging all departments to use capstone course; and
- assessing and evaluating students' writing.

Staff Analysis

Coppin State College has incorporated many new processes to improve retention and graduation rates. It has been active in the assessment process since 1991 and continues to utilize assessment data to enhance the academic process.

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Frostburg State University reported on the most significant ways it is utilizing assessment results in four major areas: Academic Program and Curriculum Initiatives, Diversity of Students, Staff and Curriculum and Technology Enhancement and Support, and Facilities Improvement.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Academic Program and Curriculum Initiatives

The University received special accreditation of the MS in Counseling Psychology, earning a ten year certification without stipulations and was cited as a model for others to emulate. Frostburg students continue to have high pass rates in the areas of teacher education and social work. The assessment of job and licensing requirements resulted in a revised Health and Physical Education program. The desire to advance student's capabilities in verbal facility and critical thinking skills have resulted in Annual Assessment Seminars for faculty and staff. The University has developed a baseline for communications skills (primarily writing) along with showing development of critical thinking skills over an undergraduate career.

Diversity of Students, Staff and Curriculum

To increase opportunities for global experience, an International Education Center has been established and a Summer School and Intersession courses abroad are now sponsored. The University improved the Music program prior to its program review and achieved full accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music and doubled the enrollment in the Music program. More money has been invested to recruit outstanding faculty and reward current faculty demonstrating outstanding performance.

Technology Enhancement and Support

The University prepared a circulation draft of the "Strategic Directions in Information Technology," a three year action plan that assessed the University's needs to remain competitive in equipment, software and student services. Several lab areas were upgraded/expanded to increase access to and opportunities for technology applications. For example, the Biotechnology Laboratory was built. It offers training and research for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty, serves as a core training facility for the biotechnology industry in Western Maryland and provides a pool of quality employees statewide. With the installation of fiber optics network in residence halls, scheduled for completion in fall 1998, students will have instant access to the Internet.

Facilities Improvement

With a goal to improve student services, the University has completed phase one of the Pullen Hall plan to institute a "one stop (student) service" shop. It is also involved with construction of the Hagerstown Community Center.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The English department has plans to evaluate portfolios of randomly selected Freshman Composition students at the end of their successful completion of the course. This will allow assessment to assure that the passing essays are consistent throughout the department and help in course modification if necessary.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

This past spring, the department began serious planning toward portfolio assessment. A two-week summer workshop was planned to allow members of the Curriculum Committee to work with a consultant to set goals and objectives for the process. The portfolio process and rubric were to be presented to the department this fall; by the end of the fall semester, the logical assessment of majors should be in place. This planning should lead to more effusive limited summative assessment of the Freshman Composition program.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in this report.

Staff Analysis

Frostburg State University discussed several specific areas in which assessment outcomes have been used since the last Student Learning Outcomes Report to improve and/or expand programs and courses. The University has done a good job of applying assessment results.

SALISBURY STATE UNIVERSITY

From 1992 through 1995, each academic department at Salisbury State University set student outcome objectives in target areas. Analyses of the trends over four years show that departments dramatically increased the number and range of their improvement plans. In 1996, the University coordinated improvement planning based at the school level. The report for this year reflects the revised format and describes the most significant ways the University uses or plans to use information gained from the assessment process in the four SSU schools.

With a new president and new administration at the University, an Office of Institutional Accountability and Research has been created and a Strategic Plan and Master Space Plan developed. The Strategic Plans is clearly focused on student outcomes as the primary indicator of success.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The report for the University presents a matrix of five target areas with 42 specific improvement activities listed as the result of student outcomes assessment. These are presented by school. The five target areas use the specific criteria in the Maryland Higher Education Commission's guidelines for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reports and seek to determine the improvement of: (1) undergraduate teaching and learning, (2) the quality of programs and curriculum, (3) academic planning and decision-making, (4) the allocation of resources and (5) policies, procedures, services and structures. Examples of criteria used for assessment include enrollment, graduation and retention rates, surveys of current students and graduates, test data such as results of licensure or certification exams, skills proficiency tests and reviews of portfolios. It appears that the great majority of improvement activities were in the categories of (1) teaching/learning improvement and (2) program/curriculum improvement. Within the category of teaching/learning, three themes emerge: attention to technology, uses of assessment, and staff development and training. Two themes emerging from program/curriculum improvement are applications experiences for students and support through advising.

A sampling of some of the activities listed:

Attention To Technology

- training programs for faculty on multimedia
- roving technology cart for use in the classroom

Uses Of Assessment

- reduced student numbers in lectures and labs
- increased required GPA for admission to teacher education programs
- emphasis of writing across curriculum in all courses

Staff Development And Training

- student evaluation of courses each semester
- planned summer training for Web course development and teaching

Applications Experiences

- educating students in international languages and cultures
- planned pilot Fulton freshman seminars to be offered in fall 1998

Support Through Advising

- established new programs to assist students at risk
- more full-time faculty to student teacher supervision.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The first general education writing course is Principles of Composition. The expected competencies are embedded in the rubric for grading essays that appears in the English department's manual for freshman English, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been". The competencies in the rubric match the competencies in Part II of Statement of Expectations. Because of some language differences between the Statement of Expectations and Salisbury's essay grading rubric, the English department intends to consider including the latter set of competencies in the manual.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

When students have completed Principles of Composition and Principles of Literature, they take a common final examination. The exam is made up of two parts: (1) define and apply literary terms and (2) write an essay on a literary work which they have read and studied prior to the exam. To validate writing competencies, the English department plans to consider scoring a sample of either course-produced or final exam essays in terms of the competencies in the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Writing Across the Curriculum program is in place and has involved schools and departments in the defining of writing competencies. The Writing Across the Curriculum Board has designed an action plan to integrate instruction and assessment of the competencies across the curriculum. A plan to assist faculty in non-English areas in teaching and assessing of writing competencies in the Statement of Expectations has been developed with three assumptions:

- there is a common conceptual basis to each competency.
- each discipline may teach to and assess the competencies in ways appropriate to the discipline.
- many disciplines are already teaching to and assessing competencies in a variety of appropriate ways.

A seven step plan was initiated in January, 1998 and is scheduled for completion at the end of AY 2000. The plan calls for the development of strategies and competencies to be used by the schools and departments, training workshops, and implementation of the assessment strategies. The ultimate responsibility for teaching and testing the identified competencies lies with the schools and academic departments.

Staff Analysis

With a new president and administrative team and the creation of the Office of Institutional Accountability and Research, Salisbury State University has made great strides in the implementation and use of assessment outcome measures. The report included an informative, detailed two page matrix indicating the many areas now being used to improve student outcomes. The University is to be commended on its progress.

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Towson University's assessment program includes the University Assessment Council and the University guiding principles. The principles define both the council's work and that of its subcommittees on the assessment of academic majors, student quality of life and students' general university experiences. The program also features annual excellence in assessment awards. Each assessment initiative is tied to the University's strategic plan and its goal to make the University more student centered.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Majors Assessment

During the 1994-1997 period, 25 of 35 eligible programs reported improvements as a direct result of assessment activities. The two most common changes as a result of assessment were course content and increased faculty collaboration and planning.

Student Quality of Life

A listing of some actions taken by the University include staff training and development; reorganization of offices and departments; creation or revised staff handbooks, policies and procedures; increased staff availability and improved communication protocols; increased number of positions; and improved physical facilities.

The University administered a student satisfaction survey in spring, 1997. While many areas received ratings of high importance and satisfaction, the following describes actions taken in areas that received ratings of high importance and least satisfaction:

- Showing Concern for Students as Individuals. Academic advising process has been revised with the addition of new employees, establishment of an advising center in College of Business and Economics, and the creation of a university-wide advising system for all first year students.
- Counseling Center. Developed an on-line, career development capability and eliminated waiting lists for students who need to see a counselor. The financial aid department enhanced the timeliness of financial awards by installing a computerized packaging system and creating a web page permitting students to apply for financial aid, conduct entrance interviews and counseling and visit additional Web sites.
- Eliminating the Run-Around. Several areas have merged or created systems. The business office has a one stop payment point. Career Services merged the internship and cooperative education offices and expanded use and availability of software to develop resumes. A one-stop service area for enrollment services has been created. University Union now has one-stop for students seeking employment and one place to get information about any aspect of student out-of-class activities.
- Lot Security A range of improvements has occurred including improved daytime bus routes, new evening van service, additional lighting and additional security staff.
- Course Feedback Actions taken in regard to timely faculty feedback will be included in subsequent outcomes reports.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

In spring 1998, the English department completed its comparison of the Statement of Expectations with the Freshman English writing course, "Writing for a Liberal Education". It was determined that the course met all the stated guidelines.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

In spring 1998 the English department formed a writing assessment committee. It also designed a portfolio-based pilot writing assessment project, secured support for a writing coordinator and received funding by the Assessment Office to help support the pilot. The committee expects to conduct the writing assessment pilot between September and December, 1998. The results of this pilot will be used to design the full-scale writing assessment project for spring 1999.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

During the 1997-1998 academic year, the University conducted a pilot assessment of the writing skills demonstrated by students completing the advanced composition course. Results and actions taken will be included in subsequent outcomes reports.

Staff Analysis

Towson has done an excellent job of incorporating assessment into the workings of the university, with assessment practices ranging from program improvements to an annual excellence in assessment award. The University is to be commended on its highly detailed, well written, and informative report.

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE

The University of Baltimore presented a detailed view of assessment methods used in the School of Business, the College of Liberal Arts and various other institutional offices.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Assessment of Undergraduate Programs

Merrick School of Business

The School of Business has introduced a tripartite assessment process focusing on faculty performance assessment, student evaluations and student competency assessment instruments. Five competencies have been identified and each of these competencies has a corporate sponsor. These competencies are Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Information Technology, and Career Readiness. The corporate sponsors send a number of employees to speak to students about how competencies are addressed in their organizations. Students are encouraged to prepare portfolios that demonstrate their mastery of the core competencies and use them to compete for progress awards within the School of Business. The use of the Student Competency Assessment will be expanded in the coming year and existing courses will be adjusted to help students reach the competency level in each of the five areas.

Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts

In the College of Liberal Arts, assessment is organized within each undergraduate degree program; a variety of assessment measures have been developed to assess student learning within each program. The History program has established a Specialization in Public History to build on student interest in and demand for courses that have a practical application. In addition, the research portion of the curriculum was strengthened when a new seminar in Public History, with a strong research component, was introduced.

Two problems discovered in the early-entry Jurisprudence program were resolved by a committee of Liberal Arts and Law faculty. Early-entry allows students to begin law school after completing 93 undergraduate credits. It was decided to tighten up the core requirements in History and Government but loosen requirements for methods and skills courses. As a result, advising is going more smoothly, few problems are being detected during graduation checks, and more students are selecting and successfully completing the early-entry program.

Institutional Indicators

The University collects considerable data regarding student body composition, student satisfaction, graduation and retention of students, and employer satisfaction. Several data publications produced by the Office of Institutional Research are distributed to Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors as needed. They are used to evaluate the most appropriate delivery systems and course scheduling for current undergraduate programs as well as to assess enrollment trends in specific academic programs.

The Off-Campus Survey was sent to students enrolled in live or interactive video classes off campus and results were shared with the Provost, Deans and Program Directors. This survey highlighted the demand for a B.S. in Criminal Justice in Hagerstown, MD which was inaugurated in spring 1998. The fall 1997 Computer Technology Survey has led to the development of two entirely web-based courses.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The University of Baltimore, as an upper-division and graduate institution, does not teach freshmen writing. All undergraduate students are required to take IDIS300: Ideas in Writing to fulfill their upper-division general education requirements. Students' writing abilities are assessed upon entering the University through a Writing Placement Exam. Students who do not pass this exam are required to take WRIT200: Practicum in Writing, which is a remedial course for which they do not receive credit.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

WRIT200: Practicum in Writing

Students enrolled in the Practicum take a pre- and post-test consisting of an objective test and a written essay. A committee of Practicum instructors and one placement test coordinator review the tests and determine if the student passes or fails the course.

Changes have been made as a result of ongoing assessment. The pre-tests have been used to diagnose students' writing problems, and the syllabus is adjusted to meet the specific needs. For example, it was observed that students that failed the test often did not understand the sample essays given to them for analysis. As a result, more emphasis has been placed on reading comprehension and summarizing. The course is evaluated each semester by students and any suggestions made for improving the course are considered by the evaluator committee and acted on when possible.

IDIS300: Ideas in Writing

The syllabus includes four major writing assignments and emphasizes the recursive nature of the writing process by requiring substantial revision and peer critiques.

The Ideas in Writing course has been revised to reflect recent work in composition studies that shows that as students progress in their major fields of study, they need to become familiar with forms of discourse experts and insiders use. The course requires students to account for the views of others. They must put aside their opinions and attend closely to others' ideas and be able to synthesize views culled from a number of different authors, each of whom may express a slightly different position.

The course is evaluated through a questionnaire administered at the end of the semester. Questionnaire results have been both consistent and positive, with instructors receiving strong student ratings. Students believe that the course has helped them to improve their writing, critical reading and thinking skills, and they feel more confident as writers.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Not addressed in this report.

Staff Analysis

The University of Baltimore, as an upper level institution, approaches assessment in a somewhat different manner than other campuses. The report listed the many assessment tools utilized by the University and their applications. The Student Competency Assessment by the Merrick School of Business is a particularly innovative approach, notably its use of outside corporate sponsors.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALTIMORE COUNTY

The campus assessment process is composed of departmentally based activities as well as campuswide activities. Assessment is an on-going process, designed by the faculty in keeping with the mission of UMBC and its departments and programs. Assessment efforts are viewed as complementing on-going campus planning processes where academic program areas and all major divisions annually update program goals, needs, and achievements.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Internal assessment activities have led to improved support services for students: improvement in processes to apprise students of opportunities for scholarships and travel abroad, and the development of coordinated research and field/laboratory experiences for undergraduate students.

Student Support Services

The University provides many different support mechanisms to students with the objective of increasing retention and graduation rates. The Learning Resource Center is the primary comprehensive academic support program. It is responsible for all undergraduates requesting assistance but is particularly concerned with undergraduates identified as needing special attention.

Surveys were sent to students not retained from fall 1996 to fall 1997 and new students who were experiencing difficulty in entry level courses, particularly in the sciences. The results of these surveys have led to improved student advising and support services. Student support has begun to expand its services to provide tutoring tailored to specific classes in which new students experienced the most difficulty. On-going analysis of the survey results will be used to improve student advisement for lower division students. On-line writing and mathematics tutoring are also being offered. A series of freshman seminars, one and two credit courses, will provide new students with a consistent link to full-time faculty and staff. The seminars are designed to provide students with a variety of skill development activities designed to improve success during first year courses and college life.

Undergraduate Research

UMBC offers a variety of research/field experiences to its undergraduates to help them prepare for post-baccalaureate studies as well as enhance the students' academic programs. These experiences are designed to be a component of students' academic programs and also to make UMBC students attractive candidates to graduate and professional schools. A competition for undergraduate research awards has been offered for several years in the areas of Arts, Humanities, Mathematics and Sciences, Social Sciences, Computer Science and Information Systems, and the Professions. Beginning in 1997, a second competition offered students the opportunity to present research on campus in the format of a professional conference. This conference has allowed the showcasing of over 100 student scholars through oral presentations, poster sessions and artistic performances/exhibits.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The Writing and Rhetoric Division of the English Department requires a first year composition course.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Members of the Writing and Rhetoric Division participated in the development of the 1995 faculty committee "Statement of Expectations". These expectations have been incorporated into the teaching and assessment of all freshman composition courses. There is on-going discussion regarding the implementation and improved assessment techniques utilized in the classroom.

Writing instructors team up with staff from such areas as Advising, Residential Life, Student Affairs and Athletics to provide a one-hour Student Success Seminar to first semester students in combination with a three-hour composition course. The focus is on issues such as advising, time and stress management, critical thinking and other subjects and techniques to help students be well prepared for their subsequent academic and professional work.

Computer-assisted writing has been used in the computer-assisted sections of Freshman Composition for the last three years. This technology has been valuable for marginal writers, technical majors across disciplines, and for students new to computers.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The Writing and Rhetoric Division of the English department also offers a writing minor, which consists of a series of additional core courses in writing which any students may take even if they do not choose to pursue the full minor program.

UMBC is in the early stages of developing a series of upper-level, writing-intensive courses. These courses would be within the disciplines and a diversity of fields would be represented on a voluntary basis.

The University is developing a Writing Fellows program that would identify and train talented students to work as peer coaches/tutors. Writing Fellows, after intensive upper level writing courses, could tutor courses offered in the English Department or could work with writing-intensive courses offered in the disciplines.

Staff Analysis

UMBC has a campus wide assessment process with strong faculty involvement. The report touched on several areas utilizing assessment results.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

University of Maryland, College Park created the Campus Assessment Work Group in 1996 and utilizes a variety of CQI initiatives on advising, transfer students, the senior experience and other issues in its assessment process. The group meets regularly to create data collection processes that can be coordinated centrally but are flexible enough to meet the needs and interests of campus committees/teams, departments and colleges. The experience of undergraduate students has been the primary focus of the group's efforts to date. Future efforts will expand to assessment of faculty and staff experiences.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Improvements in data collection as well as the quality of the data collected have already been accomplished. As the effort continues, new data will be compared to establish benchmarks with specific academic and psychosocial information sampled at different points along the collegiate experience. The University is still one to two years from having a strong enough body of data to fully realize this potential.

This report used the College Park Scholars (CPS) as an example of a program that has been extremely successful and which has used many sources of data and forms of assessment to guide its development. The increasing numbers of talented students attending the University led to the creation of this program to create a community of scholars. It was developed with the goal of recruiting more talented students to the campus, retaining these students, enhancing the curriculum for the talented student, improving campus climate for all students, and increasing the diversity of the student body. In fall 1994, four CPS programs were offered; this has grown to ten programs in fall 1998. A sampling of these programs is Advocates for Children, American Cultures, International Studies, Business, Wealth and Society, and Science, Discovery and the Universe.

One measure of this program's success is the increasing interest shown by incoming freshmen. The overall quality of academic talent of these students has also steadily increased and the retention rate is 92 percent, above the University's overall average. Additional efforts have been made to add racial and ethnic diversity to the goals for the program.

The student evaluation of the individual programs within CPS has helped to improve the content and format and, in some cases, led to larger restructuring. During the spring semester of 1997, a variety of focus groups was held with the goal to identify aspects of the program that are working and what issues need attention. An interesting outcome was the need for greater clarity on the expectations for scholarly effort and attitude. Students have expressed a desire to have this articulated early and then enforced. The focus groups were considered a wonderful learning opportunity for the students as well as a source of information for the faculty and staff of College Park Scholars.

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The freshman writing course at the University is English 101, Introduction to Writing. Its content follows closely the specific requirements in the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Course grades are based primarily on a portfolio of papers written in response to the course assignments, with the assessment of each paper focused on the specific skills detailed in the University's assessment objectives. Twenty percent of the grade is based on quizzes, short exercises and in-class demonstration of skills. The teacher is the primary assessor.

To ensure an accurate assessment, the University maintains the standard of assessment in three ways:

Consistency of requirements. All sections use the same textbook and use the same six major assignments. Detailed expectations of the assignments and standards for each grade are published in the textbook and are available to all students taking the course.

Teacher training. The teaching staff begins with a three-credit training course, Approaches to College Composition. Training and norming in grading are also covered during the mandatory orientation for new teachers prior to start of the semester. During the semester, weekly teacher training meetings are attended by all teachers during their first term in the classroom.

Review of teaching and grading practices New teachers have their first set of graded papers reviewed by the freshman writing staff and representative samples are reviewed at the end of the semester. Weekly mentoring is also given by freshman writing coordinators. After the first semester, spot checks are given to ensure norms are being maintained. All teachers' syllabi are reviewed every semester as well as student evaluations and grading profiles.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The University anticipates the acceptance of the recommendation of the Statewide English Composition Committee that teams be formed from faculty from other institutions to review course standards for each institution on a regular basis.

Staff Analysis

The University has incorporated assessment activities and results camps wide in a variety of programs. The report focused on the College Park Scholars program that has been extremely successful and demonstrates the many forms of data and assessment that guided the development of the program.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE

In June 1994 the UMES General Education Assessment Project was initiated with a two-fold goal: (1) identify desired student outcomes for general education and (2) identify an assessment mechanism for these outcomes. A partial listing of accomplishments thus far enacted includes establishment of a faculty-centered campus assessment advisory committee, the creation, dissemination and completion of a student learning outcomes course match matrix, and the pilot test of a nationally used vehicle for assessment for a random student population. The University feels that the most significant impact has been the enhancement of awareness and interest in the outcomes assessment by a large segment of the core faculty.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The report listed fourteen departments and their specific assessment activities occurring now or that are in the planning phase. A sample of those departments follows:

Agriculture. By fall 1998, syllabi for all courses will be placed on the Web and will contain expected learning outcomes. Future assessment plans are to have standardized assessment exams after the sophomore year for all students followed by a standardized exit exam in the senior year.

Education. Extensive use is made of portfolio assessment in all education programs. A comprehensive examination will be in place at the end of the 1997-1998 academic year.

Natural Science. The development of a comprehensive exam to be administered in the senior year within all majors is under discussion/consideration. Most science majors take an independent study course that relies on cross-disciplinary learning, intensive writing, analytical thinking and theory-applied learning.

Physical Therapy. This program holds professional accreditation and all students are required to take a national licensure exam. To date, success on this exam has been 100 percent. In addition to the exam, the department uses graduate and employer surveys, informal contacts with students and survey of clinical instructors.

Fine Arts. Portfolio assessment has been in place for several years. An internship in both art and music education serves as a capstone experience.

Human Ecology. The department uses the value-added concept in tracking students from entry through employment. All syllabi contain competency-based outcomes.

Several initiatives have been put in place to improve retention. A retention management plan is currently under development at the university and school level. Title III has recently funded the following projects to enhance retention:

- (1) a tracking system to design data collection, analysis and reporting for retention purposes and creating an enhanced advising and tracking system.
- (2) enhancement of the Center of Academic Support Services which includes assessment of first-time student reading, writing and math skills; developmental skill instruction; development of instructional materials; and data collection and analysis.

It is anticipated that these initiatives will increase retention rates.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Essays produced by students at the conclusion of the freshman writing sequence should meet the guidelines as outlined in the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Beginning in spring 1999 the University proposes to begin assessing freshman students after the completion of the second required course written expression. The English department has proposed a plan of action for the administration and scoring of this examination. This plan is currently being reviewed by the faculty and administration. An overview of this plan:

- students would be administered a two hour proctored examination.
- students will be required to write a 500 word essay about one of three topics.
- students will be provided written and oral explanation of the task they are to complete and the criteria which will be used to evaluate the essay.
- examinations will be scored using standardized scoring rubric based on learning outcomes criteria.
- examinations will be collected and distributed for marking and read by two faculty members.
- grade discrepancies will be resolved by a third reader.
- students who fail the examination will be given the opportunity to take the exam again the following year.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The assessment advisory committee has established a plan for measuring writing competencies beyond the general education sequence. The committee has proposed establishing a writing across the curriculum policy. The proposed policy includes:

- at least two courses in each program be designated as courses where writing and evaluation of written expression be the responsibility of the department.
- each department will establish criteria for writing excellence and verify that each student meets the writing standards.

The Office of Institutional Research will be available to assist each department as they develop and implement these writing competencies.

Staff Analysis

University of Maryland Eastern Shore has been aggressive in identifying desired student outcomes, developing institutional assessment measures, and recording the accomplishments both campuswide and in specific departments. UMES included an informative chart summarizing initiatives in place as a result of assessment activities.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

The report of University of Maryland University College focused on five areas used in its student learning outcomes assessment. The report gave particular emphasis to the course evaluation process that has been used to identify teaching strategies that are especially effective in various academic disciplines. The University views assessment at the course level as an appropriate assessment strategy for adult, part-time students.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Survey Data

Surveys are sent to three segments of the student population on a biannual basis: new undergraduate students, current undergraduates and recent bachelor's degree recipients. Additionally, a survey of employers has been developed to assess how supervisors and employers view academic preparation to meet workforce needs.

Specialization and Course Objectives

Course objectives were developed for 30 academic specializations for 1997-1998. The goal of the University, being implemented in 1998-1999, is to develop appropriate assessment measures for each course. These measures will support and relate to the course and specialization objectives and provide for faculty development to ensure that they are matching assessment to objectives.

Course Evaluations

The recently revised student course evaluation form permits students to indicate their satisfaction with quality of instruction as well as the total learning experience, including course design, syllabus and course materials and learning skills. The evaluation provides faculty with an overview of student satisfaction with all course elements and the quality of instruction. For administrators, the reports provide insights into curriculum effectiveness and faculty performance and identify areas for professional development. The evaluations are ranked. For those courses receiving low aggregate ratings, the faculty are considered "at risk" and a multi-faceted intervention takes place.

Academic Program Reviews

In 1996, the academic program review process was revised and expanded. Based on the analysis of the data, certain low enrollment courses were eliminated, upper level-courses were rescheduled to ensure they are offered when and where the students need them, and individual courses were revamped to strengthen academic content.

Participation in Benchmarking Study on the Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Since 1997, the University has participated in a national benchmarking study on the assessment of learning outcomes in conjunction with the American Productivity and Quality Center of the Institute for Education Best Practices in Houston. UMUC played a leadership role as a co-sponsor of this study. In June 1998, a meeting was held to share/transfer the knowledge that was gathered. UMUC's undergraduate programs division will utilize information from this study to develop its own assessment plan. The plan is to evaluate current internal assessment activities, identify new strategies and needed resources, and develop a timetable for implementation.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

The course objectives of UMUC's ENGL101 conform closely to the Standards for a "C" Grade in English Composition.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

The method of final evaluation for ENGL101 and other writing-intensive courses at the University is portfolio assessment. Students produce and are evaluated on the draft and final versions of :

- four essays (description, comparison and contrast, persuasion, and process analysis)
- a research paper
- an assignment notebook with answers to review and integrating questions as well as prewriting notes preparatory to essay assignments
- a final exam

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The Effective Writing Program supports undergraduate initiatives to improve student writing and promote information literacy. Workshops are offered on the topics of effective writing and writing in the disciplines. A particular aim of the program is the development and dissemination of writing assessment materials.

The Information Literacy and Writing Assessment project, a five-year effort, combines the resources of the Effective Writing Program and the Office of Library Services. Principal objectives are to promote consistent assessment of research-based writing in courses across the curriculum and increase the frequency and quality of such assignments. A task force has been refining tools to make them suitable for assessing writing projects produced in courses across the disciplines. Actual student writings are being used to test these tools by the task force. At the conclusion of the task force's work, the assessment methods and tools will be disseminated formally through the University's program of faculty development workshops. These workshops will assist faculty members in designing, implementing and assessing segmented researched writing. Plans are being developed now to collect data from the faculty implementers on the use of these assessment procedures.

The EXCEL program awards credit to students for verifiable university-level learning (whether skills or knowledge) gained from volunteer, work or life experiences. Students are assisted in developing a portfolio containing justifications for award of credit in specific courses. Faculty course-content experts evaluate the portfolios. Training in writing assessment for EXCEL faculty was initiated in spring 1998. The training aims at improving consensus among faculty about standards for assessing the writing in these portfolios. Assessment tools are being developed in connection with the EXCEL faculty training and will be refined in collaboration with writing-course portfolio evaluators.

Staff Analysis

With a student population made up primarily of part-time adults, the University of Maryland University College has put its emphasis on the course level assessment process. Of particular interest was the assessment study that the University took part in and its plans to utilize the results of this study.

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Morgan State University has focused its assessment efforts primarily on the strengthening of existing academic programs and improving retention and graduation rates of their students.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

Enrollment. Morgan's development of science programs as well as the population growth of African American students has contributed to a 50 percent enrollment growth over the last ten years. As a result of new programs and improved facilities, the quality of the faculty attracted to the University has increased dramatically.

Retention and Graduation Rates. The Academic Development Center, established in 1987, has a primary mission of providing support services to students who are admitted as exceptions to regular admission standards and/or are found to require special academic support. Students with the lowest range of SAT scores are the main clients of the Center. Interestingly, their retention rates are somewhat above rates for students in the mid-range, suggesting that the extra attention received through this program is effective in improving success in college. Ideally the University would like to extend the services and personal attention received by this group to a broader segment of the student body. The Academic Development Center offers several programs; one of the programs reported on is the Pre-College Studies Program. This program is designed to ease the transition from high school to college for students whose academic profiles and performance indicate the need for early intervention to improve their chance for success. The program is offered for an eight week period the summer prior to freshman year. The graduation rate has risen since the 1980s. Morgan now leads all statewide campuses in the number of bachelors' degrees awarded to black students and also leads in the number of awards in engineering and the sciences. The University ranks among the top ten public campuses nationally in the number of black baccalaureate recipients who subsequently obtain doctoral degrees.

Survey Findings. A variety of surveys are taken on a regular basis to assess overall performance as well as performance of individual activities on campus. Each spring, prior to graduation, a comprehensive survey is given to perspective graduates. Most students express satisfaction with academic experiences but also express some degree of dissatisfaction with administrative operations, particularly those that deliver services to students. A detailed report of the survey's results is prepared and distributed to all academic and administrative units for use in improving programs and services. At the end of each semester, faculty are required to ask students for course evaluations. Feedback obtained is then used to assist faculty in addressing course weaknesses and in improving teaching.

Test Data. Morgan recently completed a three year national study of student learning which included 23 campuses nationwide and was one of two historically black campuses involved in the federally financed study. Standardized tests were given to students entering college who entered as new freshmen in the fall of 1992. A variety of outcomes associated with general

education were tested, including critical thinking, mathematics, reading and writing. Morgan students maintained their standing in comparison with other students. An analysis that compared the progress of African American students at various campuses concluded that the Morgan students made cognitive gains that were equal to or greater than those of students enrolled at majority institutions.

Future Plans. In an effort to do an even better job of determining the strengths and weaknesses of its educational program, Morgan is considering the use of nationally standardized tests to measure the outcomes of its general education program at the end of the sophomore year and its major programs of study during the senior year.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Students must be able to write well-organized, balanced expository prose, conduct scholarly research and develop an extended persuasive paper by meeting all of the behavioral objectives listed in the Statement of Expectations. The University is working to improve the quality levels of competencies currently expected of freshmen.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Starting in fall 1998, a common exit examination is given to assess writing competencies of students completing their first general education writing courses. English faculty are currently developing the exam mechanisms.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

Two general education courses in the Humanities are taught by English department faculty. They involve interdisciplinary study of literature, philosophy, and the fine arts, with the ultimate objective of making students articulate members of the intellectual community. General education requirements in English consist of a sequence of four courses which culminate in a Writing Proficiency Exam taken at the conclusion of the junior year.

Staff Analysis

Morgan State University has effectively utilized the results of its assessment activities to impact improvements in program and course quality as well as retention and graduation rates. The report indicated a wide use of assessment measures incorporated into many areas of the institution. Morgan's participation in the national study on student learning provided evidence of the cognitive development of its students that is not available at most other institutions.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

St. Mary's College of Maryland has been engaged in both formal and informal assessment of student preparedness, effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the quality of its curriculum for the last five years. The result is a revised honors college curriculum: the St. Mary's Project, which is intended to enhance academic skills and engender responsibility and personal growth among students. The College's report discussed this project in detail as well as its Portfolio Sorting Project covering general education writing samples and department assessment workshops.

Institutional Impact of Assessment

The initiation of the St. Mary's Project was possible because of the preparedness of the student body and the overall high evaluation of the current curriculum by students. St. Mary's College of Maryland has both the highest average freshman SAT of any Maryland public institution and the highest student retention rate.

The St. Mary's Project has four criteria: (1) it be student initiated, (2) it express methodological competence, (3) it synthesize and reflect previous academic work, and (4) it be shared with the College community in some form of public presentation. The Project is viewed as both a culmination of and a means of assessing the whole of a student's education. Initiated as a voluntary project in 1997-98, the Project will become mandatory for the class of 2002.

The evaluation of the Project has already prompted far-reaching change in the structure of teaching and learning, policies for accounting for faculty course load, the allocation of financial and human resources, and reconsideration of other parts of the curriculum. St. Mary's believes that assessment of all forms will continue to help the College refine and improve this important aspect of the student's education.

The Portfolio Sorting Project is another assessment of student learning outcome. It was developed to assess changes in student skills during the college experience by having non-college raters evaluate pairs of freshman and senior writing samples according to certain criteria. The raters are not aware that each pair of papers was generated by the same student, one in freshman year and one in the senior year. Portfolio sorting has been used since 1995 and while it has generally revealed improvements in areas such as critical thinking, organization and substance, portfolio collection problems still need to be corrected. The collection process is under constant review in effort to overcome difficulties.

Department assessment workshops that assess specific cognitive skills in the major are encouraged and supported. Five workshops have already been held and more are scheduled this year. The St. Mary's Project has revealed the need to revise the curriculum to enable students to be prepared for this experience.

Assessment of Writing Competencies

Writing Competencies Expected of Freshmen

Placement in English 102, the English Composition course, is determined by a written examination completed during orientation. Students not prepared to take English 102 are placed in English 101, Introduction to Writing. It is also possible for students to be exempt from English 102 if they achieve high scores on the placement examinations. The goals of English 102 are in total agreement with the Statement of Expectations.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Writing Competencies

Students are asked to maintain a portfolio of their work, including multiple and final drafts. At the end of the semester, students are evaluated on a total of 15-20 pages of polished writing. Until 1998, the general education program required that students successfully complete English 102 and two "W" (Writing) courses. This requirement has been eliminated, but writing skill has become an even more important consideration with the establishment of the St. Mary's Project.

Methods for and/or Results of Assessing Activity Beyond First General Writing Course

The general education portfolio assessment project discussed above focuses specifically on writing skills and their development over the student's college career.

Staff Analysis

The St. Mary's Project exemplifies an excellent use of assessment results in positively impacting undergraduate teaching and learning, and the Portfolio Sorting Project represents an innovative way to assess changes in student skills.

