

June 30, 2008

Dr. Lois Olson & Dr. Kathy Krentler  
Marketing

Dear Lois and Kathy,

The American Association for Higher Education developed a number of “Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning.” With apology to David Letterman, I have adapted the list slightly, to structure those principles as a “Top Ten” list:

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values; it begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for our students.
2. Learning is a complex process that entails not only what students know, but what they can do with what they know. It involves not only knowledge and abilities, but also values, attitudes and habits of mind that require thoughtful (and diverse) approaches to measurement.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes. Assessment as a process leads a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes, but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes. To improve outcomes, faculty and administrators need to know about student experiences along the way—about the curricula, teaching and student effort that lead to particular outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. Improvement comes when assessment entails a linked series of activities that occur over time, and assessment strategies must be continually evaluated and refined in order to ensure success.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved. Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Educational quality is a collective effort.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of relevance and illuminates questions that people really care about. To be useful, information collected must be connected to issues or questions that people value.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change. Successful assessment is directed toward improvement, and its most important contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public; assessment provides a way to document outcomes and to inform constituents of the ways in which campus programs and services positively affect students, community and society.
10. Assessment is less about oversight and more about improving student learning. All assessment efforts need to be handled in a mutually supportive environment. It is essential for faculty to understand the importance and benefits of assessment and to recognize its intrinsic value.

Within the context of these assessment principles, I thank you for submitting your annual report. Members of the Student Learning Outcomes Committee have reviewed the report, and I convey their specific comments, suggestions, and questions by way of this letter (next page). It is my hope that you will perceive this review process in the same manner as do we: as a collaborative process, with the goal of enhancing student learning.

## **Committee Response to Your 2007-2008 Annual Assessment Report**

The Student Learning Outcomes Committee was deeply impressed by the realistic and very thorough framework that you and your colleagues have developed for program-level assessment of the BSBA, and by the way in which this framework built on last year's report. *Your approach could serve as a model* for departments with less evolved assessment systems. Particularly noteworthy are the well articulated and organized learning outcome statements, and the assignment of these outcomes to specific courses and program elements. We applaud your department's integration of direct assessment methods with the indirect measures employed in the exit survey, and your recognition that these methods are complementary. The Committee also thought that the specific assessments selected for implementation this year, as well as those selected for implementation next year, were quite appropriate.

Although less detailed than the BSBA report, the report on the MSBA applies the same logical and coherent approaches to assessment issues and methodologies, including the assignment of student learning outcomes to specific courses and the application of specific methodologies to collect and analyze data.

*Overall, your responses to the guideline questions for this year's reports are exemplary.* On behalf of the Committee, I want to extend my congratulations on your excellent efforts, your leadership in leading the department's assessment efforts, and your leadership at the college and campus levels.

Highest regards,

*Chris Frost*

Christopher Frost, Ph.D.  
Chair, Student Learning Outcomes Committee