

Project Details

Title	Implementation of Assessment Plans	Status	REVIEWED
Category	Any Category	Updated	09-30-2011
Timeline		Reviewed	10-12-2011
Planned Project Kickoff	04-26-2011	Created	04-24-2011
Target Completion	05-16-2015	Last Modified	10-12-2011

- **1: Project Accomplishments and Status**
- **A:** VU has taken significant strides toward meeting the expectation that it implement its required assessment action project (which focuses on implementing its assessment strategic plan) and be prepared to report student learning data in April 2012. VU's current successes begin with the identification of an Interim Director of Institutional Effectiveness and an Assessment Committee consisting of a majority of the members of the ad hoc committee that wrote the strategic plan. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness now has its own budget that includes money for staffing and equipping the office, as well as funding liaisons for the assessment process, professional development, exemplary assessment recognition, and other needs. Faculty members on the Assessment Committee have been granted released time to serve as liaisons to their divisions, leading their respective division assessment committees and working one-on-one with program faculty to implement the academic program assessment process. The University Assessment Committee has developed report forms and timelines for various steps in order to keep the assessment process on track for April 2012 reporting. The Committee reviews assessment work step-by-step and gives feedback in order to ensure the development of sound practice in a short period of time. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness has developed a spread sheet that tracks assessment progress to date. This report is regularly distributed to liaisons (who distribute it to division faculty), division deans, and the President, keeping everyone engaged in the process and aware of progress. VU's Assessment Committee is committed to not only gathering data to meet expectations, but they are committed to developing an embedded, authentic, assessment-for-improving-learning process. The following is a list of activities that are moving both the assessment strategic plan and the assessment process forward:
 - The Assessment Committee has developed and presented a working assessment vocabulary. The definitions are posted on the new Office of Institutional Effectiveness webpage.
 - The Director of Institutional Effectiveness has completed assessment audits of all programs. These audits serve the purpose of explaining to program chairs the new assessment process in a one-on-one situation. It has helped to reassure faculty that the new process is

manageable, and the audit results establish a baseline to mark VU's progress. A summary of significant findings will be placed on the VU Office of Institutional Effectiveness webpage in October.

- The Director has completed roughly 85% of the audits of non-instructional units in order to prepare for implementation of the service unit assessment processes beginning in October.
- The Director has also conducted a SWOT analysis process for both academic and non-instructional programs. A summary of significant findings will be distributed via email and added to the VU Office of Institutional Effectiveness webpage in October.
- The Director, Assessment Committee members, and the President, offered a 3-hour workshop on assessment during the May Professional Development week. The workshop was attended by 180 VU faculty and staff.
- The opening University meeting in August addressed assessment plans during an hour-long session. The President announced that he has asked the Assessment Committee to make a recommendation regarding VU's possible commitment to joining the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Assessment. The Committee's recommendation is that the President commit to the Alliance and VU complete the application process, which means going public with VU's developing assessment progress, results, and plans.
- A new plan to identify assessment-driven assessment projects for funding was also announced during the opening meeting. The plan will promote continuous improvement through Action Projects and other "special" projects that go beyond normal classroom, funding or administrative boundaries. This process will enable faculty and staff to request the University give special consideration and funding, if needed, for special assessment-driven projects. The application has been developed and the process will begin during the Spring semester.
- A draft set of University Student Learning Outcomes was presented during the opening meeting. A new Action Project to approve and implement these outcomes has been recently submitted to the Action Project Directory. The goal is to complete the process of general and liberal education review and approve new university learning outcomes; these new outcomes will give better focus to general and liberal education learning and assessment. In order to prepare for the Curriculum and Academic Affairs Committee conversations and connect faculty and staff with the outcomes, Terrell Rhodes (AAC&U) will be attending meetings and doing a convocation presentation Nov. 1, 2011.
- During the opening University meeting discussion, another Action Project was announced. Entitled with VU's motto "Learn in Order to Serve," the project is an assessment and learning project. The project's goals are to (1) build a data-driven profile of various student populations and a data warehouse for sharing data, (2) complete a study of VU's early-warning system (TAPS—Tracking Attendance and Performance System) and recommend practices for its effective use to

improve retention and gather student performance data, and (3) bring Kathleen Gabriel to campus to do a workshop on teaching unprepared students, including using formative assessments to improve student learning.

- Two other assessment activities were announced during the opening meeting: a campus quality survey (faculty and staff satisfaction survey that was recommended in the AQIP Portfolio) and a pilot project to use the IDEA student rating of faculty instruction.
 - The Director of IE has offered 3 different workshops this Fall semester (presenting each at least 3 times) addressing the initial steps of the assessment process. Attendance for each workshop series is 40-80 faculty (with numbers growing), and materials are made available through the Deans and liaisons and on the Office of IE webpage for those faculty who cannot attend.
 - Following the first workshop on writing mission statements and outcomes, the Assessment Committee has been reviewing drafts, working with program faculty to finalize these, and moving forward with plans to post these on program webpages and in other promotional literature.
 - The English Department has begun to experiment with electronic portfolios, hoping to identify a system that can be expanded into a University-wide portfolio system.
 - The Office of IE has a newly constructed webpage offering assorted information about the assessment process, forms, reports, links, and a workshop request form.
 - An effort has begun to use VU's new web technology to build an assessment site called "Improve VU." The site will be used for assessment reporting, but will also enable faculty to develop assessments and surveys on-line for use in their classes, with reporting data collected for use in reports.
 - Discussions have begun to determine how to strengthen the role of assessment in the hiring and faculty professional growth plans.
- **R:** The University is making excellent progress in the first year of this important project. The hiring of an interim director of Institutional Effectiveness, creation of an Office of Institutional Effectiveness, and establishment of an Assessment committee were essential first steps in meeting the goals of the assessment strategic plan. A strong Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be crucial in establishing a culture of evidence around assessment. Giving faculty release time to work on assessment stresses the importance of assessment to the institution. In addition, it recognizes the increase in workload assessment can entail at the beginning of a project as detailed and comprehensive as VUs. The institution may want to consider other incentives as assessment becomes more embedded in the culture of the University. The development of progress reports and timelines which are regularly communicated to the institution, along with meetings, workshops and the creation of online assessment resources will greatly facilitate communication in this area. The audits and

SWOT analyses conducted by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness will assist the University in determining where they are with assessment and what steps they need to take next. It also sets up an evaluation process to gauge progress in meeting the goals of the strategic assessment plan. The institution is to be commended for all the hard work it has done to embed assessment into its culture, thereby Helping Students Learn and Measuring Effectiveness (AQIP Categories 1 and 7 respectively).

- **2: Institution Involvement**
- **A:** As describe above, faculty and staff are being involved in a number of ways:
 - University and division Assessment Committees, linked by liaisons with released time
 - Step-by-step reporting plans and one-on-one assistance offered by liaisons or the Director
 - Spread sheet of progress to keep University personnel up-to-date on progress
 - A review of submissions during the step-by-step process to ensure feedback to programs and development of a quality assessment process
 - Addition of the Director of Institutional Effectiveness to the Provost Council in order to keep Deans and VP's aware of progress and needs
 - Audits and SWOTS, with results reported
 - Opening meeting and various workshops both Spring and Fall 2011 semesters
 - New Office of Institutional Effectiveness webpage that offers information, tools, and services
 - Emails from the Director and liaisons about progress, upcoming assessment events, and services
 - A minimum of 2 meetings per month between the President and Director to discuss progress and address concerns
 - An upcoming (Oct. 3) report to the Board of Trustees regarding progress on assessment
- **R:** As stated above, the establishment of a faculty-led assessment committee with representation from a broad section of academic departments will help VU get broad participation of relevant stakeholders and promote collaboration across disciplines (Principles of High Performing Organizations). The University appears to have good processes in place for communicating progress to its internal stakeholders and board of trustees. The University may want to consider broadening the scope of its communication with its external stakeholders and share its progress with alumni, community members, and employers of its graduates. Additionally, the University has the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of its commitment to helping students learn by having a more visible role of its key leaders in the communication and celebration of results.

- **3: Next Steps**

- **A:** The major next steps include the following:
 - Continued submissions from the programs that update their progress on assessment activities, analysis, student success data, and improvement projects
 - Continued review of and feedback on assessment progress by the Assessment Committee
 - Continued Assessment Committee implementation of the assessment strategic plan
 - Implementation of activities announced during the during the opening meeting (described in #1 above)
 - Continued updates sent to all University stakeholders, as noted in #2. These reports will update overall progress on completion of assessment process steps (spreadsheet) measured by the assessment baseline developed through the assessment audits of all programs
 - Development of an Assessment Peer Review process similar to the process used at Marquette University
 - A follow-up SWOT to assesses attitudes about VU's progress on assessment
 - Implementation of the assessment process for non-instructional units
 - Report in April 2012, as required, on learning results and improvement projects
- **R:** The next steps listed indicate that the University is well on its way to having successful assessment processes and will have a wealth of information which it can utilize in helping its students learn (AQIP Category 1). It is especially noteworthy that the plan includes assessment of non-instructional units. The University has an opportunity to align its instructional and non-instructional areas. As it approaches this phase of its plan, it should thoughtfully determine who are the key stakeholders in its non-instructional areas to be included, thereby demonstrating how it Values People (AQIP Category 4).

- **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

- **A:** One effective practice was the identification of Division Liaisons who are also Assessment Committee members. One great concern of working to complete a mandated assessment project under a compressed timeline is that poor work and habits might be developed in the rush. The liaisons are putting in significant numbers of hours working to help faculty understand that the focus of the new assessment process is on learning in the program (as opposed to previous iterations of assessment that focused more on indirect measures of student success such as numbers of students employed, employer feedback, numbers of students transferring, etc). The liaisons are also working closely with faculty as they develop their mission, outcomes, assessments and data collection methods in order to reduce the amount of review and revision. Another effective practice is the development of a

compressed, step-by-step, detailed description of what information is due. Finally, the Director is presenting workshops that address the expectations prior to due dates for each of the required steps. The specific directions and handouts help faculty members understand their expectations and keep the process moving toward the April reporting deadline. The work of the liaisons and workshops help faculty see an order in the process. Large numbers of faculty are participating in the workshops. Finally, the visible commitment and support of the President, administrators, and academic deans have been especially helpful in creating a consistent message about the importance of this project.

- **R:** The University is to be commended for recognizing the risk of rushing into assessment and the possibility of creating ineffective processes. The establishment of liaisons and their focus on helping their peers understand assessment, develop missions, outcomes, and data collection methods indicate that the institution has acted with foresight. Detailed documentation of processes will greatly facilitate assessment of student learning into the culture of VU.
- **5: Project Challenges**
- **A:** The most significant problem facing VU regarding assessment, as it appears now, is establishing systems to unite assessment activities in all its educational settings. VU is working with the assumption that a report of program learning should be representative of learning in that program, wherever courses are taught. Currently, VU is working very hard to ensure that faculty in Vincennes are working closely with faculty in Jasper to develop shared projects that assess the learning described in their common course outlines. VU is also beginning work with Ben Davis University High School, again using the same assessments used on the Vincennes and Jasper campuses to assess learning in that setting. Several VU departments are developing assessment activities with faculty teaching dual-credit courses (Project Excel). Discussions with military education personnel and distance education administrators have begun to identify issues and possible solutions. To complete this approach to assessment and assure consistent, quality instruction, VU has to figure out how to engage all faculty and adjuncts in the process. Some departments are having professional development activities that include Project Excel faculty in assessment discussions and coordination. But, coordinating all of this joint work with adjuncts hired to teach in all the distant sites presents a challenge that VU has to address. Given the April reporting date, VU's primary current focus has to be on building its core assessment philosophy and system, and it must complete plans to expand the basic approach to all its education sites in the near future. Any help that could be provided with how to address this topic would be greatly appreciated.

A second, less significant, problem is developing a more sophisticated reporting system. The current system employs blank spaces in Word

documents that are being completed step-by-step. Keeping track of reviews and edits has been a challenge, although the step-by-step work is necessary in order to assure quality work is being done. The University plans to put its final reports on a webpage or blackboard so they are accessible internally and available for review by HLC reviewers. For this year, this cumbersome system will work, but VU has to develop a more efficient system that involves fewer man-hours to manage. A web services staff member is experimenting with an electronic reporting system that will connect to new VU web technology. This system would make the writing, editing, updating, and completing processes simpler and more controlled, assuming VU can overcome the technical difficulties of building and implementing a new system. Once completed, the hope is that final reports would be easier to complete and revise, and the system would make all reports easily accessible internally and externally.

- **R:** The alignment of assessment between different campus and different stakeholders, such as area high schools and military education personnel is indeed a daunting challenge. The institution is on the right track and should not let the magnitude of the project dissuade it from pursuing it. The University may want to consider conducting workshop and providing professional development opportunities for these external stakeholders to help them understand VU's goals. In addition, regular communication and discussion will help the institution understand the needs of these stakeholders and their students (AQIP Category 3). The institution will likely have to exercise flexibility in developing strategies to succeed with each group.

In regards the second challenge mentioned, recording assessment results and tracking success is challenging. The University appears to be exploring several options and devoting resources to finding a solution. Having the final reports easier to complete and revise will certainly increase its utility to the institution and lead to continuous improvement (AQIP Category 8).