Welcome to the inaugural issue of our new assessment newsletter, *The Assessment Corral*. This newsletter will still offer important due dates for assessment plans as well as any policy enhancements coming out of SACSCOC that would be beneficial for obvious reasons. The ‘Corral’ however, will reach further as we will look to share new innovations in the assessment arena and offer greater transparency to each other with regard to our individual program and college best practices. I hope it will prove to become a literal toolbox of ideas that can be used both for academic and student affairs objectives all around the campus. We’ll post each one as we publish them, on the IR&A website so that it can be referred to as much as one needs to.

Growing encompasses sharing and circumspectly, as we share, we grow. As one of the new faces in Hardin at the beginning of the 2016-17 academic year, I want thank those who I have met thus far for their enthusiastic interest in the ideas that I’ve shared thus far. Contrary to popular opinion across the country, not just here on campus, assessment can be innovative as well as invigorating if performed methodically and with consistency over time. My roots were planted with the Higher Learning Commission, but after spending time this summer at the SACSCOC summer institute, I’m learning the two accreditation bodies aren’t far apart, though the language can be a bit different. Having spent the past four years building an assessment framework that works across all schools and colleges both academically charged and/or professionally motivated, this is a position suited for my particular skill set. I’ll be making the rounds this semester as well as in the spring with a goal of reaching out one–on–one with every academic, service, and student affairs focused program on the MSU campus.

This is important because each program has specific needs and expectations placed on them individually that eventually culminates in the completion of the university’s overall mission. We’d like to think that assessment can be placed in a nice, neat, one size fits all package. This is almost never the case. As I have these discussions around campus, I’ll be asking what can and does work best for each program.

I had the pleasure of sitting down over the summer with Dr. Raj Desai in the McCoy School of Engineering about the way assessment works best for their programs. What was found is that the school was basically satisfying the university assessment plan in Weave and then putting together another plan to cover their ABET accreditation responsibilities. The Student Learning Outcomes discussed and measured for ABET were sufficient for the assessment plan placed Continued on Page 4
The Dillard College will have its semi-annual Assurance of Learning (AOL) Day on October 7, 2016. All full-time faculty members are expected to attend this day-long Friday event that includes a catered lunch. On AOL Day, the Dillard College AOL Committee, which is chaired by Dr. Grace Zhang, presents the results of assessment activities for the college’s BBA, MBA, and online MBA program to the faculty as a whole. The day includes a discussion of AOL processes, an in-depth review of assessment results, and a discussion of areas that need improvement. The results of previous actions to continually improve are also reviewed.

The Dillard College has established six learning goals for the BBA degree and five learning goals for the MBA. The goals are assessed in both the fall and spring semester in classes where curriculum is relevant to the learning goals. An important part of AOL Day is reviewing assessment results and discussing potential pedagogical and curriculum changes needed to better achieve the general learning outcomes of the College. Often, faculty reach consensus on proposed pedagogical changes, and responsibility is assigned to individuals to make changes in their courses. If the faculty believes that a course needs to be added or substantially revised, the standard process for such a change is followed. Departments in the College meet to discuss potential changes to curriculum that would affect them. If faculty members in a department agree that a change is needed, the department’s proposal goes to the Undergraduate Program Committee or to the Graduate Program Committee for consideration. If approved by the appropriate committee, it then is brought to a faculty meeting for a vote.

Since the implementation of its first AOL Day in fall 2012, significant improvements have been made to the Dillard College’s AOL process. Although assessment results are discussed throughout the academic year in faculty meetings, the dedicated AOL Day discussion of specific processes and areas on which to focus continuous improvement efforts is extraordinarily productive and has been well received by the faculty. Several faculty members have commented after AOL Day that they understand the process better by being involved in such in-depth discussion that could not be as fully conveyed as an item on a faculty meeting agenda.

~ Dean Terry Patton

“An important part of AOL Day is reviewing assessment results and discussing potential pedagogical and curriculum changes ... to better achieve ... learning outcomes of the college.”

DEANS’ CROSSING

Each newsletter will include a contribution from one of MSU’s Deans. We thank Dr. Terry Patton, Dean of the Dillard College of Business for his contribution to the inaugural issue.
Wilson School of Nursing uses Exam Software to Enhance Student Learning

The Wilson School of Nursing (WSON) is continually working to improve student learning and achievement through a comprehensive assessment plan. The methods utilized to assess students and their results were evaluated by the faculty and the decision was made to transition to an electronic testing software that improved the execution of the objectives outlined in the comprehensive assessment plan. With special consideration given to student learning and the expected outcomes for students and faculty, Exam Soft® was selected as it allows not only flexibility, but improved and simplified data presentation options that may be used to simplify and present meaningful data to inform program, course, and curricular decisions. The Exam Soft® platform provides a secure medium for faculty members to create assessments and rubrics, grade assessments and rubrics for each student, store questions and assessments, deliver assessments, and receive immediate feedback/results on each student’s performance. Exam Soft® then allows students to access the exams and results that the faculty members provide them access to, in a variety of settings through a variety of devices. During an exam, Exam Soft® restricts the use of other programs on the devices utilized to minimize academic dishonesty. The platform also gives faculty members the option to offer the exam with questions in a different sequence for each student to preserve ethical behavior. There are also tools that support students during an exam, for example; the timer, calculator, and spell checker. Exam Soft® not only enhances the efficiency and effectiveness in creating and delivering assessments, it also allows faculty to track students’ progress over time and match their performance to the course and program outcomes/objectives. For example, faculty members are able to tag questions to specific objectives, course and program outcomes, Blooms Taxonomy, and the NCLEX blueprint as they create assessments/rubrics. This ability assures that faculty members are fully assessing what is taught in the course and that it’s in line with what is expected for the course, the program, and the school.

The analytical, communicative, presentation and assessment capabilities provided by Exam Soft®, have allowed faculty members to assess student knowledge, evaluate their performance, and have all this data organized into a central location to ease analysis - in a short period of time. Exam Soft® is the conduit to constructing meaningful assessment measures. It provides support for faculty members and helps to inform decisions and determine future actions. These future actions support meaningful assessment that will be benefit for the students, courses, and programs that will ensure success at the WSON.

~ Dr. Kathleen Williamson

Weave Assessment Deadline

November 1, 2016

If you need assistance, email Dan at daniel.stroud@mwsu.edu, or call ext. 4342. No question is too small!
in WEAVE. Combining the two plans should save the Engineering faculty some time that can be used in other vital areas.

I was also pleased to work with the QEP and Moffett Library in clarifying their Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) which in turn made it easier to put relatively strong measures in place that it is expected will offer far greater data streams that can be cross cut in many different ways at the end of the year and in the years to come.

At the summer institute Mark McClendon (Director of Institutional Research and Assessment) and I learned three important words that are expected to guide us through the coming years. Those three words are: Evidence of Use. Everyone can expect to hear me repeat these words over and over again in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. SACSCOC continually reminded us and all the other universities in attendance of the concept’s importance in future reaffirmations.

The objective here is this; once we have collected our data, it now becomes necessary to discuss our improvements and shortcomings in order to determine what the best use of this data will be. The program will then implement those changes as deemed necessary, and collect new data in the year ahead that reflects the changes. In other words, we’ll be conveying to SACSCOC reviewers our story about how we continuously improve year to year in our programs using the data that we are collecting. It is not a bad thing to have shortfalls as you observe your assessed measures. What will be frowned upon is failure as a department to work through the data together, and then to take action in one way or another to correct and or sustain their students’ learning in these areas of study.

In conclusion, I again want to say that I look forward to sitting down with your departments during this academic year to discuss just how assessment can help you strengthen your programs for the good of your students.

In the meantime, should anyone have questions or concerns on their mind already, please do not hesitate to call me at phone ext. 4342 or email me at daniel.stroud@mwsu.edu. My goal is that through this work together we’ll begin to see assessment as something more about growth and success in our programs and less about expectations and compliance for the sake of accreditation alone.

~ Dan Stroud