Assurance Argument - Criterion 4

Missouri State University - MO

4/13/2015

4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

4.A.

It is between the faculty members and students that true education occurs – in the classroom, in the laboratories, and in personal interaction. The faculty member inspires, prepares students for their careers, and solidifies the commitment to lifelong learning. The rest – student services, residence halls, athletics, co-curricular activities, etc. – all add value to the educational process. At alumni events across the country and around the world, therefore, it is not surprising that alumni ask about the individual professors who changed their lives at Missouri State.

Missouri State University values its academic programs and its faculty and demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs through a variety of structures at the department, college, and institutional level.

4.A.1

Missouri State has a long history of program review mandated by the state of Missouri. After the Higher Learning Commission site visit in 2005, the program review process was redesigned and strengthened during the HLC's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. The first cycle of program review was completed after seven years and then the process was assessed. A few minor changes were made and the University is now in the second cycle of the new process. The purpose of program/unit review at Missouri State is to allow the members of a department – its faculty and administrators – to continuously gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of their academic programs. By systematically reviewing mission, goals, priorities, activities, and outcomes, the desired result is continuous improvements in the quality of teaching, learning ,research, and public service.

The program review process is comprised of three integrated components:1) strategic planning, 2) annual reviews, and 3)periodic extensive self study and (external) reviews. The strategic plan allows the program/unit to develop a long-range view (five to seven years)of its mission, priorities and objectives. It represents a realistic view of the program/unit's aspirations as well as a specific plan for how it intends to achieve those aspirations. The annual reviews allow the programs/units to note their accomplishments and, in the process, assess their progress in achieving their goals and objectives. The periodic (external) review asks the programs/units to conduct in depth self analyses which are then reviewed by external consultants. As a result of these periodic reviews, the programs/units determine how their strategic plans should be revised to ensure they respond to the resulting recommendations and ensure quality improvements continue.

4.A.2.

Missouri State awards regular transfer credit in compliance with existing transfer credit policies (see 4.A.3.). The University also has an official credit by assessment/examination policy that stipulates which credit is awarded. That policy notes that the University accepts credit for Advanced Placement, College Level Examination Program, International Baccalaureate, and Dantes/DSST. Additionally, the University has a published policy regarding the awarding of credit for military education or experience that is based on American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations. Thus, in all cases, the awarding of credit is policy-driven and based on institutional review and/or established standards.

4.A.3.

The University has a comprehensive policy regarding transfer of undergraduate credit that is consistent with the "Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Credit" developed by the American Council on Education, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The University also has a separate policy regarding transfer of graduate credit. Academic department heads and Deans have ultimate authority over the awarding of credit.

4.A.4.

Each of the six academic colleges and the School of Agriculture has a council whose primary purpose is to act upon curricular matters that are referred to it by departments within the colleges/school as articulated in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Faculty. Each council is empowered to approve, reject, or amend the proposals.

Course prerequisites, rigor of courses, and expectations for student learning are set by departments. Curriculum committees in departments review proposals and, based on a faculty vote, proposals are then moved forward to the College Council, then the Faculty Senate.

For professional education courses, the Educator Preparation Provider (EPP), formerly known as the Professional Education Committee or PEC, is the representative body to the Faculty Senate that governs the professional education curriculum. Professional education programs are offered in each of the six academic colleges. The EPP was established to encompass all professional education certification programs across the various colleges.

Departments with graduate programs initiate curricular changes. The Graduate Council Curriculum Screening Committee is responsible for screening and reviewing all graduate level (500 and above) curricular proposals and making a recommendation regarding their disposition to the Graduate Council. The Graduate Curriculum Screening Committee requires that all programs affected by a particular graduate level curricular action be appropriately consulted. In addition to the appointed members of the Graduate Council, the Graduate Curriculum Screening Committee includes ex officio members who represent Meyer Library, Records and Registration, and the Professional Education Committee. Additionally, there are department curriculum screening committees.

All General Education curricular changes are monitored by a central group called the Committee for General Education and Interdisciplinary Programs (CGEIP). From 2011-12, the General Education Review Task Force met to develop and propose a new General Education Program and student learning outcomes. In March 2012, a curriculum structure was proposed to Faculty Senate and approved in October 2012. The new General Education Program was implemented in fall 2014.

Qualifications for on-campus faculty are addressed more fully in Criterion 3.

- **Dual Credit** – To ensure consistency, department heads approve instructors for Dual Credit classes. The instructors meet the same guidelines for adjunct instructor on campus (a master's degree or higher, or approved with 18 hours in the discipline, working toward a master's degree or working toward a Master of Teaching degree). Course syllabi are approved by the department to ensure that the materials are equivalent to content being taught on the Springfield campus. Dual Credit programs follow MDHE guidelines. If permission is required as a course prerequisite, that permission must be granted by the department before the class can be added. Some programs with high enrollments of Dual Credit students have hired full-time staff to visit dual credit instructors on-site. One example is the English Department. The Dual Credit staff works with the Director of Composition to review syllabi, support instructors by answering questions, observe classes, and provide professional development and materials. Minimally, a faculty member is assigned to be in communication with Dual Credit instructors. Institutionally, a Dual Credit coordinator is in communication with all partner schools. The Dual Credit Office has an orientation meeting each fall at which instructors are invited to meet with a department representative and learn from guest speakers. The instructors then have a departmental meeting with faculty in the disciplines. The Dual Credit staff visit classrooms and explains to the students what is expected, the guidelines, and requirements for Missouri State University. Dual Credit liaisons within departments provide resources and support by phone or email and sometimes by site visits.
- **Learning Resources for Faculty** – All Missouri State faculty have access to a number of resources to assist in their professional development.
- **Learning Resources for Students** – Missouri State provides a number of resources for all students to succeed in their academic careers, including providing Dual Credit students with ID cards so they can use the library and other University resources.
- Technology Training Centers – Computer Services maintains two state-of-the-art Technology Training Centers which are available to faculty, staff, and students. The Technology Training Centers are used to provide various computer related training to groups across the University.

- Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) – This Center offers a number of professional development opportunities for faculty, including the "Showcase on Teaching and Learning," faculty mentoring, and the Digital Professor Academy to support faculty who are developing online courses. The FCTL assists faculty to enhance online collaboration and improve student engagement, as well as developing assessment plans for online courses.
- Libraries – In addition to books ,journals, databases, and other research materials, the Missouri State Libraries have the following facilities for students: group study rooms – 11 small study rooms, 10 large study rooms, and eight graduate and faculty study rooms; a variety of tables and carrels for group activity and individual study; computers for research and writing; media viewing and listening stations; scanning services; and building-wide wireless network access.
- Access Technology Center – The Access Technology Center at Missouri State is committed to serve as a resource for faculty, staff and students with disabilities, in addition to those working with individuals with disabilities. The Center strives to provide equal access and opportunity to those with disabilities throughout all the academic programs and social activities Missouri State offers. Through training and assessment of individual needs, conversion of textbooks and academic materials into accessible formats, and providing specialized equipment and software, the Access Technology Center is able to contribute to the mission of universal design.
- Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing) – This interactive space in Meyer Library unites the resources and expertise of the faculty, library personnel, computer and information technology, the Writing Center, and subject-area tutoring in an environment that fosters informal, collaborative work and social interaction. Business course tutors, mathematics tutors, and science tutors are available to students.
- Learning Diagnostic Clinic – The Learning Diagnostic Clinic provides services and support to every student who qualifies. To quality, students must have one or more learning disabilities or otherwise be in need of assistance to access and participate in the academics available.

4.A.5.

Thirty-one of Missouri State's academic programs have achieved specialized accreditation. Academic programs having an accreditation review process with similar goals as the Missouri State program review are given the opportunity to utilize the accreditation process as its periodic review. Programs may use the accreditation cycle with approval from the Provost and respective Deans. In addition to the college ,department and specific program, information concerning the accrediting or certifying body, year of first accreditation, dates of past and future site visits, and links to evaluation reports may all be found on the University's website.

4.A.6.

Missouri State has begun tracking its graduates at the institution level using the Graduate Tracking System, which was developed by the University's Career Center. This system allows graduates, faculty, and staff a secure, streamlined Web-based application to enter immediate plans following graduation (employment, admission to professional school or admission to graduate school). From these data, customizable reports then may be generated. College and University reports are reviewed annually. Discussions about the system have been important to the Deans during academic leadership meetings, and each college is piloting ways to collect the data more efficiently.

For example, the Athletic Training has a comprehensive plan for tracking its graduates. The program director does an exit interview, students fill out a short survey over the program which includes questions about future plans, and the department maintains a Facebook page with all seniors receiving a "friend request." The department has an alumni page on its website and hosts an alumni reception at the national professional meeting each year at which time individual alumni information is updated.

At the college level, the College of Natural and Applied Sciences utilizes department and administrative assistance to review students' names within programs to identify plans of the graduates.

The University also tracks student involvement in high impact educational experiences since these often have a significant impact on student success. Missouri State defines high impact educational experiences to include student/faculty research, service learning, internships, practica, student teaching, focused field experience, and Study Away trips. Data are collected annually to determine total student participation in these activities. In 2011 and 2012, nearly 50 percent of all undergraduates participated in at least one of these activities, as reported in Key Performance Indicator #8.

Sources

- Access Technology Center 4A
- CGEIP Agendas and Minutes from meetings 4A
- Constitution_and_Bylaws_Revised_-_April_2014 4A4
- Curricular Proposal Information 4A4
- Digtial Professor Academy 4A
- Dual Credit Assessment (Debbie Penn) and Survey 3A, 4A
- Dual Credit Enrollment 4A
- Dual Credit Instructors 4A
- Graduate Council Agendas and Minutes 4A
- Key Performance Indicators 1A
- Key Performance Indicators 1A (page number 33)
- Libraries at MSU 4A
- MDHE Dual Credit Policy and Report 4A
- MDHE guidelines for transfer and articulation 4A
- MissouriStateUniversity_PolicyLibrary SJ
- MissouriStateUniversity_PolicyLibrary SJ (page number 277)
- MissouriStateUniversity_PolicyLibrary SJ (page number 306)
- MSU-Crowder College Transfer Degree Guides 4A3
- MSU-St Charles CC Transfer Degree Guides 4A3
- MSU-St Louis CC Transfer Degree Guides 4A3
- MSU-West Plains Transfer Degree Guides 4A3
- Program Review Guidelines evidence 4A1
- Program Review Schedule 2007-2020 evidence 4A1
- Technology Training Centers 4A
- Transfer Credit Policies 4A2
- Transferring Credit to MSU 4A2

4.B - Core Component 4.B

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Argument

4.B.

One element of Missouri State's 2011-16 long-range plan is "enduring commitments to student learning, inclusive excellence, and institutional impact." The purpose is "to develop educated persons." Characteristics of educated persons, as defined by Missouri State, include cultivating aesthetic tastes, developing critical thinking skills, fostering serious readers who are broadly literate, and preparing inquisitive and contributing citizens in a global society.

The HLC policy statement on Student Learning and Assessment Accreditation states, "The Commission realizes that assessment of student learning is an ongoing, dynamic process that requires substantial time; that is often marked by fits and starts; and that takes long-term commitment and leadership." The position statement goes on to explain the importance of sustained commitment to assessment and improvement and the following describes Missouri State's long-term commitment.

Progress from 2005-10

Missouri State University began its assessment efforts early and the efforts have evolved over time. In 1986, by the appointment of the campus wide Assessment and Reform Steering Committee, an assessment plan was developed. The Faculty Senate approved the first mission statement with specific objectives for the Center for Assessment and Instructional Support (CAIS) in 1993. The Assessment Council revised the CAIS mission statement in 2004 and reorganized to an 11-member group including a faculty member from each college, a representative from Academic Affairs, two student representatives, the CAIS director, and a representative from the University Planning and Advisory Council.

On July 1, 2005, the University moved to a Provost model. With this new model, the Vice President of Academic Affairs position was replaced, and the CAIS moved under the oversight of the Provost. When the CAIS director retired in the spring of 2010, the Provost moved the functions of the CAIS from the Office of Institutional Research to the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL). Due to this transition, the CAIS was renamed the FCTL Assessment Division. In late 2010, an Assessment Research Coordinator was hired to help the Director of the FCTL establish, manage, and coordinate comprehensive data gathering and sharing systems to improve the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes at Missouri State. In 2012, due to an increased focus on assessment,

additional staff were hired and assessment began reporting directly to the Office of the Provost.

Missouri State participated in two HLC Assessment Academy action projects beginning in 2006. One helped the University develop the current program review process and one explored living learning communities (LLCs). As noted in 4A the program review process underwent a total revision. The process was reviewed after the first round and changed based on feedback. The living learning communities on campus have learning outcomes and assessment plans. This framework has helped as we undergo a significant expansion of LLCs starting in fall of 2015.

4.B.1.

All student learning outcomes for programs are available for each program - most on the program website and all on the assessment website. From 2010-12, student learning outcomes and assessment plans were reviewed and revised for both General Education courses and each program at Missouri State. The goal was that by 2011 programs would submit a revised assessment template that had addressed the following:

1. Disciplinary learning outcomes with at least 3 that were monitored each year
2. Public Affairs learning outcomes (≈ 3) addressing community engagement, cultural competence, and ethical leadership with at least one that was monitored each year
3. A curriculum map
4. Appropriate assessment tools for each learning outcome including at least one direct measure for each

By 2011, each program in academic colleges outlined disciplinary learning outcomes and outcomes aligned with the public affairs mission and developed a curriculum map to align with the outcomes. While the timeline was ambitious, programs did complete this template. The strict guidelines for template led to some discomfort across campus and later that year the academic deans were given primary responsibility for assessment in their colleges along with the flexibility to move away from the strict template as long as units had the appropriate pieces and were using their assessment plans for quality improvement.

By 2012, Assessment and Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning were separated and a search began for a Director of Assessment. By January 2013, an English faculty member became the Director with a new set of goals focused on institutional assessment. The focus for this position and office was to assess the University's public affairs mission, act as a consultant on General Education assessment, and be a campus resource to practitioners on campus.

Using the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment Transparency Framework, Missouri State's Assessment website was updated and the Provost committed to a focus on transparency. Student learning outcomes for the mission and for each college, program, General Education, and unit available on the Office of Assessment website and on departmental websites. Each program has an assessment plan and examples are provided in the evidence. While learning outcomes had been developed and used for years, the University made a concerted effort to use the webpage to highlight and allow the public to easily access this information.

At the program level faculty have been directly involved in defining learning outcomes for their undergraduate and graduate programs, developing curricular maps and designating appropriate assessment tools for the various learning outcomes. Over the years these plans have been reviewed by the Assessment Council, Department Heads and Academic Deans. In addition sharing of plans inside colleges, through the Assessment Council and through programs led by the Director of Assessment

has allowed for everyone to continue to learn from one another. The Director of Assessment has developed an outstanding website for programs to showcase assessments that have been effective and how they have used the information to improve their program.

General Education student learning outcomes were developed as a result of the work of the Task Force on General Education Revision that began in 2011. A new General Education curricular structure was approved in spring 2013 for implementation beginning in the fall of 2014. The task force developed a draft of proposed general learning goals, rationale, and specific learning outcomes for Missouri State students by drawing from the Association of American Colleges and University's (AAC&U) recommended learning goals, as well as those of other institutions in Missouri and across the country. Students and faculty were surveyed and participated in focus groups regarding perceptions of general education learning outcomes. This information was used by members of the committee to write the latest general education student learning outcomes.

The General Education assessment process is embedded in a cycle of course review. Through the General Education proposal process that began in 2012, each course submitted a proposed assessment plan, tools, and learning outcomes. In the new proposed course review process, General Education course assessment coordinators will submit short annual reports on assessment.

University units such Student Affairs; Student Development and Public Affairs; and Diversity and Inclusion have structures for assessment that review learning outcomes, assessment plans, and assessments as they work to improve their units.

4.B.2.

Assessing General Education

At the institutional-level, General Education courses are assessed by those that teach the course and these assessments plans and tools are reviewed by CGEIP, a sub-committee of Faculty Senate. In spring 2015, CGEIP submitted to Faculty Senate an Annual Update Report for each General Education course and calendar for a four-year cycle of deeper review of courses in the General Education curriculum.

In addition to the development of student learning outcomes for General Education, two major changes have occurred at the institutional level of assessment. Both of these changes have been informed, if not inspired, by the Quality Initiative Project.

The University Exit Exam (UEE) has a survey component that has been administered for many years, but there have been several changes recently. In 2013, the UEE was administered online, with 100 percent of students taking the ETS Proficiency Profile, 10 survey questions, and the public affairs scale. In 2015, after a review and recommendation from Assessment Council, 50 percent of students take the ETS Proficiency Profile and the exit survey, while the other 50 percent take the public affairs scale, public affairs open-ended response, and the exit survey. Through the course of updating Key Performance Indicators, it was discovered that Missouri State was administering the ETS to nearly 12,000 students, compared to 4,000 or fewer students at other Missouri universities. This revelation has provided an opportunity to review evidence collected and become more strategic in collecting information at an institutional level. This will help the University better understand student learning related to the mission.

Missouri State has long administered institutional surveys. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was given at Missouri State University in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, and was

administered in 2015. In collaboration with new student orientation, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) was administered to students on-campus in paper form during summer 2014 with a nearly 80 percent response rate.

The data from all of these surveys are collected by the Office of Assessment and reviewed by the Assessment Council, Committee for General Education and Interdisciplinary Programs (CGEIP), academic programs, and co-curricular programs. The results are posted on the website of the Office of Assessment for review. A goal of the office is to parse out information by theme that can be useful at the faculty, department, and college level. BCSSE data from 2015 has been shared with Advisory Council, Assessment Council, Student Success Committee, colleges, department-head meetings, and "Coffee Breaks" which are open to faculty, staff, and students at appointed times throughout the year.

Assessing Institutional Learning Related to the Mission

Missouri State's Quality Initiative Program (QIP) focused on assessing student learning related to the institution's statewide public affairs mission. A public affairs rubric was developed to assess student learning, a first draft of which was developed by a committee of faculty and staff. Subsequent drafts were developed and used with student work and revised using AAC&U LEAP Rubrics for Civic Knowledge and Engagement, Ethical Reasoning, and Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. To illustrate alignment of the public affairs rubric with other University goals, maps were created to crosswalk goals from General Education, public affairs, student affairs, student development and public affairs, and professional education with the rubric attributes.

From fall 2012 through summer 2014, 4,011 samples of student work were collected from curricular and co-curricular classes, projects, and experiences. Of that total, 2,240 samples (56 percent) of the student work collected from 72 faculty and staff were reviewed by approximately 54 faculty, staff, and students in three workshops – summer 2013, fall 2013 and summer 2014. The QIP Review Workshop was a positive professional development experience that helped faculty and staff from across disciplines to further their understanding of teaching and learning in public affairs. Based on the evidence, faculty, staff, and students developed a table of contents for a Public Affairs Toolkit as a resource for those who teach public affairs projects, upper level public affairs graduation requirements, and GEP 101. The main principle that guides this toolkit is that teachers will share with their colleagues ideas about how to connect public affairs not only to their own disciplines, but across disciplines. The results of the reviews have been presented to faculty in several events and actions have already been enacted.

Program-Specific Assessment

Faculty in programs develop assessment plans and Deans oversee progress. From 2005-11, programs submitted assessment plans and reports to Assessment Council which reviewed and provided feedback. From 2011 to present, college Deans have held the primary responsibility to ensure ongoing assessment of student learning in programs and departments within each college. Colleges have an assessment plan and report on assessment in the yearly annual report submitted to the Provost in July of each year. Departments develop the plans and report results to Deans who summarize and include in the annual report.

In addition to college annual reports, in 2012, each college submitted a report that included updated student learning outcomes by program, an assessment plan, and a timeline. In 2013, Deans submitted a survey that gleaned information regarding assessment meetings, types of evidence collected, and focused on one department or program that had excelled in terms of looking at evidence, reviewing as a group, and making changes to teaching or processes based on this assessment of student learning.

Examples of programs and departments closing the feedback loop are included on the assessment website.

College plans for gathering evidence of student learning might include institution-wide or program-specific approaches that convey how student learning will be assessed, the data collection tools and approaches that will be used, and the timeline for implementation. For example, the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) uses the national Board of Certification exams as the direct measure of how well students have acquired learning outcomes. Indirect assessment measures used are exit interviews and alumni surveys. Departments use Major Field Tests and Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT) to assess student learning. In Political Science, all students majoring in Political Science are required to pass the Major Field Test. The department uses results of the exam for program assessment and development rather than individual student evaluation. A summary of the results is included in program review and in annual reports to the Dean. In addition, the department examines the reliability of the Major Field Test by comparing it with major GPA. Mathematics administers the Major Field Test in the required capstone course (MFT 497). Locally developed exams, like the common final that Mathematics uses in entry-level courses, is an example of course transformation through the assessment of student learning.

Colleges provide annual reports to the Provost, analyze data, and discuss assessment to improve student learning. Departmental annual reviews submitted to the Deans have action plans related to the improvement of student learning. In 2013, colleges and units reported on and updated current assessment cycles, highlighted specific departments that modeled assessment to improve student learning, and indicated one area of improvement with which each college was addressing.

Co-Curricular Initiatives

The Division of Student Affairs established a Planning and Assessment Team that meets monthly to initiate, review and discuss assessment activities occurring within the division. The team is composed of representatives from several Division of Student Affairs units and also includes a graduate student member from the Master's in Student Affairs in Higher Education program. The team has identified seven common student learning domains for units involved in promoting student development and student learning: 1) educated persons, 2) communication, 3) leadership development, 4) cultural competence and diversity, 5) social responsibility and citizenship, 6) collaboration and negotiation, and 7) self-awareness and wellness. Additionally, in 2012-14 the Planning and Assessment Team led the Division through a collaborative strategic planning process resulting in a revised Division mission, vision, and values, and identified five strategic directions to guide divisional efforts in championing student success. One strategic direction is "Furthering Co-Curricular Student Learning" and includes the major objective of "increasing departmental utilization of Student Affairs Learning Domains in assessment activities." The Planning and Assessment Team also assists departmental staff in the use of CampusLabs Baseline, an online assessment product used throughout the division for assessment of individual programs and activities. Since becoming a CampusLabs member, the Division of Student Affairs has conducted more than 75 assessment projects encompassing needs assessments, satisfaction surveys, and learning outcome measurement.

Role of Assessment Council from 2005-Present

The Assessment Council has had an important role on campus. From 2005-10, the Center for Assessment and Instructional Support collected program matrices and oversaw a review schedule for program assessment reports. Assessment Council completed and oversaw the following tasks during this time:

- Established report criteria
- Developed a feedback form
- Published the feedback form
- Reviewed sample program reports
- Entered information on feedback forms
- Provided feedback from programs

In 2012, Assessment Council membership changed slightly to include two members from each college. Since colleges were primarily responsible for assessment, the Assessment Council has reviewed policies, developed assessment leaders in colleges, and closed the feedback loop for college annual reports that include assessment plans, results, and actions based on those results. For example, in 2014, the Assessment Council reviewed college annual reports and submitted those letters of feedback to Deans and the Provost. The goal was to encourage the reports to be read more widely and to offer assistance to the Provost in reviewing and providing feedback from a variety of constituencies on campus. Many Assessment Council members, faculty participating in General Education reform, and General Education faculty have attended AAC&U conferences and assessment academies.

4.B.3

Assessment of student learning and the use of student learning occurs at the program-level, college-level, and university-level – all described below.

From 2005-11, Assessment Council reviewed program assessment plans and results from the plans. These were internal documents – helpful to departments yet nearly invisible to most who were not actively involved in the process. From 2013 to present, the University has focused on increasing transparency of assessment efforts and highlighting to a broader audience how faculty and staff use assessment of student learning to make changes to programs.

Using Institutional Assessment of Student Learning

In 2013, the Director of Assessment invited consultants from the Center for Inquiry at Wabash College to visit Missouri State as external consultants. Over a three-day period, the assessment consultants visited with the President, Provost, Associate Provosts, Deans, department heads, General Education coordinators, and students. The visit resulted in a memo to the Provost. The visit and feedback resulted in the following updates/changes and attempts to close any communications gaps:

- Revision of the assessment website using the National Institute of Learning Outcomes Assessment
- The showcase of departmental assessment of student learning in the "Assessment in Action" short journalistic pieces on the website
- A focus on the sub-scale of the NSSE called "Deep Approaches to Learning" students were not measuring up to the benchmark institutions as expected
- Information disseminated through "NSSE Coffee Breaks," hosted by the Office of Assessment, at departmental meetings, with Deans, with Enrollment Management, with the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL), and with others
- Based on this information, the FCTL used "Deep Approaches to Learning" as a theme for the 2014 fall "Showcase on Teaching and Learning"
- A re-visioning of the role of the Office of Assessment to focus on assessment of public affairs, institutional assessments, serving as a campus resource, and most recently implementing a comprehensive public affairs assessment plan, one of the Board of Governors' "Eight Goals for 2014-15"

- Focus on a supporting role with a goal of making the work of assessment easier for faculty, staff, departments, and colleges which led to a re-organization of Assessment and the development of new roles – instead of Assessment Research Coordinators, the office now has Assessment and Learning Outcomes Consultants

Specific examples of how programs use evidence of student learning are collected on the assessment blog and highlighted in the Office of Assessment's "In the Loop." The "Assessment in Action" examples describe programs' efforts at reviewing evidence of student learning and working toward continuous improvement and are reported in department reports, college reports, program review, and assessment surveys completed by colleges. The Assessment in Action examples provide models and examples for other programs and departments.

There are innumerable examples of program-level changes made by assessment of student learning, several of which are listed below. More examples can be found in assessment reports, college annual reports, and in departmental newsletter.

- **Media, Journalism, and Film** – A committee of MJF faculty reviewed curriculum and current trends in media and crafted learning outcomes and rubrics to equip them for work in their field.
- **Criminology** – Faculty in this department wanted to see improved student writing in a senior-level capstone course. Through reviews of student work, committees, and a curriculum map, the department developed a scope and sequence for the teaching of writing in the discipline across the program. Additionally, the department developed an online writing module to assist students with areas in need of improvement.
- **Religious Studies** – The department head received an external grant to bring faculty from similar graduate programs across the country. This assessment symposium led to Missouri State's Religious Studies graduate program to review the completion and develop a portfolio option, and revise the time when students take the comprehensive exams.
- **Agriculture** – This department used evidence of student learning collected during internships to make changes to courses and curriculum.
- **Biology** – Through faculty conversations about student learning in department meetings, an analysis of job advertisements in the field, and student feedback, faculty discovered a pattern – students in Wildlife Biology needed more exposure to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The program decided to solve the problem by collaborating with the Department of Geography, Geology, and Planning to take an existing GGP course focus on rural GIS.
- **Psychology** – Faculty members in the Psychology Department collected assessment evidence to implement a redesign of PSY 121, Introductory Psychology. The redesign occurred when the department was part of a statewide project in course redesign that started in the fall of 2010 working in conjunction with the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT).
- **Communication** – The assessment of student learning outcomes requires all graduating seniors to submit four samples of work meeting four unique student learning outcomes (SLOs). There are three departmental SLOs and each major has its own SLOs. The committee reviews a sample of these artifacts each summer. Using a rubric for each SLO, the reviewers score the reflection students provide on how they met each learning outcome. These results are analyzed and recommendations for improvements are forwarded to the faculty for consideration.
- **College of Business (COB)** – The Undergraduate Core Course Assessment Initiative in COB began a decade ago as a comprehensive process of assessment and evaluation of the undergraduate curriculum within the college. This initiative was in response to the lack of remedial direction perceived in MFAT, as a guide to curriculum development, and to meet demands for accountability from accreditation bodies and other University constituents. After considerable refinement, the final set of assessment objectives and outcomes were developed.
- **Cohort Experience** – In 2014, the University piloted a cohort-driven first-year academic

experience course led by a faculty member in Communication.

The Quality Initiative Project, a University-wide assessment project, collected student work from curricular and co-curricular courses and programs. In May 2013, October 2013, and May 2014, 49 faculty and staff participated in review sessions, and 72 faculty and staff submitted work. Follow-up meetings occurred with faculty and staff to discuss next steps.

The Quality Initiative Project led to the following:

- Changes to courses (in Communication, English, Communication Science Disorders, Accounting, Agriculture, to name a few)
- Changes to departments that participated and systematically integrated the mission within department processes and curriculum (Athletic Training, Occupational Therapy)
- A renewed interest in teaching and learning related to public affairs
- A Public Affairs Toolkit of teaching ideas
- A community of practice developed through the review workshops and public affairs mini-grants to support the development of teaching and learning in public affairs

A first-step toward reviewing direct evidence of student learning in an inter-disciplinary manner with a focus on the mission instead of disciplinary goals.

- Changes were made to the University Exit Exam in order to collect information from students regarding public affairs experiences in addition to collecting student work from courses across campus.
- A public affairs rubric was developed by committee and through use with student work that aligned institutional outcomes including General Education student learning outcomes, student development and public affairs outcomes, student affairs outcomes, and professional education outcomes. This rubric has been distributed widely and used by faculty in Physics, Communication, and Athletic Training to develop assignments and use for assessment of student learning at the program and course-level.
- Based on evidence of student learning and reviewer feedback, faculty, staff, and students drafted a table of contents for a Public Affairs Toolkit. The initial aim of this toolkit would be to develop a resource for those who teach public affairs oriented courses such as GEP 101, public affairs courses in General Education, and upper-level public affairs graduation requirements.
- The assessment process developed could be used to assess student learning outcomes in General Education, upper-level graduation requirements, or for college or department level assessment.
- Sharing ideas across disciplines helps us to identify effective teaching practices and the impact Missouri State has on student learning related to public affairs. The goal is to see students continue to show evidence of higher order thinking and clear articulation of learning related to public affairs.
- A QIP committee will be formed to review the results of two years of the QIP collection and review process and to make recommendations regarding next steps. As many institutions have found, assessing student learning is the easy part – acting on the results can be more challenging.

The QIP Review workshop was a positive professional development experience that helped participants gain an understanding of public affairs within their own courses, understand the history of public affairs as an institution and Missouri State's reaccreditation process, and brainstorm new ways to integrate and deepen student learning.

Comprehensive Public Affairs Assessment Plan

One of the 2014-15 Board of Governors goals is to develop a comprehensive public affairs assessment plan for Missouri State University. Assessment expert Linda Suskie has defined assessment as the "act of evaluating student learning."It is most important to understand if students are meeting the goals the University has established for them. For example, the testing needs to include measures that determine if students are developing skills and knowledge related to leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement. Further, it is important to determine what evidence should be collected to demonstrate to the University community and external audience that the University has been successful to improve student learning related to the three themes.

The comprehensive public affairs assessment plan will be implemented in three phases with three goals in mind:

- Phase 1 and Goal 1: Complete an inventory of existing institutional assessment of student learning related to public affairs and map to existing public affairs outcomes for student learning.
- Phase 2 and Goal 2: Streamline and bring coherence to the data collected across campus. Communicate the results broadly.
- Phase 3 and Goal 3: Improve the feedback loop.

4.B.4.

Missouri State has based its assessment program, especially academic program assessment, on best practices supplemented by a series of campus visits by assessment scholars: Susan Hatfield, Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise and John Schu. A key element of the strategy is educating the campus community about the importance of assessment. To communicate that message, the Assessment Council provides feedback to the Provost and Director of Assessment and acts as liaisons to college Deans and unit heads. The council members provide support for and information about assessment. The ultimate goal is for faculty to have a full appreciation of how assessment can be meaningful at Missouri State.

A Director of Assessment was hired in January 2012, continuing a long tradition of continuous improvement. In 2012, the following goals were adopted for the Office of Assessment:

- Gather, make sense of, and summarize what practitioners at Missouri State are learning about student learning
- Assess and advance student learning on the University's public affairs mission
- Serve as a campus resource for practitioners from across the University who are engaging in assessment; and seek out partnerships with curricular and co-curricular groups

Several methodologies have impacted the direction of assessment in the past few years. First, the new director of assessment shared widely Peter Ewell's paradigms of assessment that delineate between assessment for improvement and assessment for accountable. Clearly focusing the goals of the office on assessing student learning, versus evaluating faculty, has been an important distinction to make. Again, collecting assessment data is relatively simply, while acting on the data is much more challenging. There has been an opportunity because of the General Education revision to discuss with faculty ways to make assessment "clear and simple. In fact, the published guide book "Assessment Clear and Simple" by Barbara Walvoord has been distribute to nearly 100 faculty and staff on campus as a professional development tool for planning. Focus has been on widely disseminating and sharing assessment of student learning. The goal is that how faculty teach and how students learn, and the resulting changes made to improve learning. Focusing on using existing reports and taking time to

talk about assessing student learning through "Coffee Breaks" – informal discussion about evidence collected and workshops like the Assessment of Public Affairs that bring together faculty, staff, and students – have impact beyond the time in the workshop. These types of professional development impact classrooms, office, and students who return to the classroom.

- A faculty and staff working group has met in 2014-15 to discuss and plan around the topic of "Public Affairs Across the Curriculum."
- Faculty, staff, and students have presented about Assessment of Student Learning at Assessment Showcases held yearly on campus and at the "Showcase on Teaching and Learning."

Sources

- Assessment Council 4B
- Assessment in Action 4B
- Center for Inquiry at Wabash College report 4B
- College Annual Reports 4B
- General Education 1A, 3B
- General Education 1A, 3B (page number 28)
- Licensure Exams Data 4B
- Living Learning Communities 1A, 4C
- Office of Assessment including results of assessments 4B
- Student Success Plan 3 19 14 4B

4.C - Core Component 4.C

The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

Argument

4.C.

Missouri State University chose "retention" as one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI #1) to monitor; it is also a goal in the long-range plan. Further, the University tracks its success at increasing the number of graduates in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and other critical fields (KPI #3). Various University constituents monitor retention and persistence closely as part of the long-range plan, including the Board of Governors, Administrative Council, Academic Leadership Council and Faculty Senate. Retention and persistence are also in the annual University goals for the past several years.

The University has specific programs that are considered best practices, including first-year seminar, a learning center (Bear CLAW – Center for Learning and Writing), supplemental instruction, discipline-specific tutoring, a TRiO program, curricular learning communities, living and learning communities, and undergraduate research. A Student Success Committee met for two years to develop a plan for improvement that resulted in a faculty Provost Fellow to focus on retention and a pilot program to focus on first-generation students in GEP 101, Missouri State's first-year course. The goal is to increase retention by engaging students in high impact experiences.

4.C.1.

Every five years, Missouri State University re-evaluates and establishes a set of goals for the entire University. The goals in the long range plan are based on research from benchmark and aspirational institutions, and are true to the mission, purpose and traditions of Missouri State. The goals proposed for the plan are widely discussed on campus and finally agreed upon by large groups of faculty, staff, and administrators. The final step is formal approval by the Board of Governors. The complete2011-16longrangeplan, *Fulfilling Our Promise,* is posted on the University website and includes specific tactics and measures to be achieved by 2016 for student retention, persistence, and program completion that are both ambitious and attainable. The specific tactics and measures are organized

within six goal areas:

- Access to Success
- Public Affairs Integration
- Engaged Inquiry
- Partners for Progress
- Valuing and Supporting People
- Responsible Stewardship

4.C.2.

Through the use of Banner enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, the Missouri State Office of Institutional Research collects information on student retention, persistence, and program completion. This information is reported to the campus and the public through the [Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)](#) page on the University website and through the University's College Portrait, which is part of the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). The Office of the Provost, Office of Academic Affairs, Deans/Directors and their colleges/school, Office of Assessment, Office of Student Development and Public Affairs, [Enrollment Management Committee](#), and Student Success Committee are some of the areas that closely monitor and analyze data on these student success factors.

4.C.3.

Missouri State University has used both data and literature on student retention, persistence, and program completion to inform many decisions surrounding student success. The [First Year Programs](#) (FYP) Office is dedicated to helping new incoming students with a number of initiatives, including the introduction to college course, GEP 101: Foundations. The Division of Student Affairs also has programming for new students, most notably the Student Orientation, Advisement and Registration (SOAR) program, a comprehensive two-day orientation program for new first-year students and their families. All of these are intended to help new college students make a successful transition from high school to life at Missouri State University. These programs help students do the following:

- Develop necessary skills and learn about campus resources that will aid in their success at the University
- Learn essential information about the University and campus life
- Discuss future goals with an academic advisor
- Register for first semester of classes
- Meet faculty and staff and get to know fellow students

 The orientation for transfer students is adapted to address a different set of needs. A special "Transformation" program is offered as is on-line orientation. The University's Transfer Task Force is continuing to identify ways in which this transition for transfers can be made more meaningful.

To address students' academic needs, the University created a tutoring and writing center five years ago: the Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing). Due to the success of this center, additional academic support is now being provided through a supplemental instruction program called PASS (Peer Assisted Study Session). The University also has increased the number of living-learning communities in residence halls to help students living on campus make connections between their learning experiences in and out of the classroom and strengthen their commitment to the University. Finally, the University-wide Student Success Committee reviewed campus data and peer-reviewed literature on retention, persistence, and program completion for two years before issuing its report.

The report contained recommendations and action steps, including establishing the Provost Fellow for Student Success. The report also had recommendations regarding new software, campus programs, and other resources that are widely known to help students succeed.

The Student Success Committee, composed of faculty and staff, reviews best practices and makes recommendations related to retention. One focus in fall 2014 was to offer pilot sections of the first-year course, GEP 101: Foundations, with students majoring in the same college. The Provost Fellow for Student Success, hired in 2013, leads this group's inquiry into the experience of first generation students in a first-year course organized by major and college.

Retention and persistence are important areas of focus. Based on retention data and University goals, a variety of programs have been revised or initiated based on this information. For example:

- Regular reviews of data from GEP 101 courses are used to improve the course curriculum. Beginning in 2012, instructors began maintaining contact with their students into the next semester with the goal of establishing relationships and become better mentors. As mentioned, in 2014, special sections of GEP 101 were developed in which students were enrolled by college major and by first generation status.
- First generation students were invited to join the Real LIFE (Literacy in Financing your Education) program, a grant-funded default prevention program to help educate first generation students on managing the cost and minimizing debt.
- Living-learning communities were started within the past 10 years. A review of these communities was completed in 2014 and the opportunities were expanded in 2015.
- Data is available to departments so advisors can follow up with currently enrolled students who have not enrolled at the end of the registration cycle. The Registrar has been more aggressive through an initiative called "Proactive Registration." The goal is to push information to department heads to provide information to currently-enrolled students and provide similar lists to Academic Outreach, Veterans' Services, Diversity and Inclusion, and International Student Services.
- Partners in Education (PIE) is for entering freshman and their parents. They may sign up so parents can receive their students' mid-term grades during the first year.
- Jump START (Summer Transition and Academic Readiness Training) is a program for students who do not meet the admission criteria but are admitted during the summer as part of a special program.
- Over time, more effective orientations have been implemented for transfer students. Since transfer students prefer not to attend orientation sessions, an online orientation was developed. The College of Arts and Letters offered an orientation program for new transfers in the college. Other colleges have sent email communications to new transfer students. The School of Agriculture has a picnic each fall semester for new students.
- Advisors are encouraged to contact students at mid-term.

4.C.4.

All data on retention, persistence, and program completion is collected at Missouri State University and reported by the Office of Institutional Research following IPEDS definitions,which include built-in reliability and validity checks.

Sources

- Bear Claw (Provost) 4C3

- Enrollment Management Committee Agendas and Notes 4C
- First Year Council agendas and minutes 4C (formerly Student Success Committee)
- First Year Programs (does not include UHC 110) 1A 4C
- GEP 101 evaluations 4C
- Jump START 3D2, 4C
- Key Performance Indicators 1A
- Living Learning Communities 1A, 4C
- Partners in Education 4C
- TRiO Student Support Services 3B, 4C

4.S - Criterion 4 - Summary

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Summary

Missouri State University has a strong tradition of planning, assessing, and comparing itself to best practices. That philosophy is evident in the four long-range plans since 1995, the increasing emphasis on assessment, and the 31 individual program accreditations.

The progress on assessment has been accelerated by the Board of Governors' desire to have expanded data on graduates and the Performance Funding model instituted in 2012 for allocating state appropriations. While more can and will be done to assess student learning and student success after graduation, Missouri State has made much progress in recent years.

The key to the ultimate success is student support. Again, Missouri State has made a commitment of resources to provide the support necessary for students to succeed. The University is constantly adapting its services to the changing nature of the student body and, therefore, changing requirements for students to achieve their goals.

In all areas of planning, assessment and accreditations, the University collects and uses effectively a variety of data collected and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Research.

Strengths

1. The University is committed to continuous improvement. Faculty and staff job performance are reviewed annually and academic programs through program review and accreditation are evaluated on a regular cycle. College deans are responsible for overseeing faculty and program reviews with reports to the provost. Staff are reviewed annually by direct supervisors and reports are made to the appropriate Vice President. Co-curricular program learning outcomes are reviewed on a regular cycle and unit heads report to the Vice President of Student Affairs.
2. The Office of Assessment was reinvented to focus on institutional assessment such as NSSE and the Quality Initiative Project (QIP) that assesses the public affairs mission. The office benefitted from outside consultants and the National Institute for Learning best practices and is poised to make further impact across campus.
3. Missouri State developed an enhanced program review system with external evaluations, a clearer calendar and developed a website to store all reports. The program review process was assessed after the first cycle with minor changes recommended for the second cycle which began in 2013.

Strategic Opportunities

1. Missouri State continues to refine its customized approach to assessment as the University continues to share and learn from one another.
2. A new state-wide performance measure requires more comprehensive data on all graduates. There are pockets of outstanding data and the University tried a graduate tracking program for

three years that has not worked as well as promised.
3. As the University strives to increase retention rates, there is a focus on increasing the number of students who participate in high impact experiences such as service-learning, study away, undergraduate research, practicums and internships.

Sources

There are no sources.