



*Improving  
Institutional  
Effectiveness  
Through  
Programmatic  
Assessment*

Dina Brown, Ed.D.  
Chair, Graduate Programs  
School of Education  
Argosy University,  
Orange County Campus  
dsbrown@argosy.edu

## Abstract

This article identifies concrete steps used at Argosy University/Orange County (Argosy or AUOC) to integrate assessment in daily institutional operations and utilize assessment data for educational and organizational improvements. Additionally, the article addresses the role of an institutional effectiveness committee in facilitating the development of an internally driven core process of inquiry to improve student learning. This process includes the use of an assessment template that is consistent across programs and all delivery media; the adoption of program outcomes, measures, and rubrics that are compliant with central staff directives; and the standardization of the campus-wide self-study process.

## Introduction

Since the 1980s, political leaders, employers, and the public have expressed

an unprecedented level of concern with the state of education in America (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). School districts throughout the country have been rocked by disputes about curriculum, standards of achievement, and classroom methods (Ravitch, 2000). Spurred by national concern about the quality of American education, states and local school districts have undertaken hundreds of reform efforts, addressing not only traditional topics such as curricular content, instructional methods, and teacher training, but also fundamental issues of organizational structure and accountability (Cuban, 2003). On January 8, 2002, to support this increased emphasis on schools' accountability, President George W. Bush signed into law the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the most significant federal

education policy initiative in a generation. This new law poses enormous educational challenges for states. It requires the states to adopt challenging academic content, to expand the scope and frequency of student testing, to raise the percentage of students proficient in reading and math, to demonstrate what they term “adequate yearly progress,” and to bridge the test-score gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students (Education Commission of the States, 2002). Because of the critical importance of this initiative, the U.S. Department of Education provided substantial funds to improve the quality of assessment instruments and systems used by the states to measure the achievement of all students. According to the Department of Education, “by [Fiscal Year] 2004, states and other entities will have received nearly \$1.2 billion in support for assessment” (U.S. Department of Education, 2003, p. 1).

Similarly, in the early 1990s, the National Education Goals Panel established the first set of objectives for post-secondary accountability (Ewell, 2002). Although a proposed national assessment has never materialized, “it helped stimulate useful thinking about how a large-scale, authentic assessment of collegiate learning might actually be deployed” (p. 20). One of the most comprehensive national efforts to measure student achievement is the

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which promotes a culture of evidence-based assessment in higher education (The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006). Administered to freshmen and seniors, the CLA allows for inter-institutional comparisons that convey institutional contributions to student learning. The National Forum on College-Level Learning is another attempt to provide the states with comparable assessment information (The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006). Piloted in 2002 across several states, the study collected data on student learning using multiple assessment measures. Results from this study “allow states to identify best practices, providing information used in creating policy and programs that will improve the states’ intellectual capital” (p. 23). Since the emergence of the student assessment movement in higher education, the number of institutions engaging in some form of assessment activity has steadily increased (Maki, 2004; Peterson & Vaughan, 2002). However, while there is an extensive body of descriptive information on various approaches to student assessment, there is little systematic evidence addressing the use of this information for educational and institutional improvements (Peterson & Vaughan, 2002).

## Evolution of the Scholarship of Assessment

Although no one has officially dated the birth of the assessment movement in higher education, it is safe to propose that date as the First National Conference on Assessment in Higher Education in 1985 (Ewell, 2002). During the conference, it was concluded that in order to promote high levels of student achievement, institutions need to set challenging academic standards, involve students in active learning environments, and provide prompt and useful feedback. This conclusion might have been overlooked except that it was supported by other voices (Ewell, 2002).

One set of voices emanated from within the academy and focused on curricular content, pedagogy, and instructional reform. Increasingly, institutions across the country were characterizing themselves as learner-centered, a term that appeared in numerous college and university mission statements (Maki, 2004). Learner-centered institutions “view students as active learners, creators of or contributors to knowledge and understanding, while at the same time reflecting on how well they are learning” (p. 10). As the result of this movement, faculty was urged to shift from a transmission-oriented pedagogy to an alternative educational philosophy known

as *constructivism*. Constructivism is based on the premise that understanding comes from a person's effortful activity to integrate newly communicated information with his or her own prior knowledge and beliefs (Becker, 2000). Consequently, a constructivist pedagogy attempts to make learning a more self-directed and socially mediated process in which learners' own motivations and efforts are considered central to their educational experiences.

Learner-centered institutions also focus on how programs and services outside the academic departments contribute to, support, and complement the curriculum and, thereby, achieve the institutional mission (Maki, 2004). Exploring how different complementary relationships contribute to learning enables an institution to understand the efficacy of these relationships in enhancing students' education (Maki, 2004). Consequently, assessing the content and the quality of students' education becomes an essential process in learner-centered institutions.

A second set of voices arose simultaneously outside the academy. These consisted largely of federal, state, and regional calls for accountability, which, in some cases, also had funding or accreditation implications (Ewell, 2002). These external stimuli were largely responsible for a steady upward trend in the number of institutions reporting involvement with

assessment (Ewell, 2002; Wright, 2002). The explosive growth of the assessment movement has prompted accrediting associations to revise their procedures for institutional accountability. For instance, the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools launched its Academic Quality Improvement Project to make accreditation a more powerful force by combining the continuous quality improvement principles of prominent thinkers with the accreditation process. Furthermore, an Associate Director of the NCA, Cecilia Lopez, conducted a study of 432 team reports to determine the progress made by member institutions in implementing effective assessment programs (Wright, 2002). Lopez (1999) concluded that "many [institutions] have yet to realize a level of ongoing assessment that could position them to become a student-centered learning organization committed to continuous improvement" (p. 42).

Despite these advances, after a decade and a half, the student assessment revolution in higher education is far from complete. Peterson and Vaughan (2002) suggest that "whether student assessment makes a difference at the institutional level is still an unanswered question" (p. 45). However, the institutions are beyond the question of whether assessment should exist and are asking how they can incorporate

better methodology and yield greater benefits for students and society (Erwin & Wise, 2002). Consequently, continuing scholarship aimed at developing appropriate responses to periodic accountability demands will always be needed (Ewell, 2002).

## Site Description

This article describes the evolution of the assessment culture at Argosy, a private for-profit university with 11 campuses in 11 states. There are 11 main campuses, seven branch campuses, and six limited-service sites with the home campus and central administration located in Chicago, Illinois. Argosy University is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Education Management Corporation. Through its four colleges, Argosy offers professional programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels in psychology, behavioral sciences, business, education, and health sciences. These programs provide educational opportunities for working adults through flexible delivery formats and an amalgam of distance learning and intensive on-campus study periods (AUOC, 2004).

Argosy University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools. The assessment matrix provided by the Commission depicts three levels of implementation

signifying institutional progress in developing its assessment culture (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003). The first level is characterized by the lack of the overall strategies used in conducting an effective assessment program. The second level indicates that an institution has developed a shared understanding of the purposes, advantages, and limitations of its assessment practice but has yet to extend it to all academic programs. The third level of maturation requires an institution to integrate assessment in its daily operations and utilize student assessment data for educational and institutional improvements (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003).

In the attempt to achieve an externally validated Higher Learning Commission level three culture of assessment and continuous improvement, an Institutional Effectiveness Committee composed of multidisciplinary representation was formed by the AUOC president. The purpose of the committee was to establish and disseminate standards, tools, and processes for campus-wide assessment and continuous improvement that would be synchronized with the Argosy system. Moreover, the committee was responsible for evaluating and refining department and institutional effectiveness review procedures, thus providing an oversight of the campus-wide self-study process.

## Assessment Infrastructure

Key to the assessment infrastructure at AUOC was the development of program learning outcomes. According to Nichols and Nichols (2000), program learning outcomes are “descriptions of what academic departments intend for students to know (cognitive), think (attitudinal), and do (behavioral) when they have completed their degree programs, as well as their general education or core curricula” (p. 17). Though all program outcomes were developed using similar standards, the participants varied based on the needs of each program or campus (AUOC, 2004). For instance, the outcomes for programs taught at the national level were developed as a part of a University-wide process. Conversely, the development of the outcomes for the single-campus programs, including the general education component of the undergraduate programs, involved numerous consultations between the program chairs at local campuses and the central academic affairs personnel.

The second component of Argosy’s assessment plan was the adaptation of the five-column model of assessment for each academic program. This model, created by Nichols and Nichols (2000) is described in Appendix A. It depicts each program’s assessment process in a tabular form. While the model’s

adaptation was mandated by the central administration, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee at AUOC provided an oversight of its deployment for each academic unit. During this process, the committee ensured that each academic program had mission-based, measurable, and actionable program outcomes; each academic program employed direct and indirect measures of student achievement to triangulate the findings; and feedback from the assessment process was used to improve instruction, planning, and budgeting processes (AUOC, 2004).

While the central administration determined the common formats for program outcomes and means of assessment, the AUOC faculty decided the criteria for program success for each educational outcome (refer to column three of the five-column model in Appendix A). Furthermore, a clear expectation in the mind of the public is that institutions are able to document not only their plans for assessment, but the actual results and how these results are used to improve programming. Nichols and Nichols (2000) suggest that “responsibility for maintaining this documentation is probably best lodged at the departmental level” (p. 52). Consequently, the faculty at AUOC was responsible for summarizing data collected during the assessment process and for determining how these data may improve instructional programming and institutional

operation (refer to columns four and five of the five-column model in Appendix A).

## Department Review

The main purpose of adapting the five-column model at Argosy University was to provide a consistent and widely accepted mechanism for reporting and analyzing assessment results during the department review process. Historically, department reviews have been used to enhance the quality of an academic program by pointing out its strengths and weaknesses and by providing recommendations for more targeted resource allocation (Black & Kline, 2002). In congruence with that mission, the annual department review at Argosy University is intended to generate explicit recommendations for improving student success and to guide the future direction of the campus. Embedded within the department review is the assessment of student learning for each program outcome conveyed in the five-column model (AUOC, 2004).

As the result of the department review, annual action plans must be generated for each academic program. An action plan contains findings and recommendations for programmatic learning outcomes and indirect measures of program success such as admissions, persistence, and student satisfaction. While the

five-column model conveys all program outcomes for each academic unit, only the most pivotal items are depicted in the departmental action plans (refer to Appendix B).

The evaluation of the department review outcomes is facilitated by the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) for each academic program. The purpose of the annual SWOT report is to convey major departmental trends validated by the key stakeholders. Additionally, if the assessment data are to be used for educational decisions, their internal impact on institutional resources must be evaluated (Peterson & Vaughan, 2002). To facilitate this evaluation, each academic unit at AUOC is required to generate plans consisting of the specific goals, objectives, and resource allocation based on the departmental SWOT reports.

## Institutional Effectiveness Review

As a means of continuous campus-wide quality improvement, Argosy University has implemented an annual institutional effectiveness review which consolidates the findings of the individual reviews for each academic department and includes an assessment of all campus support operations related to its academic and strategic goals (AUOC, 2004). The institutional

effectiveness review provides a comprehensive and consistent evaluation of the current strengths and weaknesses of the campus and generates specific recommendations for the improvement of strategic and operational campus-wide efforts.

The assessment of progress made on prior year's initiatives is pivotal in preparation for the institutional effectiveness review. Consequently, the AUOC Institutional Effectiveness Committee was responsible for determining the degree of such progress and summarizing the findings with respect to prior year's recommendations. These data were used as a starting point for establishing the current level of departmental progress and operations (AUOC, 2006).

In addition to assessing the prior year's progress, the institutional effectiveness review consists of a thorough evaluation of the departmental action plans and presentations made by each academic unit. The purpose of these presentations is to facilitate discussion among all campus stakeholders and to stimulate campus-wide dialogue on developing recommendations that reflect the collective campus perspective. For instance, after reviewing the data presented by various academic and functional units, the AUOC leaders have generated a campus-wide SWOT report that consolidated findings of the individual departments (AUOC, 2006). On the basis of

this report, the leadership team developed a prioritized list of proposed campus objectives for the upcoming fiscal year and set forth the process whereby these objectives are translated into specific plans including milestones, due dates, and responsible parties. This process consisted of a two-tier plan including the creation of departmental project plans (refer to Appendix C) and the identification of personal performance indicators that are congruent with departmental objectives (AUOC, 2006).

## Lessons Learned

While responding to the external demands provided an impetus for the initial engagement with programmatic assessment at AUOC, the formation of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee in the beginning of the 2005–06 academic year facilitated the development of a sustainable internally driven core process of inquiry (Maki, 2004) to improve student learning. By the end of the year, all academic programs were engaged in systematic and disciplined assessment processes including the utilization of an assessment template that was consistent across programs and all delivery media; the adoption of program outcomes, measures, and rubrics were compliant with central staff directives; and the department review process across campus was standardized. To ensure campus-wide support

for establishing assessment infrastructure, the committee membership consisted of leaders from each academic discipline including the campus president. Additionally, the chair of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee was given release time from teaching to ensure an appropriate level of focus on campus assessment activities. While the committee succeeded in establishing uniform assessment processes across academic disciplines, the campus faced several challenges during the first year of implementation.

One of the challenges included disparate levels of departmental readiness to engage in effective assessment processes. For instance, the graduate programs in Business and Education and undergraduate Psychology program taught at the national level had well-defined learning outcomes and assessment measures that were developed as a part of a University-wide process. Conversely, the development of learning outcomes for the single-campus programs, such as Clinical Psychology, required extensive and concerted effort from local faculty resulting in some difficulties meeting initial deadlines.

Another challenge included divergent requirements from various accrediting agencies. For example, the campus is pursuing programmatic accreditation through the American Psychological Association

(APA) for the Doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. Thus, the faculty teaching in the program needed to respond to reporting requirements enforced by the APA in conjunction with adhering to the general guidelines established by The Higher Learning Commission. Consequently, the chair of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee provided additional assistance to program faculty and administrators to facilitate the reconciliation of these divergent requirements. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, the AUOC academic leadership was unanimous in supporting institutional efforts to achieve an externally validated Higher Learning Commission level three culture of assessment and continuous improvement.

## Recommendations and Implication for Practice

A major challenge faced by assessment practitioners is the lack of institutional experience in carrying out assessment initiatives (Ewell, 2004). This article identifies concrete steps that may enable institutions to integrate assessment into their daily operations. These steps include: (a) formation of an multidisciplinary committee signaling the collaborative nature of assessment initiatives; (b) adoption of standardized program outcomes, measures, and rubrics for all academic

disciplines; (c) utilization of an assessment template that is consistent across programs and delivery media; and (d) adoption of departmental review processes that demonstrate the use of assessment results for educational and institutional improvements.

Establishing assessment processes that extend across campus calls for a collaborative beginning (Maki, 2004). At AUOC, the formation of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee ensured a collaborative authorship of campus assessment practices. While the implementation of the initial infrastructure was completed during the span of one academic year, the campus intends to evaluate the adoption of e-College and FolioTech software packages to augment its assessment reporting capabilities.

At the present time, a rigorous assessment system is in place to support effective teaching and learning processes. The assessment cycle begins with the utilization of academic program outcomes rooted in the University Mission. These outcomes are conveyed in a five-column assessment model that depicts each program's assessment process in a tabular form. During the annual department review process, these outcomes are used to determine the effectiveness of instructional programming. Gaps between expected outcomes

and actual results lead to the creation of recommendations for continuous improvement in student learning. The findings of the individual departments are consolidated during the Institutional Effectiveness Review, which identifies campus-level objectives. These objectives, in turn, influence funding decisions during the budget process. The Institutional Effectiveness Report documents much of the institutional process and associated work products, initiatives, and priorities of the assessment cycle.

Drawing members of an educational community together to develop a statement of institutional commitment signals the collaborative nature of assessment (Maki, 2004). At AUOC, this collaboration was facilitated by the formation of the multidisciplinary Institutional Effectiveness Committee. Moreover, such factors as the release time given to the committee chair to ensure an appropriate focus on assessment activities and the active support of the campus president were pivotal in ensuring campus success. It is vital to position assessment as integral both to our professional work and to a commitment to teaching and learning that is responsive to our students' needs (Maki, 2004). Without this focus, "assessment runs the risk of remaining or becoming marginalized. Worse yet, it remains an empty and intellectually unfulfilling activity" (p. 15).

## References

- Argosy University/Orange County (AUOC). (2004). *Focused visit self-study report*.
- Argosy University/Orange County (AUOC). (2006). *Institutional effectiveness review*.
- Becker, J. B. (2000). Findings from the teaching, learning, and computing survey: Is Larry Cuban right? *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*. Retrieved August 10, 2008, from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n51>
- Black, K. E., & Kline, K. A. (2002). Program review: A spectrum of perspectives and practices. In T.W. Banta & Associates (Eds.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 223–239). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. (1986). *A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Hyattsville, MD: The Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED268120).
- Cuban, L. (2003). So much high-tech money invested, so little use: How come? Retrieved August 10, 2008, from <http://www.edtechnot.com/notarticle1201.html>
- Education Commission of the States. (2002). *No state left behind: The challenges and opportunities of ESEA 2001*. Retrieved August 10, 2008, from [http://www.ecs.org/html/special/esea/NSLB\\_s1.htm](http://www.ecs.org/html/special/esea/NSLB_s1.htm)

Erwin, T. D., & Wise, S. L. (2002). A scholar-practitioner model for assessment. In T.W. Banta & Associates (Eds.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 67–81). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ewell, P. T. (2002). An Emerging Scholarship: A brief history of assessment. In T.W. Banta & Associates (Eds.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 3–25). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Higher Learning Commission. (2003). *Assessment of student academic achievement: Assessment culture matrix*. Retrieved August 10, 2008, from <http://www.ncahlc.org/download/AssessMatrix03.pdf>

Lopez, C. L. (1999). *A decade of assessing student learning: What have we learned; What's next?* Chicago: North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Maki, P. L. (2004). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Nichols, J. O., & Nichols, K. W. (2000). *The departmental guide and record book for student outcomes assessment and institutional effectiveness*. Edison, NJ: Agathon Press.

Peterson, M. W., & Vaughan, D. S. (2002). Promoting academic improvement: Organizational and administrative dynamics that support student assessment. In T.W. Banta & Associates (Eds.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 26–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ravitch, D. (2000). *Left back: a century of failed school reforms*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education. (2006). *A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. higher education*. Retrieved August 10, 2008, from <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/final-report.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2003, February 12). *Paige announces \$17 million in grants to help states develop assessments under NCLB* [Press release]. Retrieved August 10, 2008, from <http://www.ed.gov/news/releases/2003/02/02122003a.html>

Wright, B. D. (2002). Accreditation and the scholarship of assessment. In T.W. Banta & Associates (Eds.), *Building a scholarship of assessment* (pp. 240–258). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



## Appendix A – Abbreviated Five-Column Model

Argosy University/Orange County

*Assessment Plan—Program Level*

School of Education

Program: **Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership**

Date of last update to repository: 10/10/05

Name of person responsible for update: Dina Brown



**Overview:** The purpose of this repository is to serve as a framework for all academic programs at Argosy University/Orange County to ensure that program learning outcomes are defined, measured, met or improved. The repository is modeled after Nichols' 5-column assessment plan.

### **Abbreviated University Mission Statement:**

Argosy University is a private higher education institution whose mission is to provide high-quality education in practitioner fields, employing delivery formats that provide access for students regardless of their geographical location. Argosy University offers general education and professional programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels within the behavioral sciences, business, education, information technology, and healthcare fields. These degree programs are designed to instill the knowledge and skills of professional practice as well as foster the values of higher education and social responsibility.

### **Abbreviated School Mission Statement:**

The mission of Argosy University's College of Education and Human Development is to prepare leading educational practitioners and lifelong learners who actively engage in the scholarships of discovery, application, integration and teaching, within diverse educational environments. Graduates of Argosy University's College of Education and Human Development possess the advanced knowledge base, skills, and dispositions that characterize confident and principled educational leaders who are ethical practitioners, effective communicators, productive collaborators and well informed consumers, synthesizers, and evaluators of educational research. As such, their practice reflects awareness of social issues, commitment to social justice, and sensitivity and responsiveness to all facets of a pluralistic society.

### **Programmatic Statement of Purpose:**

The Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership prepares individuals for either higher education or K-12 leadership positions. The program is designed to instill knowledge and skills related to the professional practices associated with educational leadership including policy issues, administrative theory and practice. The faculty of the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program considers assessment of student learning to be integral to their educational operations and regard assessment findings as a source of knowledge essential for continuous improvement in instructional and programmatic offerings.

## Programmatic Learning Outcome Assessment and Continuous Improvement Repository:

Program Intended Educational Outcomes	Program Competencies	Means of program assessment and criteria for success (direct/ indirect measures)	Summary of Data Collected	Use of results
Research and Theory	Analyze, design, conduct, and defend research in an educational context using action research and other appropriate designs.	<p>Internship, Dissertation, Comprehensive Examination</p> <p>1a. Combined dissertation rubric mean score (0 to 3) for sections A, B, E, and F will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p> <p>1b. Comprehensive exam rubric mean score (0 to 4) for relevance will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p>	<p>1a. Mean score (0 to 3) = 2.95</p> <p>1b. Mean score (0 to 4) = 3.125</p>	<p>Continue with previous recommendations regarding this outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed research outcomes across courses</li> <li>• Embed classroom activities that incorporate professional research and opportunities</li> <li>• Incorporate research concepts and theory in classroom discussions and content</li> </ul>
Communication and Informational Literacy/ Oral and written communication	Orally or in writing, present educational documents (including recommendations, critiques or justifications) that are clear, concise, organized and well supported in a professional manner using media appropriate to the education context and audience, using appropriate media and technology.	<p>Dissertation, Comprehensive Examination</p> <p>2a. Combined dissertation rubric mean score (0 to 3) for sections D, L, and M will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p> <p>2b. Combined comprehensive exam rubric mean score (0 to 4) for grammar, punctuation, and APA adherence will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p>	<p>2a. Mean score (0 to 3) = 2.86</p> <p>2b. Mean score (0 to 4) = 2.92</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider establishing a writing portfolio program, wherein the student would create a portfolio based on writing samples throughout her career as a student at Argosy. Development of the portfolio program would take place through faculty dialogue and meetings.</li> <li>2. Hold Workshops for the faculty, addressing current issues in writing and communications. Include updated information on APA writing, style and format.</li> </ol>
Critical Thinking- Problem Solving	Analyze contemporary theoretical concepts at all levels of educational leadership, in design, implementation, and evaluation of personnel preparation programs at pre-service and in-service levels.	<p>Dissertation, Comprehensive Examination</p> <p>3a. Combined dissertation rubric mean score (0 to 3) for sections C, H, I, J, and M will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p> <p>3b. Combined comprehensive exam rubric mean score (0 to 4) for organization and cogency will be equal to or greater than 2.5</p>	<p>3a. Mean score (0 to 3) = 2.92</p> <p>3b. Mean score (0 to 4) = 3.39</p>	<p>Faculty recommend the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Embed critical thinking skills learning outcomes throughout core courses.</li> <li>2. Identify specific courses in which this learning outcome needs to be emphasized.</li> <li>3. Train faculty in instructional approaches. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Create platform in the classroom for students to critically analyze, evaluate and synthesize pertinent material.</li> <li>b. Review case studies and literature for critical analyses and evaluation.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Appendix B – Abbreviated Departmental Action Plan

### DEPARTMENT REVIEW ACTION PLAN

**Program: Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership**

**Campus: Orange County**

**Date of Review**

**January 12, 2006**

#### Learning Outcome #1

Communication and Information Literacy/Oral and Written Communication

Present educational documents that are clear, concise, organized, and well-supported using appropriate media and technology.

#### Summary of Faculty Findings

##### Summative scores:

##### Dissertation

2a. Combined dissertation rubric mean score (0 to 3) for sections D, L, and M will be equal to or greater than 2.5

2a. Mean score (0 to 3) = 2.86

##### Comprehensive Examination

2b. Combined comprehensive exam rubric mean score (0 to 4) for grammar, punctuation, and APA adherence will be equal to or greater than 2.5

2b. Mean score (0 to 4) = 2.92

Current baseline criterion scores are the first attempt at creating measurable learning outcomes. Since baseline scores were determined with a minimal amount of previous data, faculty agreed that although mean scores exceeded criterion baseline score, there remains considerable potential for improvement in this learning outcome.

For instance, the quality of students' written communication presented in a clear, concise, organized, and well-supported manner is inconsistent across assignments. Faculty are frequently unable to determine writing and information literacy skills' progress across the program. Furthermore, faculty expressed awareness that there is an inconsistency in presentation of APA standards.

#### Recommendations to Improve Student Learning in this Outcome:

Faculty recommend the following:

1. Consider establishing a writing portfolio program, wherein the student would create a portfolio based on writing samples throughout her career as a student at Argosy. Development of the portfolio program would take place through faculty dialogue and meetings
2. Hold Workshops for the faculty, addressing current issues in writing and communications. Include updated information on APA writing, style, and format.
3. Embed a standardized rubric for written and oral communication in all relevant courses
  - a. Teach faculty on use of these rubrics
4. Standardize APA expectations by accomplishing the following:
  - a. Adopt an APA rubric for use in all courses
  - b. Hold workshops for faculty on APA format and style to ensure quality instruction.
  - c. Work in collaboration with the writing coordinator/student resource center to ensure that students are receiving the help needed
5. Establish effective learning/writing center and tutors to meet student needs

## Appendix C – Abbreviated Project Plan



### Departmental Action Plan

<b>Department Name:</b>	<b>School of Education Doctoral Programs Plan #3</b>
<b>Person Completing This Plan:</b>	<b>Program Chair</b>
<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>6-6-06</b>

**Instructions:**

During the Department and/or Institutional Effectiveness Review, your department (faculty/staff) suggested some recommendations for improvement for FY07. The purpose of this template is to take the most important recommendations and translate them to a plan of action...complete with tasks, persons responsible for completing those tasks and deadlines.

The emphasis of this should not be on campus level initiatives. Rather, your focus should be on pulling out the top initiatives from your department review(s) that you believe must receive your department's attention for FY07. One of the outcomes of this process should be that when we go through the Department Review process in the Spring of 2007, we should have fewer "we didn't do anything about this recommendation" types of comments.

FY07 INITIATIVE ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE			
Please use the space to the right to place the recommendation from your department review that you will focus on in this template:		Hold Workshops for the faculty, addressing current issues in writing and communications specific to the School of Education Doctoral Programs. Include updated information on APA writing, style and format.	
Please use the space to the right to define what the intended outcome of this action plan will be. In other words, how will you know that the plan you create below will have its intended results? What will improved performance look like?		Program Learning Outcome scores will improve as a result of these actions: Current Score: Mean score (0 to 3) = 2.86 Objective: Mean Score (0-3) = 2.90	
Summary Action Plan			
Task Number	In order to improve performance, we need to engage in the following tasks (list them below)	And this person is on point to complete these tasks (list below and align to tasks to the left)	By this date (create deadlines below that align to the tasks in the left hand column)
1	Hold workshops twice per year addressing written communication, APA style and dissertation-specific issues in the SOE Doctoral Programs.	Program Chair	October 1st, 2006 March 15th, 2007
2	Conduct interactive workshops/faculty meetings where faculty is working in teams to identify and create solutions to writing assignment problems specific to the School of Education Doctoral Programs. For example, assignments involving literature review will be examined across faculty, course and assignments.	Program Chair	October 1st, 2006 March 15th, 2007

## The AIR Professional File—1978-2008

A list of titles for the issues printed to date follows. Most issues are “out of print,” but are available as a PDF through the AIR Web site at <http://www.airweb.org/publications.html>. Please do not contact the editor for reprints of previously published Professional File issues.

*Organizing for Institutional Research* (J.W. Ridge; 6 pp; No. 1)

*Dealing with Information Systems: The Institutional Researcher’s Problems and Prospects* (L.E. Saunders; 4 pp; No. 2)

*Formula Budgeting and the Financing of Public Higher Education: Panacea or Nemesis for the 1980s?* (F.M. Gross; 6 pp; No. 3)

*Methodology and Limitations of Ohio Enrollment Projections* (G.A. Kraetsch; 8 pp; No. 4)

*Conducting Data Exchange Programs* (A.M. Bloom & J.A. Montgomery; 4 pp; No. 5)

*Choosing a Computer Language for Institutional Research* (D. Strenglein; 4 pp; No. 6)

*Cost Studies in Higher Education* (S.R. Hample; 4 pp; No. 7)

*Institutional Research and External Agency Reporting Responsibility* (G. Davis; 4 pp; No. 8)

*Coping with Curricular Change in Academe* (G.S. Melchiori; 4 pp; No. 9)

*Computing and Office Automation—Changing Variables* (E.M. Staman; 6 pp; No. 10)

*Resource Allocation in U.K. Universities* (B.J.R. Taylor; 8 pp; No. 11)

*Career Development in Institutional Research* (M.D. Johnson; 5 pp; No. 12)

*The Institutional Research Director: Professional Development and Career Path* (W.P. Fenstemacher; 6pp; No. 13)

*A Methodological Approach to Selective Cutbacks* (C.A. Belanger & L. Tremblay; 7 pp; No. 14)

*Effective Use of Models in the Decision Process: Theory Grounded in Three Case Studies* (M. Mayo & R.E. Kallio; 8 pp; No. 15)

*Triage and the Art of Institutional Research* (D.M. Norris; 6 pp; No. 16)

*The Use of Computational Diagrams and Nomograms in Higher Education* (R.K. Brandenburg & W.A. Simpson; 8 pp; No. 17)

*Decision Support Systems for Academic Administration* (L.J. Moore & A.G. Greenwood; 9 pp; No. 18)

*The Cost Basis for Resource Allocation for Sandwich Courses* (B.J.R. Taylor; 7 pp; No. 19)

*Assessing Faculty Salary Equity* (C.A. Allard; 7 pp; No. 20)

*Effective Writing: Go Tell It on the Mountain* (C.W. Ruggiero, C.F. Elton, C.J. Mullins & J.G. Smoot; 7 pp; No. 21)

*Preparing for Self-Study* (F.C. Johnson & M.E. Christal; 7 pp; No. 22)

*Concepts of Cost and Cost Analysis for Higher Education* (P.T. Brinkman & R.H. Allen; 8 pp; No. 23)

*The Calculation and Presentation of Management Information from Comparative Budget Analysis* (B.J.R. Taylor; 10 pp; No. 24)

*The Anatomy of an Academic Program Review* (R.L. Harpel; 6 pp; No. 25)

*The Role of Program Review in Strategic Planning* (R.J. Barak; 7 pp; No. 26)

*The Adult Learner: Four Aspects* (Ed. J.A. Lucas; 7 pp; No. 27)

*Building a Student Flow Model* (W.A. Simpson; 7 pp; No. 28)

*Evaluating Remedial Education Programs* (T.H. Bers; 8 pp; No. 29)

*Developing a Faculty Information System at Carnegie Mellon University* (D.L. Gibson & C. Golden; 7 pp; No. 30)

*Designing an Information Center: An Analysis of Markets and Delivery Systems* (R. Matross; 7 pp; No. 31)

*Linking Learning Style Theory with Retention Research: The TRAILS Project* (D.H. Kalsbeek; 7 pp; No. 32)

*Data Integrity: Why Aren’t the Data Accurate?* (F.J. Gose; 7 pp; No. 33)

*Electronic Mail and Networks: New Tools for Institutional Research and University Planning* (D.A. Updegrove, J.A. Muffo & J.A. Dunn, Jr.; 7pp; No. 34)

*Case Studies as a Supplement to Quantitative Research: Evaluation of an Intervention Program for High Risk Students* (M. Peglow-Hoch & R.D. Walleri; 8 pp; No. 35)

*Interpreting and Presenting Data to Management* (C.A. Clagett; 5 pp; No. 36)

*The Role of Institutional Research in Implementing Institutional Effectiveness or Outcomes Assessment* (J.O. Nichols; 6 pp; No. 37)

*Phenomenological Interviewing in the Conduct of Institutional Research: An Argument and an Illustration* (L.C. Attinasi, Jr.; 8 pp; No. 38)

*Beginning to Understand Why Older Students Drop Out of College* (C. Farabaugh-Dorkins; 12 pp; No. 39)

## The AIR Professional File—1978-2008

- A Responsive High School Feedback System* (P.B. Duby; 8 pp; No. 40)
- Listening to Your Alumni: One Way to Assess Academic Outcomes* (J. Pettit; 12 pp; No. 41)
- Accountability in Continuing Education Measuring Noncredit Student Outcomes* (C.A. Clagett & D.D. McConochie; 6 pp; No. 42)
- Focus Group Interviews: Applications for Institutional Research* (D.L. Brodigan; 6 pp; No. 43)
- An Interactive Model for Studying Student Retention* (R.H. Glover & J. Wilcox; 12 pp; No. 44)
- Increasing Admitted Student Yield Using a Political Targeting Model and Discriminant Analysis: An Institutional Research Admissions Partnership* (R.F. Urban; 6 pp; No. 45)
- Using Total Quality to Better Manage an Institutional Research Office* (M.A. Heverly; 6 pp; No. 46)
- Critique of a Method For Surveying Employers* (T. Banta, R.H. Phillippi & W. Lyons; 8 pp; No. 47)
- Plan-Do-Check-Act and the Management of Institutional Research* (G.W. McLaughlin & J.K. Snyder; 10 pp; No. 48)
- Strategic Planning and Organizational Change: Implications for Institutional Researchers* (K.A. Corak & D.P. Wharton; 10 pp; No. 49)
- Academic and Librarian Faculty: Birds of a Different Feather in Compensation Policy?* (M.E. Zeglen & E.J. Schmidt; 10 pp; No. 50)
- Setting Up a Key Success Index Report: A How-To Manual* (M.M. Sapp; 8 pp; No. 51)
- Involving Faculty in the Assessment of General Education: A Case Study* (D.G. Underwood & R.H. Nowaczyk; 6 pp; No. 52)
- Using a Total Quality Management Team to Improve Student Information Publications* (J.L. Frost & G.L. Beach; 8 pp; No. 53)
- Evaluating the College Mission through Assessing Institutional Outcomes* (C.J. Myers & P.J. Silvers; 9 pp; No. 54)
- Community College Students' Persistence and Goal Attainment: A Five-year Longitudinal Study* (K.A. Conklin; 9 pp; No. 55)
- What Does an Academic Department Chairperson Need to Know Anyway?* (M.K. Kinnick; 11 pp; No. 56)
- Cost of Living and Taxation Adjustments in Salary Comparisons* (M.E. Zeglen & G. Tesfagiorgis; 14 pp; No. 57)
- The Virtual Office: An Organizational Paradigm for Institutional Research in the 90's* (R. Matross; 8 pp; No. 58)
- Student Satisfaction Surveys: Measurement and Utilization Issues* (L. Sanders & S. Chan; 9 pp; No. 59)
- The Error Of Our Ways; Using TQM Tactics to Combat Institutional Issues Research Bloopers* (M.E. Zeglin; 18 pp; No. 60)
- How Enrollment Ends; Analyzing the Correlates of Student Graduation, Transfer, and Dropout with a Competing Risks Model* (S.L. Ronco; 14 pp; No. 61)
- Setting a Census Date to Optimize Enrollment, Retention, and Tuition Revenue Projects* (V. Borden, K. Burton, S. Keucher, F. Vossburg-Conaway; 12 pp; No. 62)
- Alternative Methods For Validating Admissions and Course Placement Criteria* (J. Noble & R. Sawyer; 12 pp; No. 63)
- Admissions Standards for Undergraduate Transfer Students: A Policy Analysis* (J. Saupe & S. Long; 12 pp; No. 64)
- IR for IR—Indispensable Resources for Institutional Researchers: An Analysis of AIR Publications Topics Since 1974* (J. Volkwein & V. Volkwein; 12 pp; No. 65)
- Progress Made on a Plan to Integrate Planning, Budgeting, Assessment and Quality Principles to Achieve Institutional Improvement* (S. Griffith, S. Day, J. Scott, R. Smallwood; 12 pp; No. 66)
- The Local Economic Impact of Higher Education: An Overview of Methods and Practice* (K. Stokes & P. Coomes; 16 pp; No. 67)
- Developmental Education Outcomes at Minnesota Community Colleges* (C. Schoenecker, J. Evens & L. Bollman; 16 pp; No. 68)
- Studying Faculty Flows Using an Interactive Spreadsheet Model* (W. Kelly; 16 pp; No. 69)
- Using the National Datasets for Faculty Studies* (J. Milam; 20 pp; No. 70)
- Tracking Institutional leavers: An Application* (S. DesJardins, H. Pontiff; 14 pp; No. 71)
- Predicting Freshman Success Based on High School Record and Other Measures* (D. Eno, G. W. McLaughlin, P. Sheldon & P. Brozovsky; 12 pp; No. 72)
- A New Focus for Institutional Researchers: Developing and Using a Student Decision Support System* (J. Frost, M. Wang & M. Dalrymple; 12 pp; No. 73)
- The Role of Academic Process in Student Achievement: An Application of Structural Equations Modeling and Cluster Analysis to Community College Longitudinal Data1* (K. Boughan, 21 pp; No. 74)
- A Collaborative Role for Industry Assessing Student Learning* (F. McMartin; 12 pp; No. 75)

## The AIR Professional File—1978-2008

- Efficiency and Effectiveness in Graduate Education: A Case Analysis* (M. Kehrhahn, N.L. Travers & B.G. Sheckley; No. 76)
- ABCs of Higher Education—Getting Back to the Basics: An Activity-Based Costing Approach to Planning and Financial Decision Making* (K. S. Cox, L. G. Smith & R.G. Downey; 12 pp; No. 77)
- Using Predictive Modeling to Target Student Recruitment: Theory and Practice* (E. Thomas, G. Reznik & W. Dawes; 12 pp; No. 78)
- Assessing the Impact of Curricular and Instructional Reform - A Model for Examining Gateway Courses<sup>1</sup>* (S.J. Andrade; 16 pp; No. 79)
- Surviving and Benefitting from an Institutional Research Program Review* (W.E. Knight; 7 pp; No. 80)
- A Comment on Interpreting Odds-Ratios when Logistic Regression Coefficients are Negative* (S.L. DesJardins; 7 pp; No. 81)
- Including Transfer-Out Behavior in Retention Models: Using NSC Enrollment Search Data* (S.R. Porter; 16 pp; No. 82)
- Assessing the Performance of Public Research Universities Using NSF/NCES Data and Data Envelopment Analysis Technique* (H. Zheng & A. Stewart; 24 pp; No. 83)
- Finding the 'Start Line' with an Institutional Effectiveness Inventory<sup>1</sup>* (S. Ronco & S. Brown; 12 pp; No. 84)
- Toward a Comprehensive Model of Influences Upon Time to Bachelor's Degree Attainment* (W. Knight; 18 pp; No. 85)
- Using Logistic Regression to Guide Enrollment Management at a Public Regional University* (D. Berge & D. Hendel; 14 pp; No. 86)
- A Micro Economic Model to Assess the Economic Impact of Universities: A Case Example* (R. Parsons & A. Griffiths; 24 pp; No. 87)
- Methodology for Developing an Institutional Data Warehouse* (D. Wierschem, R. McBroom & J. McMillen; 12 pp; No. 88)
- The Role of Institutional Research in Space Planning* (C.E. Watt, B.A. Johnston, R.E. Chrestman & T.B. Higerd; 10 pp; No. 89)
- What Works Best? Collecting Alumni Data with Multiple Technologies* (S. R. Porter & P.D. Umbach; 10 pp; No. 90)
- Caveat Emptor: Is There a Relationship between Part-Time Faculty Utilization and Student Learning Outcomes and Retention?* (T. Schibik & C. Harrington; 10 pp; No. 91)
- Ridge Regression as an Alternative to Ordinary Least Squares: Improving Prediction Accuracy and the Interpretation of Beta Weights* (D. A. Walker; 12 pp; No. 92)
- Cross-Validation of Persistence Models for Incoming Freshmen* (M. T. Harmston; 14 pp; No. 93)
- Tracking Community College Transfers Using National Student Clearinghouse Data* (R.M. Romano and M. Wisniewski; 14 pp; No. 94)
- Assessing Students' Perceptions of Campus Community: A Focus Group Approach* (D.X. Cheng; 11 pp; No. 95)
- Expanding Students' Voice in Assessment through Senior Survey Research* (A.M. Delaney; 20 pp; No. 96)
- Making Measurement Meaningful* (J. Carpenter-Hubin & E.E. Hornsby, 14 pp; No. 97)
- Strategies and Tools Used to Collect and Report Strategic Plan Data* (J. Blankert, C. Lucas & J. Frost; 14 pp; No. 98)
- Factors Related to Persistence of Freshmen, Freshman Transfers, and Nonfreshman Transfer Students* (Y. Perkhounkova, J. Noble & G. McLaughlin; 12 pp; No. 99)
- Does it Matter Who's in the Classroom? Effect of Instructor Type on Student Retention, Achievement and Satisfaction* (S. Ronco & J. Cahill; 16 pp; No. 100)
- Weighting Omissions and Best Practices When Using Large-Scale Data in Educational Research* (D.L. Hahs-Vaughn; 12 pp; No. 101)
- Essential Steps for Web Surveys: A Guide to Designing, Administering and Utilizing Web Surveys for University Decision-Making* (R. Cheskis-Gold, E. Shepard-Rabadam, R. Loescher & B. Carroll; 16 pp; No. 102)
- Using a Market Ratio Factor in Faculty Salary Equity Studies* (A.L. Luna; 16 pp; No. 103)
- Voices from Around the World: International Undergraduate Student Experiences* (D.G. Terkla, J. Etish-Andrews & H.S. Rosco; 15 pp; No. 104)
- Program Review: A tool for Continuous Improvement of Academic Programs* (G.W. Pitter; 12 pp; No. 105)
- Assessing the Impact of Differential Operationalization of Rurality on Studies of Educational Performance and Attainment: A Cautionary Example* (A. L. Caison & B. A. Baker; 16pp; No. 106)
- The Relationship Between Electronic Portfolio Participation and Student Success* (W. E. Knight, M. D. Hakel & M. Gromko; 16pp; No. 107)
- How Institutional Research Can Create and Synthesize Retention and Attrition Information* (A. M. Williford & J. Y. Wadley; 16pp; No. 108)



The AIR *Professional File* is intended as a presentation of papers which synthesize and interpret issues, operations, and research of interest in the field of institutional research. Authors are responsible for material presented. The AIR *Professional File* is published by the Association for Institutional Research.

## EDITOR:

### Dr. Gerald W. McLaughlin

Director of Planning and  
Institutional Research  
DePaul University  
1 East Jackson, Suite 1501  
Chicago, IL 60604-2216  
Phone: 312-362-8403  
Fax: 312-362-5918  
[gmclaugh@depaul.edu](mailto:gmclaugh@depaul.edu)

## ASSOCIATE EDITOR:

### Ms. Debbie Dailey

Assistant Provost for Institutional  
Effectiveness  
Washington and Lee University  
204 Early Fielding  
Lexington, VA 24450-2116  
Phone: 540-458-8316  
Fax: 540-458-8397  
[ddailey@wlu.edu](mailto:ddailey@wlu.edu)

## MANAGING EDITOR:

### Dr. Randy L. Swing

Executive Director  
Association for Institutional Research  
1435 E. Piedmont Drive  
Suite 211  
Tallahassee, FL 32308  
Phone: 850-385-4155  
Fax: 850-385-5180  
[air@airweb2.org](mailto:air@airweb2.org)

## AIR PROFESSIONAL FILE EDITORIAL BOARD

### Dr. Trudy H. Bers

Senior Director of  
Research, Curriculum  
and Planning  
Oakton Community College  
Des Plaines, IL

### Ms. Rebecca H. Brodigan

Director of  
Institutional Research and Analysis  
Middlebury College  
Middlebury, VT

### Dr. Harriott D. Calhoun

Director of  
Institutional Research  
Jefferson State Community College  
Birmingham, AL

### Dr. Stephen L. Chambers

Director of Institutional Research  
and Assessment  
Coconino Community College  
Flagstaff, AZ

### Dr. Anne Marie Delaney

Director of  
Institutional Research  
Babson College  
Babson Park, MA

### Dr. Paul B. Duby

Associate Vice President of  
Institutional Research  
Northern Michigan University  
Marquette, MI

### Dr. Philip Garcia

Director of  
Analytical Studies  
California State University-Long Beach  
Long Beach, CA

### Dr. Glenn W. James

Director of  
Institutional Research  
Tennessee Technological University  
Cookeville, TN

### Dr. David Jamieson-Drake

Director of  
Institutional Research  
Duke University  
Durham, NC

### Dr. Anne Machung

Principal Policy Analyst  
University of California  
Oakland, CA

### Dr. Jeffrey A. Seybert

Director of  
Institutional Research  
Johnson County Community College  
Overland Park, KS

### Dr. Bruce Szelest

Associate Director of  
Institutional Research  
SUNY-Albany  
Albany, NY

Authors interested in having their manuscripts considered for the *Professional File* are encouraged to send four copies of each manuscript to the editor, Dr. Gerald McLaughlin. Manuscripts are accepted any time of the year as long as they are not under consideration at another journal or similar publication. The suggested maximum length of a manuscript is 5,000 words (approximately 20 double-spaced pages), including tables, charts and references. Please follow the style guidelines of the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition*.