Assessment Plan

Assessing Educational Programs at Western Nevada Community College

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Philosophy of Assessment of Educational Programs

The intent of assessment is to provide information that leads to improving educational programs at Western Nevada Community College (WNCC). Therefore, the philosophy that guides assessment at WNCC stresses the following elements:

- Assessment is most effective when the people who teach within an educational program have the primary role in determining which elements will be assessed and subsequently using the results to make improvements.

- Academic faculty have the primary responsibility for the assessment of educational programs.

- Assessment requires establishing clear student learning outcomes, using the most appropriate measurement techniques, and using the results of the assessment.

- Assessment is an ongoing process for all programs. However, budgetary concerns constrain the total number of student learning outcomes that can be formally assessed during an academic year. One purpose of the Academic Program Assessment Committee is to ensure that all programs are assessed at regular intervals.

- Assessment can be used to benefit student learning in individual courses, sections of programs, or complete programs.

- Assessment can occur at different times in a program, at the beginning of a program, at the completion of the program, and even years after the student has left the program.

- Assessment results need to be communicated within the college and to those with a vested interest in the college, such as students, graduates, and members of the public.

- Formal assessment of programs requires educating the faculty about the purpose of assessment, developing their knowledge about key concepts in assessment, and aiding them in the acquisition of skills necessary to become proficient in the use of assessment.
Assessment Plan Components

Structure for Assessment

Assessment at WNCC rests upon a structure that gives teaching faculty the primary voice in determining the curriculum, outcomes, assessment processes, and development of plans to improve educational programs. The Program Assessment & Review Committee (PARC) is the vehicle through which faculty plan and conduct assessment of educational and administrative programs in cooperation with Institutional Research. This structure is supported by the administration of the college.

Administrative Support

The assessment of educational programs at WNCC has the full support of college administrators. The Program Assessment & Review Committee (PARC) receives funding to carry out program review and assessment activities, including training of faculty, through Institutional Research. The President, the Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs, as well as the other college Vice Presidents of WNCC have consistently affirmed that the assessment of programs is a faculty task and they have consistently supported faculty efforts to plan and conduct assessment.

Organizational Structure for Assessment

The organizational chart below depicts the committees and personnel who are involved in the effort to improve educational programs and services provided at the college. As the chart indicates, the college has implemented assessment across all services and programs. The Coordinator for Assessment & Planning in Institutional Research works with PARC, a college committee representative of educational and administrative areas of the college that oversees program review, assessment and budget.
Faculty Involvement

This plan for assessing educational programs was proposed by members of the faculty and is approved by PARC which is comprised of a majority of academic faculty members. PARC works with the Coordinator of Assessment and Planning in the Institutional Research office to prepare a budget each year and makes recommendations on all expenditures. Assessments of specific outcomes are conducted by program assessment committees or by PARC. Faculty on the program assessment committees are responsible for conducting assessments and receive requisite technical support from Institutional Research.
Assessment Procedures

Relationship to the College’s Mission and Goals

WNCC operates under a mission and goals statement that has received support from all of the representative bodies: faculty, staff, administrators, students, and advisory boards. The college revised the mission and goals in Fall 2001. The mission statement was approved by the Board of Regents.

The committee charged with oversight of the assessment of educational programs has established its own charges and bylaws as well as the charges and for the committees that conduct the assessment of an educational program. These are shown in the Faculty Assessment Notebook (Section 5).

Identification of Educational Programs

The PARC has identified the educational and administrative programs that are assessed on a regular basis using “programs” as defined by the Board of Regents, which means that every program of study in which a student can earn a degree of certificate is assessed. The PARC also conducts assessments in areas that span one or more academic and support programs.
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MACHINE TOOL TECHNOLOGY
MACHINE TOOL TECHNOLOGY CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
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**Assessment Cycle Activities**

The variability of length of time needed for assessment and differing start and stop dates for the various educational programs means that it is not possible to set a specific time for the activities of assessment that will be the same for all programs. The cycle of assessment is based around the five year program review cycle, but PARC carefully allows for flexibility to enhance assessment projects. Regardless of the start dates for the assessment cycle, all assessment is based on the same cycle of events.

Assessment of an educational program starts with the establishment of the student learning outcomes, selection of research strategy and measurement devices, and the creation of the criteria that will determine whether the program is meeting the standards of success. The program review process requires programs to create a five year assessment plan and to provide annual updates to that plan in the spring (April 1th) of each year.

**Assessment Reporting and Documentation**

PARC has adopted the five column model developed by Nichols and Associates to guide assessment. The original forms and procedures were developed by the Assessment Office and have been edited by PARC and the Coordinator of Assessment & Planning to allow assessment projects to be consistently documented.
Assessment Plan for 2005 – 2010

The first five-year plan for assessment of educational programs covered 2000-2005. Two of the main focus areas of this plan were to educate faculty on assessment and develop a culture of assessment at WNCC. The interim accreditation report written in spring of 2005 commended the college for its successes in these two areas. The Assessment Office, in cooperation with PARC developed this second five-year plan during the summer of 2005, covering 2005-2010. The main goals for this period are to continue the evolution of assessment at WNCC, and to make the necessary adjustments to the processes in order to insure that all student learning outcomes for a program are assessed in a five-year period and that all requirements regarding assessment of educational programs of the Accreditation Handbook for the Northwest Commission of Colleges and Universities are met.

2005-2006: Review, Revision and Planning

Assessment is a continuous process and as such, the system and processes used in assessment require periodic review and revision. The interim accreditation report of spring 2005 pointed out strengths and weaknesses in the assessment program as it existed at that time. The first year of this five-year plan will focus on reviewing the current program and making revisions which will lead to a more efficient system in which all student learning outcomes for a program will be assessed in a fixed period of time.

The goals for this year are:
1. Integrate assessment into the college’s program review process.
2. Review and revise the student learning outcomes for all educational programs.
3. Review and revise the assessment glossary of terms.
4. Develop a schedule which will enable the assessment of all student learning outcomes for a program within a fixed time period.
5. Research nationally normed assessment instruments.
6. Conduct assessment projects.
9. Incorporate professional development resources into the Assessment website.
10. Research possibilities for using graduate and alumni surveys to collect assessment data.
11. Promote syllabi revision to include outcomes.

2006-2007: Execution of the Schedule

The two main areas of focus will be to conduct the first round of assessment projects on student learning outcomes delineated in the schedule developed in 2005-2006 and to administer the nationally normed instrument if one has been identified as the best for our purposes.
The goals for this year are:
1. Conduct assessment projects according to the schedule.
4. Administer nationally normed instrument (if one has been identified.)
5. Provide assessment training for faculty.
6. Disseminate assessment information to constituencies.

2007-2008: Continued Execution of the Schedule

At this point in time, the faculty should be familiar with the system of planning and assessment projects and the second year of the schedule will be executed.

The goals for this year are:
1. Conduct assessment projects according to the schedule.
2. Use data from nationally normed instrument (or administer instrument if this was not accomplished in 2007-2007.)
4. Conduct assessment planning activity for faculty in January 2008 including choosing the general education outcome for next year's Student Success Initiative.
5. Provide assessment training for faculty.
6. Disseminate assessment information to constituencies.

2008-2009: Student Success Initiative

The third year of the schedule of assessment projects will be completed. The main focus of this year will be the Student Success Initiative which will involve efforts across all programs to improve student learning in the area of one general education student learning outcome.

The goals for this year are:
1. Conduct assessment projects according to the schedule for one general education learning outcome in all programs.
4. Provide assessment training for faculty.
5. Disseminate assessment information to constituencies.

2009-2010:

The goals for this year are:
1. Conduct assessment projects according to the schedule
2. Write five-year plan for assessment for 2010-2015.
3. Assess the effectiveness of the integrated program review and assessment process.
Appendix A

Assessment Plan Details for 2005-2010

The tables on the following pages list the major goals, activities, responsible personnel for completing the activities, and the anticipated time line. The following groups are identified by their acronyms or titles:

- Program Assessment & Review Committee (PARC), the faculty committee which provides the oversight and coordination of all assessment of educational program activities.
- Institutional Research (IR), the department responsible for conducting institution-wide research and producing reports used throughout the college.
- Program Review Teams (PRTs), the small committees of academic faculty that are responsible for setting outcomes, selecting criteria for success and methods of assessment, and developing the changes that will be implemented based on assessment results.