UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COUNCIL RETREAT
29 JULY 2009
Overview

- Key concepts and contexts for the UAC
- Orientation to University-level assessment data
  - *Indirect*: Student engagement surveys
  - *Direct*: Collegiate Learning Assessment
- Orientation to program-level assessment
- Discussion of next steps
I. Concepts and Contexts

- Participants will be able to describe
  - The three key steps of a good assessment process
  - Some strategic and historical contexts of AU’s current assessment situation
  - Reasons for the formation of a new University Assessment Council
Assessment in Three Steps

- Write down your goals for student learning
- Gather evidence about how well students are meeting those goals
- Use the evidence for improvement
AU’s Strategic Intent

- Elevate undergraduate education and enrich the undergraduate experience . . . through improved teaching and learning
  (Strategic Plan Goal 1, Initiative 2)

- Measure learning of AU students and benchmark against learning of students elsewhere (Assessment Initiative)
University Assessment Council

- Create a standing campus-wide Assessment Council, reporting to the Provost and initially charged to conduct a campus-wide assessment inventory, gathering and analyzing data about the University’s current assessment practices and recommending ways to improve them so that student learning is enhanced.

(Strategic Plan Goal 1, Initiative 2, 2009-10 Goal)
AU’s Accreditation History

SACS 1993 recommendation

University Assessment Council created (2009)

Director of Assessment position created (1994)

SACS 2004 commendation

SACS 2013 ???

7
Institutional Effectiveness

- The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

  – SACS Core Requirement 2.5
Institutional Effectiveness

- The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

  – SACS Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1
Scope of Institutional Effectiveness

• identify expected outcomes • assess results • make continuing improvements in

Educational Programs
Administrative Support Services
Educational Support Services
Research
Public Service
Common Assessment Dynamic

- Assessment began as a reform movement
- Major driver today is accreditation

Accreditation Requirements
Compliance

Departmental Practice
Innovation
Preferred Assessment Dynamic

• Assessment is part of the culture of planning for teaching and learning

• Accreditation checks and affirms robust institutional practices
Activity 1: Assessment in Three Steps

- ?
- ?
- ?
II. Our Effectiveness Framework

- Participants will be able to

  - Describe Auburn’s institutional effectiveness framework for educational programs
  - Distinguish between direct and indirect assessment measures
  - Identify opportunities for better use of assessment results
Quality Information Framework

- Institutional Assessments and Surveys
  - Signal, benchmark, motivate

- Departmental Program Reviews
  - Plan, get peer feedback

- Curriculum-Based Assessments
  - Fine tune teaching and learning
Institutional Assessments

- Direct measures, such as
  - Collegiate Learning Assessment
  - Project SAILS
  - Locally designed assessments of general education*

- Indirect measures, such as
  - Student surveys
  - Alumni surveys
  - Descriptive and inferential statistics
Program Review

- Development, implementation and revision of the curriculum reflects clear statements of expected student learning consistent with the unit’s mission and goals. (Standard III.A)

- Programmatic data are analyzed to provide evidence of the unit’s effectiveness and are used to cultivate ongoing improvement. (Standard V.A)
Curriculum-Based Assessment

- Annual report requested for each degree program
  - Selected goals for student learning
  - Assessment results
  - Use of results
- First collected in Fall 2000
- Now filed through AU Assessment web site
- Will be a major focus of Assessment Council
III. Thinking about Engagement

- Participants will be able to
  
  - Define the concept of student engagement
  - Identify five benchmarks of student engagement
  - Work more comfortably with NSSE survey data
  - Articulate possible action steps to improve engagement in their schools or colleges
The Concept of Engagement

Time + Energy → Engagement
Evidence of Engagement

Second-Term Freshmen

NSSE

Graduating Seniors

NSSE

Brand New Freshmen

BCSSE at Camp War Eagle
2008-2009

AU Faculty

FSSE
2008
The Five NSSE Benchmarks

- Academic Challenge
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Active Learning
- Supportive Campus Environment
- Enriching Experiences

NSSE measures
Activity 2: A Little Predictification

- Predict AU NSSE Benchmark Results
  - Predicted
  - Preferred
  - Actual
2008 Freshman Benchmark Scores

2008 NSSE Benchmark Scores, Freshmen

- Academic Challenge
  - Perfect Score
  - Auburn Freshmen

Student-Faculty Interaction

Active Learning

Enriching Experiences

Supportive Campus

Scores:
- Academic Challenge: 49
- Student-Faculty Interaction: 33
- Active Learning: 40
- Enriching Experiences: 26
- Supportive Campus: 62
2008 Senior Benchmark Scores

2008 NSSE Benchmark Scores, Seniors

- Perfect Score
- Auburn Seniors

Academic Challenge

Student-Faculty Interaction

Active Learning

Enriching Experiences

Supportive Campus

Scores:
- Academic Challenge: 53
- Student-Faculty Interaction: 43
- Active Learning: 50
- Enriching Experiences: 39
- Supportive Campus: 60

Note: Perfect Score is 100 for all categories.
AU vs. Top 10%, Freshmen

2008 NSSE Rescaled Benchmark Scores, Freshmen, Auburn and Top 10%

- Academic Challenge: 81
- Active Learning: 77
- Student-Faculty Interaction: 76
- Enriching Experiences: 79
- Supportive Campus: 91

Comparison between Auburn Freshmen and Top 10% benchmarks.
AU vs. Top 10%, Seniors

2008 NSSE Rescaled Benchmark Scores, Freshmen, Auburn and Top 10%

- Academic Challenge
  - Top 10%: 84
  - Auburn Seniors: 83
- Student-Faculty Interaction
  - Top 10%: 77
  - Auburn Seniors: 71
- Active Learning
  - Top 10%: 90
  - Auburn Seniors: 83

Enriching Experiences

Supportive Campus
Activity 3: Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>AUBURN UNIV.</th>
<th>NSSE 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Inferences
  - FY: AU score not different from NSSE score
  - SR: AU score likely just a little higher than NSSE score
Activity 3: Patterns of Difference

- Consider patterns in the benchmark data
  - Where do we differ most from peer groups?
  - What survey items account for the difference?
Your College’s Benchmark Report

- To enable college-level analysis, respondents were pooled for all NSSE administrations since 2002
- Comparison group is all AU respondents
- Look for AU means that are above or below the “whiskers” for your college
IV. More about Engagement

- Participants will be able to
  
  - Summarize key findings from the 2008 BCSSE administered during Camp War Eagle
  
  - Identify at least one action step that might be appropriate on the basis of our 2008 FSSE and NSSE data, considered together
BCSSE ("Bessie")

- Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement
  - Academic behavior in high school
  - Expectations for college
  - Baseline information for value-added analysis
Key BCSSE Findings

- AU new freshmen expect to be more involved in their learning at AU than they were in high school.

- They feel well prepared for college.

- They do not expect to have academic trouble.

- They want a challenging and supportive environment.
BCSSE Benchmark Scores

Camp War Eagle Responses, Summer 2008
(mean +/- one S.D.)

- Reported Senior H.S. Engagement
- Expected Freshman Year Engagement
- Expected Perseverance
- Expected Academic Difficulty
- Perceived Academic Preparation
- Importance of Campus Environment
FSSE ("Fessie")

- Faculty Survey of Student Engagement
  - How actively engaged students are in learning
  - How challenging and supportive the campus is
  - Information about teaching practices
Key FSSE Findings

- Overall, good alignment between NSSE and FSSE
- Some predictable differences in perspective
- Some “gaps” that suggest areas ripe for action
A Capstone Experience Gap?

Capstone Experiences: What Faculty Value

- Important/Very important: 79%
- Not/Somewhat important: 21%

Capstone Experiences: What Seniors Report

- Plan to do/Have done: 57%
- No/Don't Know: 43%
Study Abroad, Really?

**Study Abroad: What Faculty Value**
- 44% Not/Somewhat important
- 56% Important/Very important

**Study Abroad: What Seniors Report**
- 11% Not done
- 89% Done
Changing How Students Think?

Learn Something that Changes the Way You Think:
What Faculty Value

- Important/Very important: 89%
- Not/Somewhat important: 11%

Learn Something that Changes the Way You Think:
What Students Report

- Often/Very often: 63%
- Never/Seldom: 37%
Emphasis on Academic Effort?

Campus Emphasis on Academic Work:
What Faculty Report
- Quite a bit/Very much: 52%
- Very little/Some: 48%

Campus Emphasis on Academic Work:
What Seniors Report
- Quite a bit/Very much: 18%
- Very little/Some: 82%
Activity 4: Time to Apply!

- Summary discussion of engagement data
  - What are your colleges currently doing that could link with our NSSE results?
  - What are your colleges currently not doing that could link with our NSSE results?
  - What could we all be doing to increase the time and energy our students devote to educationally purposeful activity?
BREAK TIME
IV. Thinking about CLA Data

- Participants will be able to
  - Describe the purpose and focus of the CLA assessment
  - Interpret a graph showing CLA scores
  - Articulate possible action steps in their schools or colleges to improve student performance on the skills measured by the CLA
CLA Approach

- Holistic assessment of common skills
  - Critical Thinking
  - Analytic Reasoning
  - Written Communication
  - Problem Solving
- Measurement of value-added
- Institution as initial unit of analysis
- Direct measurement of typical performance
CLA Administration

- We participated in a cross-sectional study, in which growth between freshmen and seniors is estimated by testing samples of students, not the entire class.

- Students take the CLA online in proctored settings. Testing time is approximately 90 minutes.
CLA Measures

- Analytic Writing Task
  - Make-an-Argument
  - Critique-an-Argument

- Performance Task
Make-an-Argument

• “In our time, specialists of all kinds are highly overrated. We need more generalists -- people who can provide broad perspectives.”

• Directions: In 45 minutes, agree or disagree and explain the reasons for your position.
“Butter has now been replaced by margarine in Happy Pancake House restaurants throughout the southwestern United States. Only about 2 percent of customers have complained, indicating that 98 people out of 100 are happy with the change. Furthermore, many servers have reported that a number of customers who still ask for butter do not complain when they are given margarine instead. Clearly, either these customers cannot distinguish margarine from butter, or they use the term "butter" to refer to either butter or margarine. Thus, to avoid the expense of purchasing butter, the Happy Pancake House should extend this cost-saving change to its restaurants in the southeast and northeast as well.”

Directions: In 30 minutes, discuss how well-reasoned you find the argument.
Critique-an-Argument

“…Butter has now been replaced by margarine in Happy Pancake House restaurants throughout the southwestern United States…”

“…Happy Pancake House should extend this cost saving change to its restaurants in the southeast and northeast as well…”
“…Only about 2 percent of customers have complained, indicating that 98 people out of 100 are happy with the change…”
Performance Task

Performance Tasks place students in a real-world scenario.

• In the following case, students have 90 minutes to advise the mayor on crime reduction strategies and evaluate two potential policies:
  • Invest in a drug treatment program or
  • Put more police on the streets.

Students are provided with a Document Library, which includes different types of information, such as…
Performance Task

- A MEMO by a private investigator that reports on connections between a specific drug treatment program and a vocal critic of placing more police on the streets.
Performance Task

- A NEWS story highlighting a rise in local drug-related crime.
Performance Task

- CRIME STATISTICS that compare the percentage of drug addicts to the number of crimes committed in the area.
Performance Task

- A RESEARCH BRIEF summarizing a scientific study that found the drug treatment program to be effective.
Performance Task

• Crime and community DATA TABLES provided by the Police Department.
Performance Task

- A CHART that shows that counties with a relatively large number of police officers per resident tend to have more crime than those with fewer officers per resident.
Performance Task

- WEB SEARCH results of other studies evaluating the drug treatment program.
Performance Task

- Performance Tasks require students to use an integrated set of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and written communication skills.

- There are no “right” answers. The goal is to stimulate and assess students’ abilities to make reasoned, reflective arguments.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

CLA scores for a school represent the average (or “mean”) score for all students that completed a CLA task and who also have an SAT score (or ACT score converted to the SAT scale) on file with the registrar.

The CLA scale approximates the SAT scale.
Mean SAT Scores (on the horizontal x-axis) are used to control for incoming academic ability.

Put another way, it allows for a level playing field when comparing performance across all CLA schools.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

This blue dot represents the mean CLA score and mean SAT score for the 79 freshmen we sampled.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

These blue circles represent mean CLA and SAT scores at the other 180 schools testing freshmen in fall 2007.

Once again, the unit of analysis is schools, not students.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

The diagonal blue line shows the typical relationship between academic ability and mean CLA scores of freshmen across all participating institutions.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

Points along the line represent expected CLA scores for a school testing freshmen across the range of mean SAT scores.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

The focus is on the difference between a college’s actual and expected CLA scores—graphically, the vertical distance between the dot and the line.

This difference is reported in standard errors and then converted to a percentile rank out of all participating colleges.
## CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 – 99</td>
<td>Well Above Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 89</td>
<td>Above Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 69</td>
<td>At Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 29</td>
<td>Below Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 9</td>
<td>Well Below Below Expected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

Based on the average SAT score (1181) of the freshmen we sampled, their expected average CLA score was 1152. Our freshmen scored 1189, which is at the 83rd percentile (Above Expected).

Figure 1: Relationship between CLA Performance and Incoming Academic Ability
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

Repeating the process for seniors, this solid red square represents the mean CLA score and mean SAT score for the seniors we sampled in Spring 2008.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

These red squares represent mean CLA and SAT scores at the other 162 schools testing seniors in spring 2008.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

The diagonal red line shows the typical relationship between academic ability and mean CLA scores of seniors across all participating institutions.
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

Points along the line represent the expected CLA score for a school testing seniors across the range of mean SAT scores.
Based on the average SAT score (1236) of the seniors we sampled, their expected average CLA score was 1272. Our seniors scored 1240, which is at the 20th percentile (**Below Expected**).
CLA Scoring and our CLA Results

So how did we do?

Our institution’s value-added is in the 3rd percentile of all undergraduate institutions participating in the 2007-2008 CLA. This was Well Below Expected.
AU CLA Overall Scores, All Yrs

- 2005-06: AU Freshmen 1103, AU Seniors 1219
- 2006-07: AU Freshmen 1118, AU Seniors 1253
- 2007-08: AU Freshmen 1198, AU Seniors 1240
- 2008-09: AU Freshmen 1248, AU Seniors 1248
Analytic Writing Task Scores, All Yrs

Year: 2005-06
- AU Freshmen: 1074
- AU Seniors: 1241

Year: 2006-07
- AU Freshmen: 1116
- AU Seniors: 1237

Year: 2007-08
- AU Freshmen: 1173
- AU Seniors: 1245

Year: 2008-09
- AU Freshmen: 1289

Legend:
- Red: AU Freshmen
- Dark Brown: AU Seniors
Activity 5: Time to Apply, Again!

- Summary discussion of CLA data
  - What are your colleges currently doing that could link with our CLA results?
  - What are your colleges currently **not** doing that could link with our CLA results?
  - After controlling for incoming ability, what could we all be doing to improve the reasoning, problem-solving, and communication skills measured by the CLA?
BREAK TIME
V. Program-Based Assessment

- Participants will be able to
  - Describe how the three-step assessment process applies to degree programs
  - Explain the critical importance of documented program-based assessment in the SACS reaffirmation process
  - Identify likely barriers to effective program-based assessment
  - Summarize current program-based assessment at AU
  - Offer ideas for improving program-based assessment at AU
Assessment in Three Steps

- Write down your goals for student learning
- Gather evidence about how well students are meeting those goals
- Use the evidence for improvement
Program-Level Learning Goals

- *University learning goal*: By the time they graduate with a bachelor’s degree, Auburn students will reason analytically and think critically.

- *Program-level learning goal*: By the time they graduate with a B.A. in History, our students will be able to analyze primary and secondary historical sources and, on the basis of that analysis, to take and defend a position on a debatable historical issue.
Program-Level Evidence

- Evidence of learning can be found
  - In classroom situations: assignments and grading (always)
  - In situations beyond the classroom (often)
    - Direct: projects, exams, juries
    - Indirect: progression, placement, student evaluations, surveys, activities
  - In formal reviews (periodically)
    - Program review
    - Disciplinary accreditation
Program-Level Improvement

- Improvement implies decisions about
  - Advising
  - Curriculum and course content
  - Pedagogy and course staffing
  - Scheduling
  - Extra-curricular structures
  - Facilities
  - Learning resources
  - Early warning systems
  - Etc.
Activity 6: Sample Assessments

- Review a sample annual assessment report for 2008
  - How well has it described learning goals for the program?
  - What evidence has been collected of the extent to which students are achieving those learning goals?
  - How has the evidence been used for improvement? What accounts for the decisions the program have made about the evidence they have collected?
Current Process (Minimum)

Degree Program
- Outcomes
- Assessments
- Improvements

Assessment Office
- Archives
- Analysis
- Assistance
A Better Process

College and UAC

Peer Review

Program Faculty

Data & Support

Assessment Work

OIRA

Work Program Faculty
UAC Roles Going Forward

• Charge for First Year
  • Inventory: What is being done? What needs to be done now? What needs to be done differently?
  • Initiative: Move forward toward SACS readiness

• Possible Future Roles
  • Evaluate the AU assessment process in terms of the results being achieved and recommend ways to improve both process and results
  • Provide feedback (formative or summative) to programs on their assessment reports and results
  • Certify program-level assessment reports prior to their formal submission “for the record.”
What Comes Next

- Assessment Workshop with Barbara Walvoord
  September 14, 2009
  Time and location to be announced
  Intended Audience: UAC members, chairs, departmental leaders

- UAC Responsibility: Recruit participants from your college
THANK YOU!!!