Transformation for the New Millennium
Assessment of Student Outcome Measures at Greenville College

Introduction and Background

In 1995 a comprehensive institutional assessment plan, the Strategic Initiatives Assessment Plan (SIAP) was designed and organized around the strategic plan for growth of the college. At that time the Assessment Committee was established as a standing committee approved by Faculty Council to review and improve the institutional assessment plan on a yearly basis. Between 1995 and 1998, several assessment tools were deleted (DIT, Rokeach Values Survey, Trust Test); new measures were added as a result of student and faculty interest in how Greenville College compares to other four year liberal arts colleges of similar size and mission. In 2002-3 the Academic Profile was added to the assessment plan in order to provide a national benchmark against which the critical thinking skills of Greenville College students could be compared. A few academic departments decided to include ETS area tests within their program assessment plans in order to determine the proficiency of their graduates in specific disciplines (see the Assessment Plan for Management).

The establishment of the New Millennium Commission by President Mannoia in 1999-2000 marked the point at which the Assessment Committee adjusted the institutional assessment plan from the framework of strategic planning to the framework of curricular and co-curricular improvements through the use of student outcome data. This shift included previous consultation with the office of VPAA through which it was determined that the Assessment Committee would coordinate curricular assessment efforts and the VPAA would coordinate the assessment of co-curricular programs and offices (see minutes of AC, October 1998). Materials previously developed for co-curricular assessment were transferred to the VPAA’s office. The Dean of Instruction concurred with this and indicated willingness to track the development of assessment in both areas.

The sheer number of changes in administrative positions had a significant impact upon the Assessment Committee in carrying out the revised Assessment Plan. As presented in their IUPUI workshop of 2001, Trudy Banta and Peter Ewell state that the changes in the offices of Presidents, VPAA’s, Deans of Instruction, CFOs, Deans of Student Development, and Registrars create a tremendous impact upon the continuous improvement of instruction through assessment efforts. Greenville College experienced changes in all of these positions during this past ten year period. In addition, the responsibilities of Dean of Assessment and Planning were divided between the Vice President for Planning and Technology, the Dean of Instruction, the Registrar, and the Director of Assessment. The functions of an Office of Institutional Research are maintained by the Assistant Registrar and the Dean of Instruction. The Assessment Committee responded to these transitions by revising SIAP to the changing views and areas of emphasis demonstrated by new administrators. The positive impact of these adjustments is that current faculty who serve on the Assessment Committee have developed a sense of understanding and ownership for the assessment efforts that far exceeds what was possible in 1995-96. At the same time they realize their role as ambassadors of the importance of assessment and the continuous improvement of curriculum as a result of student outcome data.
Faculty are united in the belief that the institutional goals and objectives articulated prior to re-accreditation in 1995-96 remain an accurate description the expectations for GC graduates. At the same time, they recognize that each department needs to determine the specific manner in which institutional objectives are fulfilled through each major. Course embedded assignments in each major are linked to course and department objectives as well as to institutional objectives. Since 1998, departments have been at work to develop these course embedded indicators of the fulfillment of institutional objectives. In order to further consolidate faculty thinking about institutional objectives, a group of faculty and administrators created a smaller set of three “clusters” of the nine institutional objectives. These clusters were presented in the fall of 2002 under the headings of “critical thinking,” “diversity of worldview,” and “character formation.”

The reorganization of the General Education curriculum and the development of a web-based portfolio system were significant dimensions of transition affecting assessment efforts during the period 2001 to the present. In 2002 an audit of all course syllabi indicated that only a small percentage included obvious links between institutional objectives, departmental objectives, and course objectives. Since that time, this percentage has shifted considerably, in large part because faculty involved in the new General Education Core courses have an increased awareness of the need to create these intentional links across the board, within Core courses, but also within the courses they teach in their own discipline. This gradual process of change in awareness, intentionality, and increased focus on facilitating the best in each student (see StrengthFinder program) increased faculty willingness to improve syllabi in the direction of a clearer articulation of measurable outcome goals for each course. This enabled departments that were undergoing preparation for review to sharpen their list of quality indicators for each major and recommend these course embedded assignments for inclusion in student portfolios.

Through these process of change, gradual though it was, a “culture of assessment” described in the 1995-6 self-study has gradually become a culture of continual growth and improvement. The findings described below are informed by the principles of effective assessment as outlined by AHE in 1992 as well as the HLC Principles of Good Practice. In particular, the use of ongoing, multi-dimensional, course-embedded techniques that balance attention to outcomes and experience has proven to be the “best fit” for a campus like Greenville College. The departmental evaluations that flow out of such a process are formative, owned by the faculty who produce them, and lead to practical qualitative changes in curriculum.¹

**Rationale for the use of Multiple Measures**

Prior to the self-study in 1995-1996 the rationale for the selection of multiple measures to assess the “transformation” of student’s lives at Greenville College was established; it has not changed since that time. The selection of measures is grounded in the mission of the institution and informed by the guidelines of the Higher Learning Commission. The *Strategic Initiatives Assessment Plan*, 1995, describes this process and the manner in which the instruments were utilized at that time. Through the work of the Assessment Committee in reviewing the assessment plan for the institution on a yearly basis, several instruments have been replaced by improved versions or deleted because the information was already being obtained through other sources (see the chart on pg. 128 of the 2005-2006 HLC Greenville College Self-Study).

The HLC guidelines used to determine the collection of instruments utilized in the Greenville College assessment plan were: 1) the use of formative and summative assessment techniques; 2) the use of direct and indirect measures; 3) the use of multiple methods of assessment (standardized tests, course embedded assignments, portfolios, interviews, surveys); 3) the involvement of all persons within the campus community; and 4) the use of cost-effective tools that are in keeping with the mission of the institution.

The Measurement of Transformation in Critical Thinking (I.O. 1-3)

A student’s progress within the academic discipline of the major and minor fields of study was viewed as the most direct indicator of change in critical thinking. For this reason, departments were encouraged to select assignments from senior seminar courses, research projects, and other forms of evidence (portfolio components) at the senior level to compare to freshmen and sophomore level work in order to determine if students were achieving stated departmental goals. The Common Day of Learning presentations by groups of seniors were designed as a means of demonstrating critical thinking skills in a manner that integrated faith and learning, theory and praxis, and interdisciplinary involvement with other scholars. In 2002-3 the Assessment Committee determined that the Academic Profile, a standardized measure including a Critical Thinking scale, should be included in the collection of institutional measures to provide additional information as to how Greenville College students compare to a national sample.

The Measurement of Transformation in World Diversity (I.O. 4-6)

The assessment of changes in a student’s understanding of the world of others, the nature of creation itself, and the varieties of human experience requires tools from within the academic discipline of choice and broad measures of world view and ethical perspectives. The use of standardized content area tests by some departments (Chemistry, Mathematics, Management) or a review of GRE content area scores (Physics) or MCAT scores (Pre-Medicine) are examples of discipline based summative assessment. Changes in world view are evident through the use of the Faith Development Interview Aspect scores as well as a more recent measure, the College Student Values and Beliefs inventory that is now part of the CSI-CSS freshmen/senior testing that is offered through the Comprehensive Institutional Research Project (CIRP), CCCU. In addition to portfolio evidence, and the Common Day of Learning, the use of ethical dilemmas within senior seminars has increased as a means of promoting complex, value-based thinking and the assessment of changes in students’ perspectives. This is summarized in the 2005-2006 HLC Greenville College Self Study, finding 4d.2, p.229-231.

The Measurement of Transformation in Character (I.O. 7-9)

The most challenging dimension to measure is the degree to which a student develops “character” and the desire to serve the world of others while attending a four-year liberal arts college. For this reason the Measure of Psychosocial Development (MPD) and Fowler Faith Development Interviews (FDI) have been used in conjunction with standardized measures since 1997-98. Portfolio evidence of student involvement in volunteer service projects and faith-based mission efforts is another manner in which this dimension is measured. The Dordt writing sample and Biblical/Theological additional questions to the Academic Profile were added to the assessment of General Education through Greenville College’s participation in a Teagle grant with cooperation institutions of the CCCU.
### Institutional Mission and Measures

*Implemented through General Education, Academic, and Co-Curricular Programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Examples of Outcomes</th>
<th>Institutional Improvements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td>Senior Research</td>
<td>Decline in number of students completing Sr. honors projects (2002-3)</td>
<td>Increased incentives to faculty for research involving students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seek Truth; Think critically and creatively.</td>
<td>COR 401, CDL Academic Profile</td>
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<td><strong>World Diversity</strong></td>
<td>CIRP CDL Portfolio</td>
<td>Student interest and participation in cross-cultural activities was low (2000-2001)</td>
<td>Include cross-cultural requirements in General Education Curriculum Support faculty in Damascus Road experience</td>
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<td>Understand and value wholeness of creation; Understand our world; Respect human life and understand the human condition; Apply basic social structures and processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Character</strong></td>
<td>CSVB FDI MPD</td>
<td>The number of students struggling with spiritual issues increased</td>
<td>Shift to “Resident Chaplains” and increase faith programs in dorms</td>
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<td>Develop self-understanding; value personal accomplishment; Respond to God’s expression.</td>
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*CIRP-Comprehensive Institutional Research Project sponsored by the CCCU. CSI, College Student Inventory (freshmen), CSS-College Senior Survey, SSI-Student Satisfaction Inventory (given to all class levels), CSVB-College Student Values and Beliefs (first utilized, 2004).*

*ETS-Educational Testing Service academic area achievement tests: selected at the discretion of departments for the assessment of seniors.*

*Academic Profile-A comprehensive test focusing on academic skills developed through general education courses: Humanities, Social sciences, Natural sciences, Reading, Writing, Critical thinking, and Mathematics are scored.*

*MPD-The Measure of Psychosocial Development measures adjustment through eight critical conflict and resolution stages.*

*16PF-The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire assesses personality types and global features of personality: extraversion, anxiety, tough-mindedness, independence, and self-control.*

*FDI-Fowler’s Faith Development Interview is a peer facilitated in-depth interview integrated into COR 102 and 401.*

*CDL-Common Day of Learning*

*Portfolio-A comprehensive collection of best works of the student; owned by the student, this collection is reviewed first within departments, then by the institutional Assessment Committee.*
Assessment as a Process of Improvement

The process of assessment at Greenville College is facilitative—it promotes a continuous process of review, revision, and the implementation of best practices within academic departments and other facets of campus operation. Assessment is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing data for the purpose of improving learning. As a “community of learners” this process touches the lives of persons in all segments of institutional operations. Assessment is not the evaluation of individual programs, individual faculty, staff, or students. It is provides information as to how well programs within the college carry out their purposes.

Faculty, administrators, staff, and students participate in this process of ongoing improvement in how the college serves the public at large. Faculty play a role in utilizing assessment data within courses and departments but they also serve as members of the Assessment Committee. This representative committee works to help departments prepare for departmental review by examining assessment plans on an annual basis. In the year prior to the department’s review, members of the Assessment Committee work closely with department members to review existing materials and prepare a draft of the review document that will serve to describe the department’s programs to external reviewers. The Assessment Committee makes recommendations to the Dean’s Council, the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee, and the Office of the VPAA as appropriate.

Components of Assessment

One of the purposes for assessment in higher education outlined by the HLC (2003) is that it helps to “enhance the public’s perception of the value of higher education.” (p. 1-2) The aim of assessment at Greenville College is to promote the Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Students set forth in 1992 by the American Association for Higher Education. In this regard the following dimensions of assessment planning are monitored.

In the development of assessment plans, departments need to:
- Emphasize improvement rather than accountability
- Conceptualize assessment in terms of institutional mission
- Identify persons responsible for assessment processes
- Clarify the way in which students achieve institutional goals and department/program goals through the assessment process.
- Specify a schedule for reviewing student outcome data within the department or program.

In evaluating and providing feedback to departments on their assessment plans, the Assessment Committee will look for:
- Clearly stated learning outcomes for departments and programs.
- Identified links between department/program learning outcomes, course experiences, and institutional goals/objectives.
- Identified measures to be used to assess each outcome.
- A description of who will use the results and for what purpose the results will be used.
A description of the process for collection, analysis, interpretation, and use of data for program improvement.

The maintenance of feedback processes that inform constituents of student outcome data and changes implemented as a result.

The department’s ability to evaluate their assessment plan using AAHE principles.

The assessment process is viewed as form of scholarship, a way of inquiring as to whether the programs of the college are actually producing the desired outcomes and goals. The content of each assessment plan is unique to each program and department but the process within each area involves similar steps in a cycle of measurement, analysis and reporting, developing improvements, implementing improvements, and evaluating to see if the desired change has taken place. At Greenville College the areas of assessment process form intersecting spheres of evidence that inform the process of institutional transformation.

The following diagram describes the cycle of improvement beginning with the development of program curricula and culminating in the revision of curricula and improvements in the manner in which they are delivered based on student outcome data. Within this process the Assessment Committee approves and monitors methods for measuring student outcomes across academic programs, General Education, and the institution as a whole.²

Assessment Processes at Greenville College: Intersecting Spheres of Evidence

Comprehensive Assessment at Greenville College: The Intersection of Institutional Evidence

- Four intersecting spheres of evidence represent the process of assessment at Greenville College.
- Each sphere includes the 5-column model of Nichols and the functional elements outlined by Banta (2002).
- Methods and instruments used in each sphere:
  A. National standardized tests administered in conjunction with CCCU research projects: CIRP, CSI, CSS, NSSI (through 2003), and SSI.
  B. Common Day of Learning, the Academic Profile, and Portfolios.
  C. Departmental Review and evaluation of each major.
  D. Psychosocial, survey, and interview data that is both qualitative and quantitative.
  E. HERI Faculty Surveys and ongoing administrative evaluation processes.
- The timetable for implementation of the process began with General Education and Departmental Majors, and will be followed by Co-Curricular Programs (beginning in 2006-2007 with Student Development) and culminating with Administrative performance review and evaluation (revision of documents for this process is currently underway).
In each of the four spheres of function, the following processes unfold: institutional goals and objectives are linked to area goals, measurement tools are selected and implemented, and after outcome data is analyzed, improvements in programs are developed implemented and eventually become a part of the budgeting process.

**Assessment processes within each area of institutional function:**

- Institutional mission and goals/objectives serve as the foundation of institutional improvement.
- Each functional area within the institution sets goals and objectives for the programs and activities they sponsor.
- Measurement tools are selected that best represent the intent and nature of the program or activity of the functional area.
- Results are analyzed by area personnel who plan ways of changing curricula, program sequences, and content in order to improve their programs.
- Changes are implemented and monitored to determine if the outcome is acceptable or if further change needs to be made. Budgets are revised in accord with the changes implemented.
Assessment for improvement in General Education

- General Education experiences transformation through the influence of:
  - A. Standardized measures of institutional Performance.
  - B. Common Day of Learning, Academic Profile, and Portfolios.
  - D. Psychosocial, survey, and interview data.
- The process of improving General Education has been an active dimension of academic life for faculty and students 2000-2005. Over 35% of the faculty and 27% of the student body have had input into the changes undertaken in General Education in the past five years.
- Through the leadership of Dr. Randy Bergen, a new initiative in the assessment of General Education funded by the Teagle Foundation was undertaken in summer, 2005.
Assessment of Academic Majors

**Improvement of Academic Majors through Assessment:**

- Academic Majors experience transformation through the influence of:
  - A. Standardized measures of institutional performance.
  - B. Common Day of Learning, Academic Profile, and Portfolios.
  - C. Department/program assessment and evaluation within each major.
- Since the revision of the schedule for Departmental Review (1998-1999) 47% of the academic departments have undertaken the review process. 24% have fully completed academic review. 29% are currently in the process of review.
Assessment of Co-Curricular Programs

**Improvement of Co-curricular programs through Assessment:**

- Co-Curricular programs experience transformation through the influence of:
  - A. Standardized measures of institutional effectiveness.
  - B. Common Day of Learning, Academic Profile, and Portfolios.
  - C. Program assessment and evaluation.
  - D. Psychosocial, survey, and interview data.

- Although Student Development will not undergo formal review until 2006-2007, the team continually assesses outcome data and revises program initiatives in order to improve the campus culture.
Improvement of Administrative Areas and Services through Assessment:

- Administrative Areas and Support Services are transformed through the influence of:
  - A. Standardized measures of institutional effectiveness.
  - D. Psychosocial, survey, and interview data.
  - E. The HERI Faculty Survey and ongoing administrative evaluation.

This area is the last to experience the full implementation of comprehensive assessment. The cycle of review in this area will not begin until after 2006-2007. Forms of documentation for this process are currently under development. 75% of administrative and support service departments (9 out of 12) have undergone complete reorganization in the last five years. This does not include changes in the President’s Office.
Impact of Assessment Processes

In the past decade the process of assessment at Greenville College has become more deeply embedded in the fabric of everyday life. Several programs have made outstanding changes as a result of continuous appraisal and response to evidence generated through their processes of assessment. Examples of these types of changes are as follows:

1. Curriculum of the GOAL Program: Each course within the GOAL program has undergone extensive revision as a result of student and faculty response and evaluation of curricular sequences.

2. New Student Orientation: Each year NSO is redesigned on the basis of outcome data from the prior year. All persons involved, regardless of their campus position have a voice in the process of change.

3. Spiritual Formation through Chapel: The spiritual needs of students are continually monitored through formal and informal methods. This evidence allows chapel coordinators to sequence speakers, topics, and experiences in a manner that meets the needs of constituents.

4. Residence Life: Formative and summative assessment of student needs, responses to, and participation in Residence Life programs contributes to the redesigning of activities from one year to the next.

5. Inquiry based learning in Chemistry and Biology: Students and faculty work in research based teams to develop higher levels of mastery through inquiry based teaching and learning projects.

6. Alumni Speaker Presentations for current students (Management Department, Communication Department, Development Office): Department sponsored presentations of Alumni Speakers allow the entire community as well as majors within the department to benefit from the life-story and expertise of each presenter.

7. Development of Digital Portfolios in Digital Media: Through peer and faculty feedback the process of designing digital portfolios to communicate the vocational purpose and intent of senior students has been improved. Some of these professional quality digital portfolios have become the basis of business endeavors that serve the greater community.

Resources for Improving Assessment

In order to promote greater understanding and implementation of assessment processes at Greenville College, the Assessment Committee has partnered with Psi Chi to offer a Teaching and Learning Lab with references, resource guides, audio and video workshops, and computer support to facilitate the assessment process within each department. User response and feedback will be collated in order to determine additional ways in which assessment and the department review process could be improved. This lab will be available during the summer and fall 2006.
References


Improving General Education

Significant change has taken place within the CORE curriculum of the General Education Program as well as revisions in the distributed requirements for all students. Refining goals and objectives within each required course is a time-intensive and collaborative process. Discussion regarding expectations for graduates, including the input of faculty, alumni, employers, and other constituents has taken place. Collaboration among students and faculty in the development and evaluation of the Common Day of Learning yields rich data that will influence the manner in which institutional goals and objectives as well as the objectives for General Education are refined.

Improving Academic Programs

Each department works to clearly state their expectations of core qualities within graduates from each of their programs. Individual courses and course sequences are examined to determine what course embedded assignments might serve as key indicators of quality in graduating seniors. Department heads understand that measures of student learning are both direct and indirect. The artifacts of learning such as portfolios, senior seminars, standardized tests are considered direct measures of student learning. Surveys, interviews, grades, retention rates, and graduation rates are considered indirect measures. Both are necessary in a comprehensive assessment plan.

At Greenville College an effort has been made to allow departments the freedom to shape program assessment in a manner that uniquely fits the values and pedagogical styles used within the department. Issues of validity, reliability, sampling, and analysis are considered as well as the need to obtain student outcome data from a variety of types of sources. Each department has established a way of comparing the evidence of student learning with program learning outcome goals. Some departments prefer to review these data each semester, others prefer to create longer intervals for the review of these data. All departments have made changes in curriculum and program offerings that result from what they learn from the process of assessing student learning and their own teaching.

Improving Co-Curricular and Administrative Areas

Assessment efforts within Co-Curricular programs and projects are formative and summative, formal and informal. Many students develop extensive journal entries that result from their co-curricular experiences. These data in addition to formal, summative assessment processes contribute to the redesigning of programs on a yearly basis. Within administrative areas, goals and objectives for performance within an administrative office is grounded in the mission and goals of the institution. These are reviewed on an annual basis. These processes will be improved in the coming year as new forms of documentation and tracking of the review and improvement process are utilized.