



# Assessment At ISU

**A Newsletter of Examples and  
Strategies**

October 2005

## *Matching Assessments with Outcomes*

Accreditation and assessment come hand in hand. One way to begin the process is to list the standards by which a program is assessed, and match those standards with appropriate assessments. For example, the **College of Education** will experience a visit from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) in November 2005. The College of Education organized student, new teacher (alumni) and employer (principal) surveys that ask respondents to rate their program in respect to each standard, on a four-point scale. The results have been organized so that faculty are able to view question response averages and medians by year on a simple line graph. This enables faculty to view trends and observe how well student learning is occurring in each program. The **College of Nursing** has an extensive assessment plan that matches its accrediting organization's standards with assessments, with specific action items which the faculty have determined after viewing assessments. And the **Department of Construction Management** has organized assessments so that faculty can view student, alumni and employer survey results in view of their own accrediting organization's standards, the American Council of Construction Education (ACCE).

## *Some Creative Ideas on Qualitative Assessment*

Several members of the university community have asked about ways to move beyond quantitative measures; using qualitative measures as a method of understanding how students perform on specific student learning objectives. Several departments have moved in this direction mostly because they are interested in developing assessment systems that address cumulative, developmental, or creative student performance. One method of using qualitative assessment is requiring students (or other participants) to complete journals, portfolios, or to submit projects and/or portfolios to a team of faculty members for review. A random sample is collected, and faculty members grade samples according to an agreed-upon rubric. The faculty complete open-ended questions and submit for content analysis; a report is then submitted to the relevant department. Another method is to ask faculty members to review student work prior to an expert panel, in which they answer a number of open-ended questions by a panel facilitator about the quality of student learning in respect to specific program objectives. During the panel experience, a person takes notes and faculty experts complete a questionnaire. Notes from the panel are then sent to the faculty members for the purposes of validity, after which questionnaire results and the notes are analyzed. Results are then communicated to faculty for review and feedback.

The College of Education's **Department of Elementary Education and Special Education** and Ph.D. program in **Curriculum, Instruction and Media Technology** recently completed an expert panel after the faculty had just completed grading doctoral preliminary examinations. Prior to the event, faculty were asked to consider student performance on a number of assignments. Open-ended questions and questions on a questionnaire were reviewed for appropriateness of use. During the expert panel, faculty made several observations that were noted, resulting in several assessments of student learning that could later be discussed by faculty for program improvement.

The result of the analysis revealed that students performed well in areas such as knowledge of research methods and diversity, but needed continued practice in applying lessons learned in the classroom in their own research and in the teaching profession.

### *Using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for Assessment*

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is used by many colleges and universities in the United States to assess how well students are engaged in the university community. Several questions on the survey can be used for assessment by colleges, departments, and programs to assess student learning. Here are a few examples:

The College of Nursing has reviewed several questions on the NSSE that address quality of advisement, students discussing assignments with faculty members, degree to which their program succeeds in encouraging critical thinking and the use of oral communication skills, among others. In February, the faculty in the **B.S. Nursing Program** discussed the usefulness of several questions for assessment and is scheduling further discussions about its use.

In preparation for its NCATE visit, the College of Education asked the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Research (OSPIRE) and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation to analyze the scores of teacher candidates on NSSE questions having to do with diversity and technology, showing that senior teaching candidates perform significantly better on accepting diversity and using technology than freshmen, a finding that can be used in its NCATE institutional report and in its exhibit center when the NCATE visit occurs in November 2005.

Each college has received its separate NSSE report, with question averages specific to each college. If interested in specific analysis, feel free to contact Sean McKittrick at [smckitrick@isugw.indstate.edu](mailto:smckitrick@isugw.indstate.edu) or at x8899.

### **Use of Portfolios and Measurement of Professional and Creative Activity**

After listing program objectives and listing methods used to assess those objectives, it becomes very important to ask whether or not those assessments directly assess student learning, and whether or not such assessments are used to assess student learning at different points in a program, such as at mid- and endpoint.

One way to do this is to ask students to submit samples of work in a developmental portfolio. The students are required to submit and keep a portfolio of their work. At the middle of their program, random samples are collected and reviewed, using a rubric or some other kind of instrument of assess the quality of student work, measured against program objectives. The results could be quantified for placement on a graph, and then viewed and discussed by faculty in the interested of further improvement of student learning. Or, faculty could gather together after viewing samples in an “expert panel” (as discussed above); faculty could also complete an open-ended questionnaire that identify

strengths and weaknesses in student performance. Moreover, the same could be performed in respect to senior work, and mid-level and senior performances could be observed for trends and “lessons learned.”

Several departments within ISU use barrier juries to assess the quality of student work at beginning, mid-level, and senior level areas of development. After such information is collected, aggregated information (so not to identify individual students or faculty) can be used to assess student learning. When collected over several years, this information can be made over time to detect trends. The **Department of Music and the Department of Art** have employed such a strategy in their assessment efforts.

## **Grant Assessment**

Occasionally, it is important to include assessment systems as part of a grant proposal. At a minimum, grant reviewers may feel that a particular grant proposal makes itself accountable by organizing assessment instruments and methods that later enable grant administrators to collect, analyze, and report assessment data that lead to a discussion of outcomes. For example, the Office of Assessment and Accreditation has worked with the *Writing Through the Arts* grant committee to generate valid and reliable surveys. It is in the process of working with members of outside school districts to review a professional development survey for appropriateness of use. Although the work is still in process, it hopes to enhance the response rate and work toward the creation of meaningful information for the grant committee for reporting purposes, and possible publication by participating faculty.

## **Assessment of Study Abroad**

Analyses of the **Study Abroad Program in Costa Rica** have indicated that students gain a great deal from participation in the program. Survey results indicate that students learn more about local culture, gain a better understanding of international and cultural issues, and learn Spanish much faster than if they learned the language only in the classroom. The study abroad program also collected important evidence of student perceptions of improvement over the years of the value of excursions to the educational experience, quality of instruction, and increasing satisfaction with the host family experience.

## **Training Seminars**

The Office of Assessment and Accreditation is offering number of training seminars. Please refer to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation web page for specific times, places, and locations. Individuals and groups may also request independent training, details of which are also on the web page. Please contact Deanna Thompson at x2304 to schedule a scheduling session (with requests for time, place and location), or contact Dr. Sean McKitrick at smckitrick@isugw.indstate.edu

## *Contacting the Office of Assessment and Accreditation*

One goal of the Office of Assessment and Accreditation is to meet with each program and department to assist in the creation and implementation of assessment plans, not only for accreditation purposes but also for assisting in faculty-led assessment of student learning. Please contact **Sean McKitrick at 237-8899 or smckitrick@isugw.indstate.edu**. He is located at 717 COE.

## *Suggestions? Comments? Contributions?*

Interested in contributing to the newsletter? Have suggestions, or would like to share what you are doing in respect to assessment and accreditation? Please contact Sean McKitrick at the contact information above.

## *Upcoming Events*

- \*October 20, 2005: Assessment Seminar, "Writing Effective Assessment Plans"
- \*October 24-25, 2005: Assessment Institute, IUPUI
- \*October 26, 2005: Assessment Seminar, "Developing and Using Surveys to Assess Student Learning"
- \*November 9, 2005: Assessment Seminar, "Writing Useful Alumni Surveys"
- \*November 13-16, 2005: NCATE Accreditation Visit, College of Education
- \*November 17, 2005: Assessment Seminar, "Writing and Using Rubrics for Effective Program Assessment"
- \*December 2005: Construction Management Self-Study to ACCE
- \*December 2005: Recreation Management Self-Study to NRPA
- \*April 30: Completion of NCATE Institutional Report (College of Education)