

**Evaluation of 2009/2010 Annual Assessment Reports of
Student Learning Outcomes
At California State University, Sacramento**

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1. Audience, purpose and scope of this document

- 1) Audience: Academic Affairs.
- 2) Scope: Review all the 2009/2010 annual assessment reports (AAR) submitted to the Office of the Academic Affairs before Oct. 1, 2010.
- 3) Purpose: Critically evaluate the annual assessment reports in order to provide suggestions that will help Academic Affairs in making the annual assessment process and its reports more effective and efficient.

2. Terminology

- 1) Assessment: On-going process designed to monitor and improve student learning.
- 2) Student Learning Outcome (SLO): Specific learning goals and/or objectives as set by the university, colleges, departments, or programs.
- 3) Assessment Plan: A formal document presenting SLOs, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and the time frame and commitment for the assessment effort.
- 4) Direct Measures: Methods used to directly evaluate student work, including papers, presentations, exams, projects, or any other activities directly assessing SLOs.
- 5) Indirect Measures: Surveys and other methods of gathering opinions in order to evaluate the attainment of SLOs.
- 6) Rubric: Tools or criteria used to evaluate student work.
- 7) AAR: An annual assessment report required by the Office of the Academic Affairs.
- 8) WASC: Western Association of Schools & Colleges.
- 9) AY: Academic Year.
- 10) OAPA: Office of Academic Program Assessment at Sacramento State.
- 11) EER: Educational Effectiveness Review from WASC.
- 12) VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education from the Association of American Colleges and University.
- 13) AAC&U: the Association of American Colleges and University.
- 14) LEAP: Liberal Education and America's Promise from the Association of American Colleges and University (AAC&U).

3. Evaluation criteria and documents consulted

There is insufficient information available in many reports for this review to arrive at defensible conclusions or broad generalizations. However, using the criteria and documents listed below, we are able to obtain valuable insights that enable us to identify important patterns, trends, and observations:

¹ We would like to thank Korin Vallejo and Zaki Syed, who have helped edit this report.

- 1) Adelman, Cliff. 2009. *The Bologna Process for U.S. Eyes: Relearning Higher Education in the Age of Convergence*. Washington DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy
- 2) Allen, Mary J. 2004. *Assessing Academic programs in Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Anker Publishing.
- 3) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). 2002. *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*. Washington, DC.
- 4) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). 2004. *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of US Degrees. A Report from the Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation and Assessment*. Washington, DC.
- 5) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). 2007. *College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP)*. Washington, DC.
- 6) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). 2010a. *The Quality Imperative: Match Ambitious Goals for College Attainment with an Ambitious Vision for Learning*. Washington, DC.
- 7) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). 2010b. *VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Rubrics*. Retrieved on Sept. 24, 2010 from http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=30550374&CF_TOKEN=75090408
- 8) Barr, R. B. & Tagg, J. 1995. *From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education*. *Change*: 27(6): 13-25
- 9) Bergan, S. and Damian. R. (eds). 2010. *Higher Education for Modern Societies – Competences and Values*. Strasbourg. FR: Council of Europe.
- 10) Bresciani, Marilee J. 2006. *Outcomes-Based Academic and Co-Curricular Program Review: A compilation of institutional good practices*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- 11) Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric.
- 12) CSU General Education Breadth Requirements. ([file:///G:/UDISK20%20\(G\)/teaching/community.dir/ssisasessment/WASC/The%20executive%20order%20of%20GE%20from%20CSU.htm](file:///G:/UDISK20%20(G)/teaching/community.dir/ssisasessment/WASC/The%20executive%20order%20of%20GE%20from%20CSU.htm))
- 13) Office of Academic Program Assessment at Sacramento State. (<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/index.html>)
- 14) Report of the WASC EER Visiting Team from June 2009. (<http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation/Report%20of%20the%20WASC%20EER%20Visiting%20Team%20April%202009.pdf>)
- 15) The Essential Learning Outcomes developed by LEAP. (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>)
- 16) Thomas, Angelo A. and K. Patricia Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A handbook for college teachers*. Jossey-Bass.

- 17) WASC Commission Action Letter to President Gonzalez from July 17, 2007.
([http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation/WASC Commission Action Letter.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation/WASC_Commission_Action_Letter.pdf))
- 18) WASC Reaccreditation Action Letter from June 2009.
- 19) (<http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation/WASC%20Reaccreditation%20Action%20Letter%20June%202009.pdf>)
- 20) WASC *Resources Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review.*
- 21) WASC Rubric for Assessing the Quality of Academic Learning Outcomes.
- 22) WASC Rubric for Assessing the Use of the Capstone Experience for Assessing Program Learning Outcomes.
- 23) WASC Rubric for Assessing the Use of Portfolio for Assessing Program Learning Outcomes.
- 24) WASC Rubric for Assessing the Integration of Student Learning Assessment into Program Reviews.
- 25) Written Communication VALUE Rubric.
- 26) Written Communication Rubric from the College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies (SSIS).

4. Lists of annual assessment reports reviewed:

- 1) College of Arts and Letters (**13 Reports**)
 - A. Department of Art
 - B. Department of Communication Studies
 - C. Department of Design
 - D. Department of English
 - E. Department of Foreign Language
 - F. Department of History
 - G. Department of Humanities and Religious Studies
 - H. Learning Skills
 - i. Math Program
 - ii. Writing Program
 - I. Department of Music
 - J. Department of Philosophy
 - K. Department of Theater and Dance
 - L. Writing Across the Curriculum
- 2) College of Business Administration (1 report with 4 programs)
 - A. BSBA (The Bachelor of Science in Business Administration)
 - B. MBA (The Master of Business Administration)
 - C. EMBA (The Master of Business Administration for Executives))
 - D. MS/ACCY (The Master of Science in Accountancy)

- 3) College of Education (**14 Reports**)
 - A. Department of Bilingual/Multicultural Education
 - B. Department of Child Development
 - C. Department of Counselor Education
 - i. Pupil Personnel Services Credential
 - ii. Marriage Family and Child Counseling
 - iii. M.S. in Counseling (Career Specialization)
 - D. Department of Educational Leadership and Policies Studies
 - E. Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, School Psychology, and ASL Deaf Studies (EDS)
 - i. MA in Education, Major- Special Education
 - ii. Education Specialist Credential: Mild/Moderate Disabilities & Multiple Subject Credential
 - iii. Level I Specialist Credential in Moderate/Severer Disabilities
 - iv. PPS: School Psychology, M.A., Ed.S
 - v. American Sign Language and Deaf Studies Program
 - F. Department of Teacher Education
 - i. MA in Education
 - ii. Single Subject Credential
 - iii. Multiple Subject Credential
- 4) College of Engineering and Computer Science (**5 Reports**)
 - A. Department of Civil Engineering
 - B. Department of Computer Engineering
 - C. Department of Computer Science
 - D. Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
 - E. Department of Mechanical Engineering
- 5) College of Health and Human Services (**8 Reports**)
 - A. Department of Criminal Justice
 - B. Department of Kinesiology
 - C. Department of Nursing
 - D. Department of Physical Therapy
 - E. Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism
 - F. Department of Social Work
 - i. Undergraduate Program
 - ii. Graduate Program
 - G. Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology
- 6) College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (**6 Reports**)
 - A. Department of Biological Science
 - B. Department of Chemistry
 - C. Department of Geography

- D. Department of Geology
- E. Department of Mathematics
- F. Department of Physics and Astronomy
- 7) College of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Studies (15 Reports)
 - A. Department of Anthropology
 - B. Asian Studies
 - C. Department of Economics
 - D. Department of Environmental Science
 - E. Department of Ethnic Studies
 - F. Department of Family and Consumer Science
 - G. Gerontology
 - H. Department of Government
 - I. Liberal Studies
 - J. Department of Psychology
 - K. Department of Public Policy and Administration
 - L. Social Science
 - M. Department of Sociology
 - N. Women's Studies

5. Accomplishments

A greater number of high quality AARs, including data on student learning outcomes and success, have been produced compared to previous years.

- 1) Deans, Associate Deans, college assessment coordinators, department chairs, and department assessment coordinators have played an important leadership role in driving the annual assessment efforts forward.
- 2) There is significant increase in the number of reports submitted this year than last year.
- 3) More faculty members have been actively involved in the annual assessment activities and have started to directly examine student work to improve student learning.
- 4) More programs and colleges have been using direct measures to assess student learning outcomes.
- 5) Explicit criteria, such as the VALUE rubrics or their modifications, have been used in more departments and colleges to directly examine student work.
- 6) Technology, such as TaskStream, has been used for the first time on the campus to make data collection, data analysis, and data reporting more effective and efficient.
- 7) Assessment data have been used by many colleges and programs to make meaningful program changes and/or to improve student learning.

6. Problems

- 1) Participation and timeliness of reporting.

- A. It appeared during the summer of 2010 that progress in conducting the annual assessment among colleges and departments would remain very uneven. However, by the middle of September, 2010, most of the programs had submitted reports. This is a significant increase in the number of programs reporting from the 2008-2009 academic year.
 - B. Some departments and colleges only assess some of the programs, not all the programs.
 - C. Budget cuts and furloughs have made it harder for some programs and colleges to keep the annual assessment effort as a top priority.
 - D. Reports were received as late as the first week of October 2010, even though these reports were due before or on July 1, 2010.
- 2) Setting and connecting learning outcomes to the department/college/university learning outcomes.
- A. Some of the SLOs are not measurable.
 - B. There is a lack of consistency of whether programs/departments are measuring discipline-based SLOs or higher-level program-level SLOs which makes it difficult to aggregate data at the university level.
 - C. Some of the reports lack a connection between program/department SLOs and overarching SLOs at the university level or above.
 - i. In many AARs, there are no explicit connections between the program's learning outcomes and the university's learning goals.
 - ii. Many reports do not mention any direct connections between the program's learning outcomes and the state, national, and international standards/trends.
 - iii. Some reports assess one learning outcome for the year, but do not mention how this learning outcome relates to the overall department assessment plan or to the state, national, and international standards/trends.
 - D. In some reports, there is no explicit connection between each specific learning outcome and the measure.
 - E. Faculty and students in some programs have limited knowledge of the program and/or university learning outcomes.
 - F. There is no mention of student learning outcomes, measures, or results in some reports that were first submitted to outside accredited agencies.

- 3) Data collection.
 - A. The use of indirect measures alone, such as surveys, is not enough for many accrediting agencies.
 - B. In some reports, data collected is not used to explicitly evaluate the learning outcome(s) in the report. Instead it is for a general survey that has no explicit or direct connection to the learning outcome(s) assessed in the report.
 - C. In some reports, both direct and indirect data are collected. However, there is no explicit connection between these two kinds of data and how the two are used systematically to assess each SLO.
 - D. Some programs still rely heavily on multiple-choice questions, grades, or GPAs as the measures of SLOs. These measures alone are not highly regarded by many accrediting agencies.
 - E. Important information about how the data is collected, analyzed, and reported is often not present in many reports. This makes it difficult to know the reliability and validity of the data and the quality of the results.
- 4) Data analysis.
 - A. It is not clear from some reports the extent to which program faculty members are engaged collectively in analyzing and reflecting on the data for the AAR. Thus, it is hard to decipher if the assessment effort is a class assessment by an individual faculty or the annual program assessment by all the faculty members in the program.
 - B. Explicit criteria, such as the VALUE rubrics or their modifications, are not presented in the reports, making it very hard to know the quality of the results reported.
 - C. More faculty involvement in the data collection, analysis, and reflection and more explicit criteria are needed to increase the quality of the study, including the reliability and validity of the data and the results.
- 5) Program changes as a result of the annual assessment.
 - A. Some programs have made changes based on non-reliable or invalid data.
 - B. Some programs have proposed changes that have no direct connections with the annual assessment data or results.
 - C. Some programs have made and/or proposed no changes even though valid assessment data suggest that changes are needed.

- 6) Preparation of the department annual assessment reports.
 - A. Some programs collect the assessment data at the end of the spring semester, and do not have enough time to do an extensive data analysis, reflect on the data, propose meaningful changes, finish writing and editing the report, and submit to the Deans before the July 1 deadline.
 - B. The length of the annual reports varies drastically, from two pages to more than 200 pages.
 - C. The format of the reports differs significantly. Some have followed one of the three options, while others have disregarded all the options.
 - D. The quality of the information in the annual reports also varies a great deal. Sometimes, not enough useful information is provided in order to evaluate the quality and the interpretation of the data, the conclusions of the study, and the proposed program changes.
 - E. Some annual reports, especially those for outside agencies and for the self-study at Sacramento State, offer too much information that has no direct connection to any annual assessment effort in the program.

7. Short term recommendations for Academic Affairs

Make the annual assessment and its report simple, clear and of high quality

- 1) Encourage the Deans, Associate Deans, department chairs/program directors, and college and department assessment coordinators to read good assessment reports recommended by the Office of Academic Program Assessment.
- 2) Recommend that the departments, programs, and colleges collect the data in fall 2010, and use spring 2011 to analyze the data, reflect on the results, and discuss the changes needed to improve student learning. This would give the programs enough time to engage the faculty in the annual assessment and produce a well prepared report.
- 3) Have **ONE** standardized report submission format from each college that would request at least **ONE** example of a measured learning goal for the academic year, regardless whether the program is going through the program review or the accreditation progress. Submission form would include specific instructions so the information and data provided in the reports are of high quality.

- 4) Encourage programs to offer ONE exemplar of a change currently being proposed or implemented based on a previous year's data and results, if there was data collected in a previous academic year.
- 5) Encourage colleges, departments, and programs to link all the SLOs in the AAR to the university SLOs.
- 6) Make the department chairs/program directors, department and college assessment coordinators, and the college Deans aware of the multiple purposes for the annual assessment report, including program review, program improvement, accreditation, budgeting, and planning.
- 7) Use the annual assessment as a learning process for the faculty, the programs, and the colleges.
- 8) Encourage the Deans, Associate Deans, department chairs/program directors, and college and department assessment coordinators to attend workshops and meetings so they can gain a clear understanding of how to conduct an effective and efficient annual assessment and write simple and clear assessment reports.
- 9) Work toward informing all the students in the university about the university learning goals.

8. Short term recommendations for the Office of Academic Program Assessment

Make the annual assessment and its report simple, clear and of high quality

- 1) Recommend at least one excellent assessment report for the Deans, Associate Deans, department chairs/program directors, and college and department assessment coordinators to read.
- 2) Develop examples of good assessment reports and the annual assessment process and provide them to the Deans, Associate Deans, department chairs/program directors, and college and department assessment coordinators so they can conduct effective and efficient annual assessment and write simple and clear assessment reports.
- 3) Use the annual assessment as a learning process for the faculty, the programs, and the colleges.
- 4) Develop effective and efficient assessment workshops and meetings for the faculty, departments, programs, and colleges so they can gain a clear understanding of how to conduct effective and efficient assessment for the classes, the programs, and the university.
- 5) Make these assessment related meetings and workshops encouraging and easy to understand.

9. Short-term recommendations for the Deans/college assessment coordinators

Before submitting the AARs, the Deans should:

- 1) Ensure that the information in the submitted AARs are of high quality.
- 2) Ensure that the submitted AARs are well-written.
- 3) Ensure that the submitted AARs comply with the standardized submission format.

10. Short term recommendations for the department/program chairs, directors, and assessment coordinators

- 1) Encourage all the faculty members to know the program learning outcomes and link their class learning outcomes to the program and the university learning outcomes.
- 2) Make all the students in the department and the program aware of the program learning outcomes and link their class learning outcomes to the program and the university learning outcomes.
- 3) Encourage all the faculty members to reflect on the data collection, data analysis, and the results of the annual assessment effort.
- 4) Use the annual assessment as the data for the 6-year program review

11. Long-term recommendations for Academic Affairs

Continue to make the annual assessment and its report simple, clear and of high quality; use the high quality assessment evidence to inform budgeting, planning, hiring, and many other decision-makings in the university.

- 1) Faculty and department participation
 - A. Encourage and/or fund the use of technology to make the annual assessment more efficient and effective and more directly related to faculty everyday teaching.
 - B. Develop incentives/support for the inclusion of faculty in the university assessment infrastructure, such as the establishment of the faculty assessment fellowships or the establishment of the faculty senate assessment committee, to encourage and support direct faculty involvement and commitment to the annual assessment effort on campus.
 - C. Develop small grants to get faculty actively involved in systemically integrating everyday teaching and learning into the annual assessment effort.
 - D. Encourage colleges/departments to have or include in retreats specific sessions that would focus on assessment efforts.
Information could include but not be limited to:

- i. Develop or update the assessment plan.
 - ii. Set department SLOs.
 - iii. Present how faculty are currently involved in or would like be involved in the annual assessment efforts.
 - iv. Present the best practices for assessment.
 - v. Present how to use syllabi to present to students the SLOs and how each SLO is linked to each class assignment and/or course offerings in the department.
 - E. Send out all the requests and requirements for the AARs to the colleges, departments, and programs first in late April and then in mid September.
 - F. Develop incentives/support for the completion of high quality AARs to the university.
 - G. Require all the departments, programs, and colleges to use the annual assessment data for the 6 year program review on campus.
- 2) Connecting learning outcomes to the department/college/university learning outcomes and to the national/international standards
Encourage colleges, departments, and programs to:
- A. Research the national or international associations or accreditation agencies in the discipline or in higher educations in the U.S. and around the world regarding the learning outcomes the program should consider.
 - B. Update college/department assessment plans with measurable learning outcomes for all the programs in the department and post them on the website.
 - C. Develop matrix for all the programs that would link program SLOs to the university SLOs and to the standards and trends in the discipline.
 - D. Assess one learning outcome at a time, using multiple methods of data collection and analysis.
 - E. Develop explicit criteria, such as rubrics, for the SLOs.
 - F. Develop signature assignments for the SLOs.
- 3) Data collection and analysis
Encourage college, departments, and programs to:
- A. Research the best practices in their discipline regarding the type of data that should be collected (objective vs. subjective measures; direct vs. indirect measures).
 - B. Use technology to make the data collection, data analysis, and data reporting more efficient and effective.

- C. Present specific guidelines as to the type of data and other critical information that should, and should not, be included in the assessment report:
 - i. Avoid using class grades or GPA's.
 - ii. Use high quality projects to directly assess SLOs, including service learning projects, capstone class assignments, undergraduate research projects, and/or portfolios.
 - iii. Use both direct and indirect measures (how they should be used, what they consist of, how are they connected) to study SLOs and link specific SLO to the direct and/or indirect measures and key assignments.
- 4) Preparation and presentation of the department/college annual assessment reports
 - A. Clarify to the colleges/departments the audience and purpose of the annual assessment reports, include these in the request for the reports:
 - i. Provide data to see whether the program is meeting the learning goals and objectives or in need of improvements.
 - ii. Showcase what students have learned in the program.
 - iii. Provide annual data for the 6-year program review on campus.
 - iv. Provide data to assess whether the university is meeting its BA/BS goal.
 - v. Provide evidence for budgeting, planning, faculty-hiring, and other decision-making in the university.
 - vi. Meet the accreditation requirements from WASC and many other accreditation agencies.
 - B. Require OAPA to help the departments, programs, and colleges to meet the above diverse needs.
 - C. Encourage OAPA to create the template and instructions for the production of a standardized AAR.
 - D. Identify the best timing for the data collection, data analysis, data reflection, and the report writing for the AAR so that our departments, programs, and colleges can "close the loop" within the required timeframe.
- 5) Outcome-based assessment and evidence-based claims and decision-making
 - A. Program changes or improvement plans need to be specifically connected to the data and/or results reported in the AAR.
 - B. All other claims and decision-making need to be based on evidence from the annual assessment.

- C. Use high quality annual assessment data and 6-year program review results to inform budgeting and planning in the university.

12. Long-term recommendations for the Office of Academic Program Assessment (OAPA)

- 1) Develop a handbook complete with instructions, FAQs, and examples of best practices for the annual assessment and AARs.
- 2) Offer technical support and develop examples to colleges, departments, and programs to make the annual assessment process more effective and efficient.
- 3) Offer examples of AAR to colleges, departments, and programs to demonstrate how to write a good AAR.
- 4) Encourage colleges, departments, and programs to research the best practices in their discipline regarding how they would get faculty involved in annual program assessment.
- 5) Offer visionary leadership for the program review and assessment for Sacramento State.

13. Long-term recommendations for the Deans/college assessment coordinator and/or department/program chairs, directors, and assessment coordinators

- 1) Research the national or international associations or accreditation agencies in the discipline or in higher educations in the U.S. and around the world regarding the learning outcomes the program should consider.
- 2) Update college/department assessment plans with measurable learning outcomes for all the programs in the department and post them on the website.
- 3) Develop matrix for all the programs that would link program SLOs to the university SLOs and to the standards and trends in the discipline.
- 4) Develop signature assignments for the SLOs. Use high quality projects to directly assess SLOs, including service learning projects, capstone class assignments, undergraduate research projects, and/or portfolios.
- 5) Develop explicit criteria, such as rubrics, for the SLOs.
- 6) Assess one learning outcome at a time, using multiple methods of data collection and analysis.
- 7) Use both direct and indirect measures (how they should be used, what they consist of, how are they connected) to study SLOs and link

specific SLO to the direct and/or indirect measures, the key assignments, and the explicit criteria.

- 8) Use technology to make the data collection, data analysis, and data reporting more efficient and effective.
- 9) Make program changes or improvement plans based on high quality evidence from the annual assessment and the 6-year program review in the college and/or department/program.
- 10) Write simple, clear, and high quality annual assessment reports with the clear understanding of multiple purposes and audiences for the report.
- 11) Use high quality annual assessment data and the 6-year program review results to inform budgeting and planning in the college and/or department/program.
- 12) Make many other important claims and decisions in the college and/or the department/program based on high quality evidence from the annual assessment and the 6-year program review.