



August 16, 2010

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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

TO: College of Arts and Sciences Department Chairs and Program
Directors

FROM: Mary Anne Fitzpatrick *MAF*

RE: Assessment of Student Learning in Major Degree Programs

As you are aware, assessment of student learning in our undergraduate and graduate degree programs is an important responsibility for all programs and colleges at the University of South Carolina. As educators, we must articulate what and how well our students learn to a number of audiences, including accrediting bodies, but primarily to and for ourselves.

Both the College of Arts and Sciences and its constituent departments and programs have significant responsibilities in the assessment process. At the College level, we are responsible for helping departments and programs understand the process and for providing feedback to them on their assessment activities. The College Curriculum Committee continues to provide reviews of assessment activities on an annual basis. But it is the particular responsibility of departments and programs to assess student learning in their degree programs; only departments and programs have the expertise and insight to determine what and how well students learn in the major field of study.

Together, we must ensure that our efforts in assessment are effective. Department chairs and program directors must ensure that a culture conducive to assessment exists in their units: well-designed assessment plans are in place, assessment activities are conducted each year according to the plan in a timely manner, and assessment data is used thoughtfully in decision-making about program improvement and curricular change. Please see the attached checklist for more information.

The College Curriculum Committee will provide comprehensive feedback to you on your assessment plan(s) by November 15. The College looks forward to helping you manage and improve your assessment efforts. For additional information, you may contact Assistant Dean Mary Ann Byrnes at 777-5371.

Attachment

c: Philip Moore, Director, Institutional Assessment and Compliance
Steve Lynn, Senior Associate Dean
Roger Sawyer, Senior Associate Dean
Mary Ann Byrnes, Assistant Dean

Assessment Responsibilities for College of Arts and Sciences Department Chairs and Program Directors

- Establish a culture conducive to assessment and publicly support assessment activities in the department/program.
- Ensure that course syllabi contain student learning outcomes for each course and that syllabi are maintained in the department/program. Learned societies for the various disciplines may have helpful materials or examples of learning outcomes. See also the University's Center for Teaching Excellence at <http://www.sc.edu/cte/>
- Designate responsibility for assessment activities for each degree program within the department/program. One person may have responsibility for more than one degree program if appropriate. Regular committees may be charged with specific assessment duties. Staff may be assigned to assist faculty with assessment duties, but faculty should be the leaders in the assessment process.
- Be sure that assessment leaders in the department or program have access to the Assessment Plan Composer web site at <http://assessmentplan.ipr.sc.edu/default.asp> Mary Ann Byrnes (777-5371, byrnes@sc.edu) can give assessment leaders their usernames and passwords.
- Ensure that a well-designed assessment plan is in place for each degree program and that the plan is entered into the Assessment Plan Composer web site.
- Consult the Assessment Toolbox on the Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance web site at <http://kudzu.ipr.sc.edu/effectiveness/toolbox/>
- Facilitate assessment activities in the department/program, e.g., discuss student learning goals at departmental meetings, ensure that assessment leaders have access for the collection of data, ensure that assessment data are collected.
- Periodically check in with assessment leaders to ensure that assessment activities are scheduled and conducted at appropriate times in the academic year.
- Use assessment data in decision-making about program improvement and curricular change.
- **Ensure compliance with two annual deadlines.**
 - December 15:** Deadline for assessment leaders to revise the current year's plan according to College Curriculum Committee's suggestions.
 - May 15:** Deadline for assessment leaders to submit their results and use of results for the current year and update their plans for the upcoming year. All material should be entered into the Assessment Plan Composer.
- Keep copies of assessment documents in departmental files for use in periodic self-studies and other activities.