

## **2004-2007 Triennial Evaluation Report of the Assessment Process at University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point.**

This report is an evaluation of the assessment process and its responsible subcommittee, the Academic Affairs Assessment Subcommittee for 2004-2007. The report is written in accordance with the University Handbook, Chapter 7-Assessment requirements and addresses the processes and the challenges the assessment process at UWSP encountered.

### **Summer 2004-Summer 2007 Historical Background**

Since the last report in 2004, the Assessment Subcommittee has seen numerous changes in subcommittee composition and elected chairs. In the spring of 2004, the previous assessment chair, whose tenure was six years, retired from UWSP teaching and assessment responsibilities. During the fall, the initial election of a chair resulted in no action or meetings as the elected chair fell ill and no subcommittee actions resulted until the election of a subsequent chair in early November. Since that time, the subcommittee composition has been as listed below.

#### **2004 – 2005 Assessment Subcommittee**

Justin Rueb, Chair (beginning in November)	Rick Wilke
Pat Rothfuss	Kris Hoffenberger
Patricia Holland	Kit Werner
Sue Raab	Doug Forbes
Students: Amy Clark, Courtney Ryan	

#### **2005 – 2006 Assessment Subcommittee**

Justin Rueb, Chair (Fall Semester)	Rick Wilke
Paula DeHart, Interim Chair (Spring Semester)	Steve Bondeson
Bob Mosier	Mark Tolstedt
Kris Hoffenberger	
Students: Courtney Ryan, Jerry Stoeklein, Andy Letson	

#### **2006 – 2007 Assessment Subcommittee**

Paula DeHart, Co-Chair	Justin Rueb (Co-Chair)
Steve Bondeson	Bob Mosier
Kris Hoffenberger	Mark Tolstedt
Meta Reigel	
Students: Andy Letson, Zach Vruwink	

In November 2004, the subcommittee dedicated itself to ensuring that the 7-month hiatus due to retirement and illness would not adversely affect the assessment process in place at UWSP. Although a late start, the subcommittee gathered assessment reports from all departments due in October 2004, with the exception of the Biology

department. All subcommittee evaluation reports of the department assessment reports were forwarded to the affected departments by May 30, 2005. The subcommittee also completed the Wellness assessment survey and Environmental Literacy assessment survey (originally scheduled for fall 2004) during the spring semester of 2005. These reports were finalized in spring of 2006, late due to illness of the initially assigned author.

In September 2005, Justin Rueb announced that he could only be the chair for the fall semester due to his assignment as the International Study Abroad Faculty Leader for London in spring 2006. Accordingly, Paula Dehart agreed to become chair of the subcommittee for the spring of 2006. During the fall of 2006, the chair organized ad hoc committees that represented the General Degree Requirements. The committees were tasked with developing embedded assessment techniques for their respective GDRs. These ad-hoc committees were put on hold in the summer of 2006, as the need for each GDR was reevaluated during 2006-2007. All scheduled department assessment reports were gathered in fall 2005 and the subcommittee evaluations of those reports were forwarded to the respective department during the summer of 2006. Based on the subcommittee recommendation, the 2004-2005 and the 2005-2006 annual UWSP assessment reports were combined into a single report and posted in October of 2006. The 2004-2005 report was again delayed due to the assigned author's illness.

In September 2006, Paula Dehart and Justin Rueb agreed to serve as co-chairs of the assessment subcommittee. In September 2006, a revised assessment schedule was approved by Faculty Senate. However, the schedule was not effectively disseminated to Faculty Chairs and this caused confusion as to what report was due by what department. As a result, five departments failed to turn in any assessment reports to the subcommittee. The subcommittee evaluation reports to the departmental assessment reports were finalized and sent to the affected department by mid-June. Those departments who failed to provide reports were informed of the need to conduct regular assessment

During the last three years (2004-2007), the assessment subcommittee has been faced with several challenges, especially with continuity of the chair's position. Additionally, during the past three years, the subcommittee identified several issues that they felt were directly impacting the effectiveness of the assessment process at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Additionally during these three years, the subcommittee identified several issues that adversely affected the process and implemented new procedures when necessary. These issues, in addition to an AASCU review, led the subcommittee to completely reevaluate the current assessment process at UWSP and to rewrite the assessment section of the University handbook (Chapter 7-Section 3-Assessment). Our evaluation of what has worked in assessment at UWSP, what has adversely impacted our assessment process, and recommendations to overcome those issues comprise the next section.

## **Assessment Process at UWSP**

**Assessment Subcommittee Composition** – The Subcommittee consists of representatives from the Student Government Association, the Division of Student Development, and faculty from the four colleges. The Subcommittee chairperson serves as a voting member of the Academic Affairs Committee.

The subcommittee members have been very motivated and have accomplished the review of over 50 reports during the three years (discussed later). In January 2007, the subcommittee initially proposed that the size of the subcommittee be increased to two faculty members from each college. This increase would reduce the workload of each member, while simultaneously increasing assessment exposure to more individuals at UWSP.

The workload of the chair during 2004-2005 was extremely high. The chair had to call all meetings, create the agenda for each meeting, and coordinate the assessment process of each department, while ensuring assessment of GDRs and interdisciplinary majors. The chair is also an active member of the Academic Affairs committee, requiring weekly attendance. Furthermore, in accordance with assessment policy at the time, all reports were submitted to the subcommittee chair, who then had to review all reports, gather the reviews of two other subcommittee members, and then personally write the summary of the reviews for return to the affected department. The average number of reviews in a given year is 18 subcommittee reports. Prior to fall 2004, the chair was given 25% release time. Due to budget constraints, the subsequent chairs received no such release.

In the fall of 2005, as a condition of Paula Dehart assuming the chair's position, the subcommittee members agreed to write some of the reviews to reduce the workload of the chair. This policy is still in place, but the total workload of the chair is still high. Accordingly, Paula Dehart and Justin Rueb agreed to co-chair the assessment subcommittee. Duties were then divided to reduce overall workload and provide continuity through university accreditation in 2007-2008.

Concerning workload of the subcommittee, the subcommittee members have seen an increase in their workload based on increased assessment collection and reporting. As assessment continues to grow and expand at UWSP, the workload for the subcommittee will again show corresponding growth. This growth has proven somewhat burdensome for the subcommittee comprised of only four individuals from faculty (one from each college) and two from staff (students affairs and Provost representative).

### **Recommendations and Anticipated Course of Actions**

Given the above situation, the subcommittee has generated the following recommendations and anticipated course of actions concerning the Assessment Subcommittee chair's position and responsibility, and the subcommittee structure.

1. The Assessment subcommittee chair position should be associated with a 25% release time or equivalent stipend, as has been the policy in the past. Discussions with the 2006-2007 Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs/Provost suggest this recommendation is possible, but must be cleared with the incoming Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs /Provost.

2. The assessment subcommittee should be enlarged. The subcommittee should be increased from one faculty member per college to at least two faculty members per college and one open position for the subcommittee chair, besides the two staff and two student positions currently on the subcommittee. This recommendation was originally forwarded to academic affairs this past spring (2007), but was returned to the subcommittee because it requires a constitutional change. The subcommittee will proceed with a request to change the constitution to increase subcommittee size this fall (2007).

### **Program Assessment Schedule, Department Compliance, Feedback and Dissemination**

During the past three years, various department chairs often claimed that they did not know they had a report due or they were unsure of what report was due. Although the assessment schedule is posted on the university website, the schedule was not often consulted and the schedule has occasionally been outdated. Additionally, the old schedule was not equitable in that some departments had 5-6 reports during 8 years and other departments had 7 reports due during a similar 8-year period.

As a result, full compliance by departments was not achieved. Many departments stated that their confusion caused them to submit their report late or in some instances, they failed to submit any report at all. A couple departments just felt that assessment reports were not critical items that warranted their department's primary attention. Furthermore, many departments (approximately 70%) felt that the reports were cumbersome and often did not add a lot to their actual assessment program. These attitudes were expressed by a large number of the departments, despite the majority of the departments still complying with due reports. In response, the Assessment Subcommittee addressed these perceptions by making Assessment Process changes, later approved by the Faculty Senate.

A review of current policies during the past three years revealed several shortcomings that caused assessment to not be accepted as well as it should be. First, most departments saw assessment as a burden and not as a valuable tool in enhancing student learning. This situation was a direct result of the subcommittee's inability to implement corrective action for departmental noncompliance. Since departments did not have any requirement to forward beyond the assessment subcommittee, many department assessments were very restricted and cursory in nature. Additionally, assessment policies prevented the subcommittee from forwarding any concerns to the responsible dean or to the provost office, limiting the effectiveness of the subcommittee. The subcommittee could only forward generalized findings and could not identify any department for their

noncompliance with assessment policies. This situation made departmental accountability essentially nonexistent.

To overcome these oversights, the subcommittee chair sent out an email every fall to remind chairs of their required reports due for that October. Additional emails followed until the final deadlines in December occurred. The chair sent one additional email to all noncompliant departments in early January to solicit any final reports.

The subcommittee noted that the difficulty in obtaining the reports, evaluating all the reports and then responding to the department in a timely fashion was just not possible given the many conflicting demands of the subcommittee membership. During the past three years, the assessment subcommittee reviews of the reports were returned to the departments as much as a year later than when the departmental report was originally scheduled. This delay made the feedback incorporation before the next assessment report limited to only one of the two years since last report. The subcommittee felt that other alternatives were needed.

### **Recommendations and Anticipated Course of Actions**

1. Update and Post the Program schedule annually: The program assessment schedule was revised in spring 2006 and approved by the Faculty Senate to update the old schedule and align the schedule with department Program Self-Study requirements. During the fall of 2007, the subcommittee realigned the schedule so that every department would undergo the same assessment cycle. Every two years, each department must file a given report to the subcommittee. The eight-year cycle starts with a Program Assessment Plan based upon the year in which the Program Self-Study (determined initially by the Vice Chancellor's office) is scheduled, followed by two Assessment Reports, and then the Program Self Study. The cycle then continues in this manner.

2. Annual Departmental Notification: The Assessment Subcommittee will notify each affected department of the report due to the subcommittee report in October of that year by the first week of September to ensure that reports are submitted on time. A secondary notification will be submitted approximately one week before the reports are due.

3. The Dissemination of All Departmental Reports Should Be Forwarded to the Responsible Dean and the Provost for Review. The Faculty Senate approved the newest version of the UWSP Handbook (Chapter 7-Section 3-UWSP Assessment plan) on May 2, 2007, which was extensively revised by the Assessment Subcommittee. The handbook now requires that all assessment reports be forwarded to the responsible Dean and to the Provost's office.

4. The Feedback Loop for Departmental reports must be sped up. After extensive review of the assessment report feedback timeline, the subcommittee has developed an optional alternative process for assessment reporting, approved May 2, 2007. In the spring of 2006, the subcommittee proposed that each department would have the option

of presenting their assessment report in presentation format (e.g., PowerPoint, etc.). The presentation slides would be submitted in lieu of, but at the same time as, the regular assessment report. The subcommittee chair would then schedule the department and the assessment subcommittee for a 45-minute presentation time during which the department would present their assessment plan or report findings. The subcommittee could then express their concerns and a collegial exchange of ideas should follow. The subcommittee feels this approach would lighten administrative demands on the department, as well as get them more actively involved in the assessment process. Furthermore, the immediate feedback on both parties' part would reduce the current time delay of over 6 months between assessment report submission and the subcommittee's assessment feedback.

5. Assessment Process Awareness and Acceptance at UWSP must be improved. Enlargement of the Assessment Subcommittee should increase the number of people actively involved with the process, while simultaneously making their departments more aware of the need for assessment. Additionally, the reinstatement of the GDR ad-hoc committees after the GDR review is finalized will allow for interdisciplinary assessment across the curriculum. The subcommittee should ensure that all future annual assessment reports and other critical assessment reports, such as the current document, be forwarded in hard copy to each department chair, responsible dean, and the Provost office.

6. Annual Assessment Report must be become a viable mechanism for change, rather than its current descriptive form. To date, the annual assessment report has simply been a report on what was done and the results. Little information was provided as to how these assessments could benefit student learning. Future reports must interpret the reported result for use in determining, what if anything needs to change to improve student learning.