

California State University, Stanislaus
Assessing the Assessment Program

Timetable

CSU Stanislaus conducts both internal and external assessments of the effectiveness of the assessment program. The timetable is as follows:

Fall 2003	External	Informal	Barbara Cambridge, American Association for Higher Education	Complete
	Internal	Informal	President Hughes, and Provost Dauwalder	Complete
Fall 2004	External	Informal	Barbara Cambridge, American Association for Higher Education	Complete
Spring 2005 through Spring 2007	Internal	Informal	WASC Leadership Team Review of WASC Standards and Assessment Requirements	Complete
Fall 2007	External	Formal	Mary Allen, Consultant	Complete
Spring 2008	Internal	Formal	Assessment Leadership Team – begin formal review of SUR	In Process
	Internal	Formal	Assessment Leadership Team – begin formal review of APR	In Process
Fall 2008	External	Formal	WASC – Capacity and Preparatory Site Visit (October 1-3)	
	Internal	Formal	Assessment Leadership Team – conclude formal review of SUR	
	Internal	Formal	Assessment Leadership Team – conclude formal review of APR	
Spring 2009	External	Informal	Assessment Forum – External Presenter to be determined	
Spring 2010	External	Formal	WASC – Educational Effectiveness Site Visit (March 3-5)	
Fall 2010	Internal	Informal	After WASC Re-accreditation Report	
Spring 2013	External	Formal	External Reviewer to be determined	

Elements for Review

Elements for review of the assessment program include the following:

1. collective values for the importance, purposes, and benefits of assessment
2. commitment to continuous quality improvement
3. shared responsibility for assessment and respective roles of faculty, administration, staff, students, and external community
4. faculty and senior administration leadership in student learning assessment
5. progress in direct measures of student learning
6. progress in methods for evaluating institutional quality
7. progress in documenting uses of assessment information for quality improvement
8. institutional structures/organization in support of assessment
9. institutional resources in support of assessment
10. how assessment affects faculty

Each review results in specific recommendations for improvement of the assessment program. These recommendations are reviewed by the faculty leadership, faculty governance committees, student governance committees, and administration for appropriate action. The recommendations and actions taken in response are posted on the website of Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance.

2003 Review of Assessment

An internal review of the university's structure in support of assessment and quality assurance occurred and was reviewed informally by Dr. Barbara Cambridge during the 2003 President's Assessment Summit. Her observations focused on the following major issues of presidential leadership, organizational structures, and university-wide understanding and commitment to assessment.

Presidential Leadership

In 2003, President Marvalene Hughes identified a singular and important strategic goal that guided the university in realizing its commitment to student learning and assessment "...to renew, strengthen, and expand its commitment to a learning-centered strategic plan by developing and implementing a model of institutional assessment that engages all units and programs on all operational levels..."

Organizational Structures

As a result of the 2003 internal and external reviews, in fall 2004, CSU Stanislaus restructured its organizational approach for assessment of institutional quality. The Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance, led by the Associate Vice President for Assessment and Quality Assurance, was created for the purpose of providing vigorous leadership and coordination for university-wide assessment and quality assurance.

This allowed a refocusing of the Office of Institutional Research on service and mobilized its resources to enhance the amount and sophistication of its institutional research capacity. A previous structure attempted to link – in one office – strategic planning, assessment, accountability, and institutional research. While connections among these elements remain fundamental to the university's effectiveness, an assessment of organizational outcomes resulting from this model illustrated that this approach diluted the myriad and complex functions associated with each of these areas, especially with regard to assessment of student learning.

In addition, the formation of a university-wide Assessment Leadership Team, complemented by assessment coordinators from academic and administrative units was proposed and is under review.

University-wide Commitment to Assessment

Although the early focus of assessment was primarily in academic affairs and academic assessment of educational effectiveness, CSU Stanislaus' commitment to learning-centered required greater understanding and communication across University division. A second President's Summit was planned, with a focus on assessment across the university's four major divisions.

Faculty support for assessment was also a concern. Some faculty and staff were suspicious of assessment, wary of workload and budget issues, and concerned about how assessment will be designed and carried out. As a result, the faculty coordinator for the assessment of student learning worked with faculty and the AVPAQA worked with staff to address these issues and ensure the campus worked in positive ways in support of assessment. Faculty-led efforts through academic governance structure, combined with administrative support, would continue to help to allay these fears and focus our attention on the shared value of improving learning and teaching.

2004 Review of Assessment

In 2004, Dr. Barbara Cambridge led the Second President's Assessment Summit. Her observations of assessment at CSU Stanislaus included overall progress, organizational structure, relationships of assessment to strategic planning, assessment methods, and students' role in assessment.

Overall Progress

Significant progress was made in assessment since her visit the previous year. This progress was apparent in the number and quality of assessment activities, the campus community's understanding and views toward fostering improvement in learning, and the organizational structure for assessment.

Organizational Structure

The new organizational structure and new leadership have given vitality to assessment efforts. However, in the absence of a university-wide assessment committee, the AVPAQA must work through informal connections, rather than formal university consultation. An assessment committee would be essential to promote, communicate, advocate, and review assessment initiatives.

Relationship of Assessment and Strategic Planning

The assessment of the university's achievement of its strategic planning goals may be too complex to be manageable and sustainable. Fewer priorities (2-3 at the most) would allow the university to concentrate its energy into stronger assessment and make a difference in quality.

Direct and Indirect Assessment Methods

Most of the university's assessment methods tend to be indirect, gathering information from surveys and self-report instruments. The University's challenge is to increase its efforts (through departments, the University Writing Committee, and the University Faculty Development Committee) to support faculty to use a broad variety of approaches to the assessment of student learning, including possibly in-class essays, process-oriented research papers, dialog journals, on-line chat rooms, portfolios, and capstone courses/seminars in the major.

Students' Role in Assessment

The challenge for most universities is to increase students' understanding of assessment and how engaging in assessment during their college years not only improves the quality of teaching and learning but also enhances their skill set for in their employment.

2005 through 2007 Review of Assessment

Various faculty and administrative groups conducted an informal evaluation of the assessment program at CSU Stanislaus as part of its self study for reaccreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Preliminary Self-Review of WASC Standards and Criteria for Review

The university campus evaluated its progress under each of the four WASC standard and criteria for review. For those items related to assessment, findings indicated strong consensus among campus groups with regard to the importance and urgency of addressing the following:

- Developing indicators and evidence for achievement of educational objectives
- Developing clearer requirements for student achievement at entry-level and graduation
- Evaluating student use of library and information resources
- Evaluating student co-curricular learning goals
- Demonstrating that faculty take collective responsibility for demonstrating attainment of student learning goals and use of results for program improvement
- Demonstrating that planning processes are informed by analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, evidence of educational effectiveness, and student learning

2007 – Review of Assessment

In October 2007, Dr. Mary Allen, a nationally recognized leader in assessment of student learning and author of several textbooks on general education, conducted a comprehensive review of assessment efforts at CSU Stanislaus. After three days of in-depth interviews with many groups and individuals, she issued a report organized around three broad questions. Overall, Dr. Allen indicated that CSU Stanislaus has demonstrated many excellent accomplishments and is making substantial progress in implementing assessment effectively.

Has CSU Stanislaus institutionalized assessment?

Examples of Positive Achievements

1. Substantial progress toward institutionalization.
2. Strong and multi-layered infrastructure to support assessment.
3. Widespread campus commitment to improving quality through assessment.
4. Excellent commitment to the *Principles of Assessment of Student Learning*.
5. Program Assessment Coordinators as a highly effective method for the assessment of student learning outcomes for academic programs.
6. Strong faculty leadership for assessment by the Senate Executive Committee and the Assessment of Student Learning Subcommittee.
7. Centrality of assessment of student learning in the Academic Program Review Process.
8. An emerging "culture of evidence."

Areas for Continued Development

9. Permanent fiscal investment in assigned time for Program Assessment Coordinators and Faculty Coordinator.
10. Immediate attention to the assessment of the general education program.
11. Revived assessment of student learning goals for graduate education.
12. Greater alignment of the Academic Program Review and the Student Learning Assessment processes and reporting.
13. Greater use of external reviewers, with disciplinary and assessment expertise, in the Academic Program Review process.
14. Integration of assessment as an important service component into the recognition and personnel review processes.
15. Increased student involvement and awareness of assessment activities and outcomes.

Do the faculty and administrators have a common understanding of their shared responsibilities and roles in assessment?

Examples of Positive Achievements

16. The roles and responsibilities for assessment were developed through shared governance and widely understood by faculty and administration.
17. Faculty respect positive support provided by the Faculty Assessment Coordinator and professionals in the Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance.

Areas for Continued Development

18. More visible leadership of the Department Chairs in involving departmental faculty in assessment activities and outcomes.
19. Greater leadership role of the Deans for ensuring on-going assessment support.
20. More visible statements of support for assessment achievements by President and Provost.

Has the campus implemented assessment effectively?

Examples of Positive Achievements

21. Faculty recognition of their role in leading assessment of their academic programs.
22. Positive momentum, with Assessment Council and Program Assessment Coordinators deserving credit for much of the progress related to academic programs.
23. Websites as repository for assessment efforts.
24. Assessment Leadership Team for understanding institution-wide assessment efforts and use in institutional improvement.
25. Support Unit Review Process for non-instructional units linked to student learning/success.

Areas for Continued Development

26. Increased understanding of assessment for College committees that provide feedback on Academic Program Reviews.
27. Development of multi-year plans that cycle through outcomes over a 4-5 year period.
28. Faculty development support for assessment, with special expertise provided by the Faculty Development Director.
29. Provision of institutional data by the Office of Institutional Research and increased use of institutional research data by faculty and governance groups for assessment purposes.

Note:

Non-instructional programs may require more support and training, but this assessment review did not provide for sufficient evaluative depth to draw conclusions.