

## Impetus for the Assessment Academy Project

Creighton University has and remains committed to "Growing a Culture of Assessment." Creighton's historical approach to assessment was and is both a top down and grass roots approach; that is assessment is administratively supported but faculty-driven. This approach is consistent with organizational structures and culture but often resulted in autonomous, independent assessment efforts, with few (if any) common measures of student learning and a general lack of assessment outside the traditional classroom.

Preparation for our 2007 Accreditation Visit, in coordination with the University Assessment Committee, identified three needs that should be addressed to improve our "culture of assessment:" (1) Collaboration among assessment efforts, particularly around (2) articulation and measurement of values and valued outcomes, (3) that capture the dynamic and holistic educational experience of our students. To meet those needs, a proposal was drafted for the inaugural class of the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning that included four foci: Assessing Values, University-level Learning Outcomes Assessment, Bridging of Curricular and Co-Curricular Learning, and a rich Peer Review of Assessment Practices.

## Assessing Values

Creighton University has celebrated its Catholic, Jesuit heritage for over 125 years; in the past, the Jesuits were the leaders of value-based education at the institution. Over the past years, they have worked hard to collaborate with the non-Jesuits who work at Creighton in order to encourage those lay people to pick up the mantle of embedding the Ignatian values (and pedagogy) that are the hallmark of Jesuit education and to perpetuate Ignatian values in the absence of a critical mass of Jesuits. Our need to demonstrate student acquisition of values outcomes necessitates a comprehensive, campus-wide initiative that frames student acquisition of Ignatian values as the work of each individual within the university community. Additionally, this campus-wide initiative needed to evidence itself within each school and college's programs and be systematically linked to the overarching University-level Learning Outcomes. Administratively, a "Resolution on the Catholic-Jesuit Mission of Creighton University" was passed by Academic (university-level governing body) Council. Each school and college has identified its plan to implement the recommendations of this resolution (December 2008), and the University Assessment Committee has been tasked with assessing the implementation of these values-centric activities. Additionally, two of the six University-level Learning Outcomes are explicitly tied to Jesuit values, and all six outcomes are embedded within a larger document that contextualizes the Jesuit, Catholic nature of our institution.

## University-Level Learning Outcomes/Assessment

Beginning with a distillation of the institution's core values and related learning outcomes (i.e., review of university documents, mission statement, presidential convocations, school/college learning outcomes) in 2007, a committee began the process of identifying commonalities across each academic unit. A draft of 'common' university-level outcomes was distributed to each academic and co-curricular unit of the university whereby they "mapped" these outcomes relative to their individual units' mission, outcomes, and/or learning goals. Following this review, the drafted statement of six outcomes was distributed to the chief academic officer and the president. The six university-level outcomes have been reviewed, approved, and disseminated—a copy of the larger document, which includes the context and mission-centered nature of these learning outcomes, may be found at [\[smentacademy/universityleveloutcomes/index.php\]\(http://www.creighton.edu/aea/higherlearningcommissionasses-\). Equally important, the campus is engaging in conversations regarding university assessment and the common learning outcomes. Specifically, a newly formed-Campus Conversations sub-committee of the University Assessment Committee met with an identified 'assessment group' within each academic unit during the 2008-2009 academic year. As administrative support is firmly established and given the faculty-driven culture of assessment, the 2009-2010 academic year has focused on identifying Faculty Champions of/for assessment, who will participate in a ½ day assessment workshop and help inform our subsequent campus assessment efforts.](http://www.creighton.edu/aea/higherlearningcommissionasses-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

## Bridging Curricular and Co-Curricular Learning

In recognition of the dynamic and holistic educational experiences of our students and the "high impact" on student learning achieved through various forms of experiential learning, Creighton University desired to integrate and assess curricular and co-curricular programs, activities, and experiences that lead to student learning. Building upon the previous shared educational/living experience of a semester-long immersion in the Dominican Republic, two new initiatives were developed in 2008-2009, between the Student Services Division and the College of Arts and Sciences: Freshman Leadership Program's connection to the Communication 152 course and the Faculty Partners Program, nationally recognized for their "outstanding partnerships between student affairs professionals and academic affairs." Collectively these programs and instructional

efforts have led to some early models and sample assessment rubrics. This programmatic effort is part of a larger campus effort to systematically collect data on all forms of community engagement and service-learning, which frequently involves co-curricular learning; thereby, identifying other potential partnerships and models of co-curricular assessments of student learning (e.g., Office of Interprofessional Scholarship, Service, and Education).

## Peer Review of Assessment Practices

As Creighton University moves toward greater "transparency of assessment practices" and more "public sharing of our evidence of student learning," we move away from independently submitted annual assessment reports to on-line templates for school-wide, program-level reporting. Drawing upon the work of CHEA-recognized work of the University of Northern Arizona, the 2008 annual reports were analyzed in the hopes of creating baseline assessments and identifying some "best practices." However, the variability in what and how the data was collected and reported indicated that Creighton would benefit from a

"simpler beginning." Borrowing from the work of Marquette University, a simple web-based grid allows for the identification and posting of program-level assessment goals, plans, measures, and reporting. For sample, see [www.creighton.edu/grad-school/aboutus/assessment/index.php](http://www.creighton.edu/grad-school/aboutus/assessment/index.php). A University Assessment sub-committee is working with the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment on developing an electronic repository for all (annual) assessment data, institutional research, and faculty (development) resources. As we grow our "culture of assessment," it is critical that faculty are provided (and become the sources of) an assessment "tool kit," "best practices" and assessment consultation for our learning community.

## Continuing/Future Directions

As our four-year Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning Project concludes, the work of "Growing a Culture of Assessment at Creighton University" continues to expand, particularly through Faculty (Assessment) Champions, a rich cadre of Peer Reviewers and Campus Experts, and a transparent and more comprehensive reporting system. These, and other (e.g., University Planning, Policies and Procedures, Reflective Evaluation on University Assessment) efforts will continue to be led, guided, and/or encouraged by the members of the University Assessment Committee.

## University-Level Learning Outcomes

All Creighton graduates will demonstrate:

1. **Disciplinary competence and/or professional proficiency.**
2. **Critical thinking skills.**
3. **Ignatian values, to include but not limited to a commitment to an exploration of faith and the promotion of justice.**
4. **The ability to communicate clearly and effectively.**
5. **Deliberative reflection for personal and professional formation.**
6. **The ability to work effectively across race, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, and sexual orientation.**