TO: John P. Schlegel, S.J
FROM: University Assessment Committee
      Scott A. Chadwick, Chair
SUBJECT: Executive Summary - 2003 Annual Assessment Reports
DATE: February 12, 2004

This memo has three purposes:

1. To provide you a summary of the state of assessment at the college, school, and division levels.
2. To make visible university-level assessment issues.
3. To request your feedback on the University Assessment Committee’s (UAC) plans for action based on the reports we received.

Summary of the State of Assessment

1. Every Dean, and the Vice President for Student Services, produced an Assessment Report for 2003. Based on our historical records, this is the first time all Deans have produced Assessment Reports in the same year. It is also the first time a division outside of Academic Affairs or Health Sciences produced an Annual Assessment Report.

2. With the exception of COBA, those schools, and departments within CCAS, who undergo external accreditation, have solid assessment programs for the requirements set out by their accrediting bodies. COBA’s accrediting body has articulated their new assessment standards within the last year. COBA is working steadily, and making good progress, to satisfy those standards within the time period allowed.

3. There exist some departments within CCAS (e.g., Communication Studies) who have developed strong assessment programs without the pressure from external accreditors. Prior to your convocation address earlier this week, the UAC was prepared to request a statement from you regarding the importance of assessment in order to help develop a culture of assessment for other non-accredited departments and programs. However, we believe your comments about assessment in your convocation will serve that purpose.
4. Several schools, including the School of Medicine, the School of Dentistry, and the School of Pharmacy and Health Professions, have strategically built assessment into their bureaucratic structure, providing dedicated financial and human capital resources for assessment efforts.

5. With some exceptions in the Health Sciences, students by and large are uninformed about the process and significance of assessment and are not actively incorporated into assessment processes.

6. With two exceptions, no school, college, or division has integrated the assessment of Ignatian values into their assessment plans. The School of Dentistry has identified goals, objectives, and metrics related to Ignatian values. The School of Pharmacy and Health Professions is developing the assessment of those values, integrating them into its existing assessment plan and curriculum feedback loop. However, no unit can say with surety that whatever values (beyond professional values) are being taught are being learned and enacted by their students.

University-Level Assessment Issues

1. The issue of assessment-specific resources was raised in several ways.

   A. First, Deans see the value of strategically allocating financial and human capital resources to assessment efforts, and all Deans have done that to some, or a great, extent. However, concerns exist about the availability of financial resources in the future, and if those funds should be allocated separately or as part of the operating budgets for each school and department.

   B. Second, if faculty are expected to embed classroom and programmatic assessment into their workload, current reward structures, including Rank and Tenure, need to be modified to reward their efforts.

2. No common assessment lexicon exists at Creighton University. Flexibility within colleges, schools, and divisions must be maintained, but we also need to be able to easily communicate across unit boundaries.

3. Persons and units interested in learning from successful assessment programs have zero visibility to assessment plans, reports, and evidence of success from those programs, other than via their informal networks around campus.

4. There exists a need for a university-wide, central location to which persons and programs can turn to share and learn about best practices, seek assessment assistance, and gain access to assessment experts within other schools and colleges. We support The Office for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (ETLA) acting in that capacity.

5. Departments without external accreditiation pressures, and who have made little progress, need to hear, from you, their Vice Presidents, and Deans, the clear and forceful message that assessment must be advanced in a timely fashion.
6. New financial resources specifically budgeted for assessment are needed by many units on campus, in addition to their normal operating budgets.

Plans for Action Based on the Annual Assessment Reports
1. We plan to continue requesting Annual Assessment Reports, with two changes for next year:
   
   A. Move from paper-based reports to digital reports in an attempt to reduce the time required for review and feedback, and
   
   B. Revise the report format to allow easier cross-unit comparison and university-level summation while retaining reporting flexibility necessary for individual units.

2. We plan to develop a Creighton University Assessment Lexicon, including cross-references to translate synonymous terms and phrases.

3. We see value in creating a firewall-protected, Web-based, interactive assessment database for internal use. However, we do not want to impose this database upon the university. Thus, we need your assistance in gaining buy-in and participation from units throughout the university.

4. We understand that ETLA is planning to initiate a themed approach for their efforts during the 2004 – 2005 academic year. The Office’s theme will center on assessing values. We plan to work in conjunction with ETLA to improve the university’s ability to assess Ignatian and other important values for our students to hold and enact.

Cc: Cam E. Enarson, M.D.
    Chris M. Wiseman, J.D.

Attachments: Memos to Annual Assessment Report authors