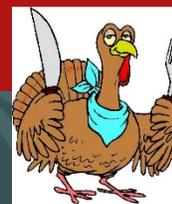Happy Thanksgiving

ASSESSMENT MATTERS

TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

We got some terrific feedback from our last Assessment Matters Newsletter in which we summarized our assessment plan rubric and some of the most common problem areas. But some of you are wondering, where did that rubric even come from? Why are we doing all of this academic assessment stuff anyway? So we thought a history lesson was needed to explain how all of this started and how we got to this point in our assessment process.

"It was a steamy night in the summer, 2006…" No, just kidding, but the big assessment push DID start with the Spellings Commission report in September, 2006. The formation of the **Commission on the Future of Higher Education**, also known

> ACCREDITATION AGENCIES SHOULD MAKE PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES, INCLUDING COMPLETION RATES AND STUDENT LEARNING, THE CORE OF THEIR ASSESSMENT AS A PRIORITY OVER INPUTS OR PROCESSES.
> (SPELLINGS COMMISSION REPORT)

as the **Spellings Commission**, was announced on September 19, 2005, by U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The nineteen-member commission was charged with recommending a national strategy for reforming post-secondary education, with a particular focus on how well colleges and universities are preparing students for the 21st-century workplace, as well as a secondary focus on how well high schools are preparing the students for post-secondary education. In the report, released on September 26, 2006, the Commission focused on four key areas: **access, affordability** (particularly for non-traditional students), the standards of **quality**

in instruction, and the **accountability** of institutions of higher learning to their constituencies (students, families, taxpayers, and other investors in higher education).

Prior to the 2006 push, assessment began getting more attention at UA around 1995, as one of ABOR's strategic missions was to improve the quality of undergraduate education. Some value-added assessments, primarily in writing, were developed to measure institutional impact through repeated assessment of the same qualities on the same students done at various points in a student's career. By 2000, a new general education program was in place and the Academic Program Review (APR) process asked each program to report intended student outcomes, program goals, faculty involvement in assessment, data-collection methods, application of assessment results of learning to curricular improvement, amongst a few other items. The Student Assessment Coordinating Committee (SACC) was formed to offer symposiums on assessment. In the early 2000's, the first website for reporting on outcomes assessment was created, with pages for all degree programs. These pages were reviewed by members of SACC and feedback was provided to the programs. By May, 2008, the SACC was dissolved, mainly due to personnel turnover, and the Provost's office formed the Assessment Coordinating Council (ACC). Composed of Associate Deans or their designee from each college, the role of this council included coordinating resources for campus assessment activities, serving as a cross-campus forum for exchange of ideas, and advising the Provost on matters related to assessment and evaluation.

2010 was the breakout year for assessment.

- The Office of Instruction and Assessment was formed.
- The UA Assessment webpages were redesigned.
- APR Assessment Review became more rigorous and required follow-up visits and improvement plans.
- The ACC developed a detailed rubric for scoring both APR plans as well as webpages.

The original rubric was written by the faculty members of the ACC. Although it has undergone many revisions in wording, the criteria are the same as the original rubric. You could say that as programs' assessment plans became more sophisticated, so too, did the evaluation rubric. By 2015, the ACC had completed its charge and was disbanded. Currently, there is an institutional Assessment Leadership Team (ALT) comprised of not just members of the academic community, but also from Student Affairs and the UA Libraries. The ALT meets regularly during the academic year to discuss current assessment-related projects across campus.

> WHEN THE ASSESSMENT TEAM USES THE RUBRIC TO EVALUATE YOUR PROGRAM, IT IS FOR FORMATIVE FEEDBACK, NOT JUDGMENT!

The 2017-2018 academic year marked the completion of the first 7-year cycle of required assessment reporting in the APR. The assessment website has been deactivated and replaced with a commercial product, Taskstream by Watermark, as we needed more capacity and analytics of assessment results. Assessment at the UA has grown, painfully sometimes, and matured to the beginning of a robust program. *Yes, we do assessment for accountability. But that accountability is not just to our accreditors, it is to our students and their families.* When a prospective student comes to visit and asks, "Why is your program so great? How is it better than the others like it at other institutions?", you can point to your assessment findings and _prove_ to that person how well your program prepares students in that area. When the Higher Learning Commission visits us in 2020, we need to have every program accounted for in Taskstream, with learning outcomes, curriculum maps, assessment plans, findings and action plans.

Over the last 20 years we have put in place a *process*. This *process* has been improved upon and updated since the last HLC visit, but let's BEAR DOWN and show that Wildcat spirit and "get 'er done!"

Announcements

The new Assessment Website is scheduled to go live the week of January 7, 2019. These new pages will contain a multitude of resources to assist you in your assessment efforts. If you need to save or move anything from the current website, assessement.arizona.edu, to Taskstream, we suggest you do so by the end of the semester.

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Register Today

6th Annual Arizona Assessment Conference

The Arizona Assessment Conference is an opportunity to bring together assessment professionals in higher education throughout Arizona. Please join us this year at Glendale Community College.

Conference Schedule
Friday, March 8, 2019 12:30 pm - 5:00 pm   Saturday, March 9, 2019 8:00 am - 3:30 pm

Location: Glendale Community College, Student Union 6000 W Olive Ave   Glendale, AZ 85302

Natasha Jankowski, Director and Research Assistant Professor with the Department of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, has presented at numerous national conferences and institutional events, and written various reports for NILOA. Her main research interests include assessment and evaluation, organizational evidence use, and evidence-based storytelling. She holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education from the University of Illinois, an M.A. in Higher Education Administration from Kent State University, and a B.A. in philosophy from Illinois State University. She previously worked for GEAR UP Learning Centers at Western Michigan University and worked with the Office of Community College Research and Leadership studying community colleges and public policy.

Terry Rhodes received his B.A. from Indiana University at Bloomington and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Before moving into national higher education work, he was a faculty member for twenty-five years. Dr. Rhodes is currently Vice President for the Office of Quality, Curriculum and Assessment at the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) where he focuses on the quality of undergraduate education, access, general education, and assessment of student learning. He is also the executive director of the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project and director of the annual AAC&U General Education Institute.

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