Section 1 - Introduction and Overview

1. Introduction

This Assessment Plan updates the plan originally established by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 1995. This document describes the process by which the University has accomplished its assessment mission in the recent past and how it will attempt to meet its assessment needs in the future.

UW-Platteville is a comprehensive public institution enrolling approximately 5,500 students in three colleges: Business, Industry, Life Science, and Agriculture; Liberal Arts and Education; and Engineering, Mathematics, and Science. The university offers Bachelor's degrees in fifty-five programs and Master's degrees in four programs. The university shares in the mission of the University of Wisconsin System and in the Core Mission of the University Cluster, as well as bearing responsibility for its own Select Mission. The three mission statements are included in Appendix 1.

In one form or another, assessment activities at UWP have existed for more than two decades. For the most part, these efforts have been directed by the faculty rather than imposed by the university administration. This long-standing commitment to this principle of faculty-based assessment continues to drive institutional efforts. A brief history of UWP's assessment activities is presented in Section 2 of this plan. In addition, Appendix 2 documents the scope of university assessment activities in more recent years.

This assessment tradition includes a variety of activities at different institutional levels. For example, the Academic Planning Council (APC) and the University Undergraduate Curriculum Commission (UUCC) routinely review most academic departments - beyond any on-going review processes within the programs themselves. Assessment efforts in the basic skills area of the General Education Program date from at least 1982; although campus-wide efforts remained somewhat fragmented and sporadic for a decade, assessment procedures have been more systematic since the early 1990s. The Assessment Oversight Committee (AOC) and the UUCC have undertaken several efforts to broaden the scope of assessing the liberal studies area within General Education since the mid-1990s.

This plan reaffirms the university's commitment to academic assessment. It collates and refines existing assessment practices, provides direction for the assessment of learning outcomes, and integrates these elements into a comprehensive effort. The plan is intended to not only document ongoing institutional activities, but to aid in the development of a dynamic assessment culture at UWP. To these ends, the Assessment Plan plays an integral role in maintaining the institution's commitment to educational excellence.
2. Overview

This plan accords equal importance to all three phases in the assessment process.

- Identifying and articulating operational goals and objectives implicit in the university mission statement.
- Developing and implementing techniques and instruments by which achievement of these goals and objectives can be measured.
- Using the observed results of the implemented assessment techniques to improve program quality, quantity and/or effectiveness.

What follows is organized into sections 2-5 that describe what we've accomplished historically as an institution, our current assessment activities, and what we will attempt to accomplish in the future within the framework of the primary mission areas of the university. Five appendices are attached to the end.

Section 2 provides the historical and philosophical context within which the plan was initially developed. The section describes UWP's past assessment experiences, particularly as they support current and future assessment activities. It also explains how assessment relates to the university mission and strategic plan, and identifies principles that guide assessment discussions at UWP.

Section 3 describes plans for assessing each of four broad educational components at UWP - the basic skills, the liberal studies, individual baccalaureate and graduate degree program areas, and student life. Each of the four component plans details how the three assessment steps are to be followed for particular educational activities.

Section 4 focuses on the processes by which the assessment plan is implemented. Principal facets of the section include identifying the individuals and entities responsible for implementing various components of the plan, specifying oversight and monitoring procedures, and indicating how the assessment plan itself is assessed.

Section 5 summarizes the assessment plan. This section addresses the five evaluative questions posed by the North Central Association (now the Higher Learning Commission).

Section 2 - Historical and Philosophical Perspectives

1. History
Assessment efforts at UW-Platteville have evolved over more than two decades. (John C. Simonson, "UW-Platteville Basic Skills Assessment Final Report", submitted to the UUCC, January 1984 (photocopy)) However, assessment activities were sporadic until the early 1990s. Much of this Section 2 is devoted to anecdotal descriptions of specific assessment projects as well as multi-year efforts to assess aspects of the institution's General Education Program.

Systematic and campus-wide assessment dates primarily from the early 1980s, with UW-P's participation in the UW-System's task force on assessment. In addition to identifying basic principles to guide the assessment program at UWP, participation in the System-wide task force provided the impetus for pilot assessment projects on campus. In the early 1990s, a planning committee studied the problem of a university-wide strategy for assessment activities. The result was the formation of the Assessment Oversight Committee (AOC, described in Section 4.A). The remainder of Section 2 focuses on assessment efforts in the areas of basic skills, liberal studies, and individual programs.

**Basic Skills Assessment**

Under auspices of the UUCC, the university assessed the writing and mathematical skills of a representative sample of undergraduates in 1982 (Ibid.). No systematic efforts were made in assessing the basic skills areas during the next few years, although the UUCC continued to discuss writing and mathematical skills on a regular basis.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the UUCC evaluated several external instruments as potential assessment tools. These standardized instruments included Educational Testing Service's TASKS program, and ACT's Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) program, among others. Within a year, however, the UW System mandated use of the ACT-CAAP and a five-year administration timetable for all campuses. Specifically, the CAAP tools for assessing writing and mathematical skills were imposed by UW System, with a pilot administration planned in 1991. The target group to be tested was "rising juniors", i.e., students who had earned 45-59 credits.

In accordance with this UW-System directive, UWP assessed writing and mathematical skills among "rising juniors" in 1991-92. However, UWP elected to administer basic skills assessment on a more frequent basis. Biennial administration of ACT-CAAP was articulated in the original Assessment Plan (1995). In addition, UWP elected to administer the ACT-CAAP critical thinking skills test in selected upper-division classes (i.e., not to rising juniors) on a pilot basis at the same time.

Initial efforts to employ ACT-CAAP took place in 1992 and 1994, but systematic administration at the local level did not occur until 1996 (with subsequent replications in 1998 and 2001). Consistent methodology in selecting the sample,
proctoring the exams, etc., allowed some benchmarking of CAAP results. Campus results were not only compared to nationally standardized data, but were analyzed with a local regression model that employed nearly 40 variables. (George Smith and John Simonson, "Assessment of Mathematics Skills of UW-Platteville Students: A Report on the Statistical Analyses of CAAP Mathematics Scores" in Basic Skills Assessment at UW-Platteville: A Technical Report, edited by Anthony D. Thomas (2000), 10.) Results of these analyses were provided to appropriate governance groups, academic programs and campus administration.

In addition, a team of faculty teaching Freshman Composition evaluated the student writing samples provided to ACT-CAAP in 1996. ACT had reported UWP students' writing skills were "adequate, but not competent" (a mean of 3.3 on a scale of 1 to 6). The faculty team confirmed that while writing mechanics were solid within the essays, students' skills in rhetorical development were less impressive.

Subsequent consideration by Freshman Composition faculty suggested that a nationally normed instrument was perhaps less effective in assessing student writing skills than would be a longitudinal portfolio approach. In 1999, the English faculty initiated a pilot portfolio process to assess students' writing abilities during their years at UWP. A cohort sample of freshmen was selected for tracking through several writing courses. The faculty gathered samples of student writing at the beginning of ENGL 1130/Freshman Composition I and at the end of ENGL 1230/Freshman Composition II; a third sample will be drawn from selected writing-intensive courses taken during students' senior year.

An essential element within this process was the development of an assessment rubric for evaluating student writing. Faculty dialogue was crucial in this attempt to normalize assessment of student writing (i.e., to arrive at consensus on what should be assessed and how to assess it). A similar process will be applied to the identification and development of writing-intensive courses at the senior level.

Preceding attempts to develop a local assessment strategy for student writing were efforts to evolve a home-grown assessment instrument for mathematics. Development of a local mathematics tool was initiated in 1997, with additional support provided through an Assessment Activity Fund grant in 1999. A draft of the assessment instrument was administered in sections of courses used to satisfy the university math requirement; more than 200 students participated in this initial assessment effort in 1999. Forty students were assessed with a revised instrument in 2001 (during administration of the ACT-CAAP tests).

A significant advantage of home-grown instruments is the opportunity to provide more useful feedback than is available from a nationally normed exam, such as the ACT-CAAP. Locally developed instruments can be tied to pedagogical content, local objectives and local standards. Such feedback will be critical in
assessing achievement of basic skills objectives in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, and wellness.

Liberal Studies Assessment

Considerable groundwork was laid for assessment of other general education requirements over the last 10 to 15 years. In 1987-1988 the UUCC conducted extensive discussion of the goals and objectives of UWP's general education requirements, culminating in substantial revisions in the liberal studies requirements in 1989-90. The UUCC reviewed alternative techniques for assessing the revised liberal studies program and decided on an appropriate testing instrument, "General Intellectual Skills". However, little progress was made on that particular assessment project while the UUCC attempted to complete its three-year revamping of the UWP General Education Program.

In 1994-95, the UUCC conducted a year-long review of all courses approved for General Education credit. Three-person teams evaluated course syllabi, exams, written assignments, and other educational inputs for more than 300 courses in the basic skills, social sciences, humanities, etc. This assessment of course inputs was acknowledged as less useful than effective outcomes assessment, but it did result in more than 20 courses being dropped from the General Education Program and in the refinement of many additional courses.

In a review of campus assessment activities during its 1996 accreditation visit, the North Central Association (now the Higher Learning Commission) applauded the UUCC's input evaluation effort, but confirmed the greater value of assessing educational outcomes in the future. (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, "Report of a Visit to University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, Wisconsin, December 2-4, 1996", 20-23.)

In addition to the efforts made to develop a home-grown mathematics assessment tool within the basic skills area, additional efforts were made to develop local assessment instruments and/or processes in the liberal studies areas of the social sciences (1999), humanities (2001), fine arts (2001), natural sciences (2001), and historical perspectives (2001). These activities followed the three-phase model identified earlier in this plan: clarifying goals, selecting appropriate assessment techniques, and providing useful feedback to relevant departments to enhance educational quality. In part, these efforts were supported through the Assessment Activity Fund grant program established in 1999.

In 2001, the Faculty Senate directed an existing committee, the Academic Standards Committee, to take over the UUCC's historical role of reviewing courses already approved for general education credit. The Senate and the UUCC also recommended that the Provost appoint a Director of General Education to, among other responsibilities, oversee this process. The ASC has developed a
process of portfolio assessment for all general education courses that should take five years to complete. Each course will be held up to the existing standards (sections 3 B.1, B.2, and C.3), to determine how successfully the university is meeting its general education mission.

Program Assessment

While systematic assessment of basic skills and liberal studies were assigned to the AOC and the UUCC, respectively, program assessment efforts remain dispersed among academic and administrative units.

Individual discipline-based assessment activities are conducted by specific academic programs as needs arise. Many of these program-based assessment efforts are conducted in conjunction with accreditation activities involving external agencies and organizations (e.g., ABET, NAIT, NCATE). Certification of programs in engineering, industrial studies, education, and other areas confirms the quality control exercised in these areas.

The APC conducts periodic "audit and review" of academic programs which consist of two parts: (1) input assessment that focuses primarily on data such as FTE (Full-Time Equivalency) faculty resources, SCH (Student Credit Hours) generated, and budgets; and (2) outcomes assessment that asks programs to identify appropriate quantitative and qualitative measures of quality control and goal achievement. The UUCC assesses certain aspects of all programs proposing curricular changes (e.g., new courses, revised major requirements).

A handful of UWP programs have participated in "lateral reviews" - qualitative comparisons among regional institutions. In part, such studies assess the feasibility of maintaining parallel programs across several UW campuses. These reviews have asked participating schools to evaluate the relative quality of specific programs (e.g., Business Administration) within the context of those offered by other institutions.

In the mid-1980s the College of Engineering conducted one of six UW-System pilot assessment projects under the task force's sponsorship. The results of that project provided a foundation for developing a campus-wide plan for assessment of major programs. During Fall 1987, the Department of Economics attempted (1) to assess learning of economics principles that occurred during the semester; (2) to measure level of and changes in students' critical thinking skills during the semester; (3) to investigate effects of regular and frequent writing opportunities on students' learning; and (4) to investigate factors associated with differentials in students' learning. The assessment project was supported by grants from the University of Wisconsin Assessment and Testing Advisory Council, and from the UWP Scholarly Activity Improvement Fund. Stephen R. Portch, UW-System Vice President for Academic Affairs, found the work "extremely encouraging", for several reasons:
First of all, you convincingly demonstrate (although this was not your primary intent, nor should it have been) the complexity of doing discipline-specific assessment and applying it to improvements in teaching and learning. As you know, the UW System Assessment and Testing Advisory Council has been making this argument for some time, and we will continue to make it. In fact, we may be able to use your study when we present our next report on assessment to the Board of Regents. Second, while you were not entirely pleased with the "home-grown" testing instrument you have developed, you have successfully developed and used one. In fact, you have developed a test more applicable to the UW-Platteville curriculum and one more current (as your unemployment rate example so aptly demonstrates). Some of your local and national colleagues have not managed to progress this far. It is heartening to me to see that you have not only accomplished this, you did it in the context of a much larger research effort. (Ann Al Yasiri, Terry Liska, and John Simonson, "Value-Added Assessment in Economics", February 1992 (photocopy).)

Many local program-based assessment activities include pedagogical research by UWP faculty. As an institution engaged primarily in undergraduate education, UWP has developed a wide range of practical assessment tools that address local needs (see Appendices 2 and 5). In addition to the routine "audit and review" assessment process directed by the APC, ongoing self-assessment of programs and administrative units is encouraged by the AOC and this assessment plan, with emphasis placed on developing methods for the assessment of learning outcomes. The AOC will continue to survey and evaluate program assessment activities and to distill from them a set of "best practices" to be disseminated across programs and administrative units.

**Student Life Assessment**

College students' lives consist of more than just hours spent in classrooms and laboratories. Among these non-classroom aspects are residence hall environment, extracurricular activities, advising relationships with faculty, and other routine components of campus life.

In 2001, UWP's Division of Student Affairs surveyed local students (freshmen and seniors) regarding selected academic and non-academic issues. These areas included (1) level of academic challenge, (2) active and collaborative learning, (3) student interactions with faculty members, (4) enriching educational experiences, and (5) supportive campus environment. (National Survey of Student Engagement, Institutional Benchmark Report (2001) for the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, 1.) Imposed by the UW System (UWS), this National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) attempts to assess attitudes and perceptions of student life and to compare the results against national norms as well as with other UW System campuses.
Survey results suggest that UWP's level of academic challenge is slightly above that of UWS institutions, but slightly below all NSSE institutions. Platteville's levels of active and collaborative learning are significantly above the UWS average, but again slightly below the national norm. Student interactions with faculty members at UWP are slightly higher than those at other UWS campuses, but significantly below the national mean. "Enriching educational experiences" at UWP are lower than those at other UWS institutions, and significantly below the NSSE average. UWP's campus environment is perceived to be somewhat better than those at other UWS campuses, but slightly below the national mean.

A significant advantage of the NSSE survey is the ability to establish comparative benchmarks for UWP. The report cautions comparisons with UWS data, since consortium results may not have been normalized. The NSSE survey instrument is fairly detailed, allowing UWP to identify specific strengths and weaknesses within the campus environment.

Other standardized tools used to assess student life at UWP are the CORE Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Survey and the benchmarked ACUHO-I/EBI survey of residence hall experiences. Internally developed user surveys assess student perceptions of academic advising, university counseling services, intramural athletics, university health services, placement services, and multicultural services.

**Other Assessment Activities**

A variety of other efforts have evolved over the past few years to create a campus environment conducive to assessment activities. Such efforts attempt (1) to support and reward faculty and staff involvement in campus assessment activities, (2) to enhance the visibility of these efforts on a campus-wide basis, and (3) to support faculty participation in professional conferences dealing with assessment.

The Assessment Activity Fund (AAF) grant program was initiated in 1999 in an effort to support a wide range of assessment initiatives, including proposals that address discipline-specific needs as well as proposals that address campus-wide assessment issues. In part, the AAF grants respond to the expressed need to broaden institutional interest in and support for assessment activities.

Among the initial AAF-supported proposals was an effort to create a local assessment journal to compile articles and reports on campus assessment efforts. The first publication of this journal occurred in 2000. Content included summaries of ACT-CAAP analyses and program-specific assessment projects, and copies of papers presented at professional conferences. The AAF program also supported analysis of ACT-CAAP data in basic skills assessment. Funded through additional AAF grants were efforts to develop local assessment tools in mathematics, the social sciences, humanities, fine arts, natural sciences, historical perspectives, international education, and ethnic and gender studies.
In conclusion, a substantial assessment legacy exists at UWP, involving virtually all facets of student development. Campus assessment experiences - past, present, and future - provide an invaluable base upon which to develop an effective campus-wide assessment program.

A relatively detailed inventory of assessment practices in program areas throughout the university is provided in Appendices 2 and 5.

2. The Relation of the Mission to Planned Assessment

University assessment is designed to be consistent with university missions. Missions of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville are threefold: The University of Wisconsin System Mission Statement, the Core Mission of the University Cluster, and the Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. The latter two are each comprised of nine statements that reflect the goals of the university. (See Appendix 1 for copies of these mission statements.) The purpose of assessment is to determine the extent to which goals of the three missions are being met.

The relationship between each of the four principal areas of assessment - basic skills, liberal studies, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs, and student life - and the Core Mission of the University Cluster is shown in Appendix 3, Table 1. The relationship between each of the four principal areas of assessment and the Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville is shown in Appendix 3, Table 2.

Offering baccalaureate and graduate degrees is primary to both the University Cluster Mission and Select Mission of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and constitutes one of the university's goals. Degree programs are generally assessed by student course evaluations, graduating senior exit surveys and interviews, placement rates, accreditation visits, alumni surveys, employer surveys, input from advisory councils, feedback from capstone courses, and focus groups.

Offering a core of basic competencies and liberal studies that supports university degrees is stated in the Core Mission of the University Cluster and comprises another goal of the university. The UUCC devotes a part of its regular monthly meetings to discussion of general education issues, and in addition, convenes a second monthly meeting devoted exclusively to the general education program. Together with ongoing AAF-supported discussion groups (who report periodically to the AOC) and meetings of the Academic Standards Committee, this provides a forum for critical examination of these important issues.
Between 1987 and 1989, the UUCC conducted a comprehensive review of the UWP liberal studies requirements. Based on that review, the requirements were extensively revised. Among the major changes were (1) addition of requirements in ethnic and gender studies, in international studies and in history, and (2) establishment of course content specifications for all courses designed to meet liberal studies requirements; those changes were implemented in the 1991-1993 Undergraduate Catalog. Since the early 1990s, several assessment activities have attempted to determine the effectiveness of these revised liberal studies requirements.

Basic skills are necessary for students to succeed in attaining baccalaureate degrees and becoming "more literate and intellectually more astute". Therefore, assuring that UW-Platteville students demonstrate acceptable competence in basic skills also constitutes a goal of the university. Students' basic skills in writing and mathematics are assessed by tests such as ACT-CAAP, PPST, aptitude/mental ability tests, and professional exams. Capstone courses and student interviews also provide a measure of these skills.

Although basic skills, liberal studies, and major programs are clearly identifiable major goals of the university, the university missions include many other goals and objectives as well. For example, the university is charged with providing an environment in which students may achieve maximum personal development as well as educational growth. Programs to enhance student life include university counseling services, dining services, multi-cultural services, the children's center, student health care, tutoring, basic skills workshops, cultural events, and placement services. Methods for assessing this goal include interviews, opinionnaires, aptitude and mental ability tests, diagnostic tests, personal inventories, and suggestion boxes.

The university is also charged with providing outreach services to individuals, to businesses, to agriculture, and to government agencies. This goal is addressed through non-credit courses, research activities by faculty and students, and assorted consulting activities by university personnel. A wide variety of techniques is also available for assessing the university's effectiveness in achieving its community outreach mission goals. The matrix in Appendix 3 includes all mission goals of the university, including those not explicitly addressed by the Assessment Plan. Omission of goals from the plan is not meant to imply their lack of importance. Rather, the necessity of focusing on those program areas in which there is consensus regarding priority and assessibility is central to this plan. In some cases, the goals not provided for in this plan may be included in future revisions; in other cases, goals deleted from the university mission may result in the elimination of associated assessment activities. Many goals will undoubtedly continue to be assessed as they are now, even if informally.

3. Linking Assessment with the Strategic Plan
During the 1991-92 academic year, an analysis of UW-Platteville's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats revealed that, among other things, the university needed a formal long-range plan to guide its future. Over forty members of the university community volunteered to serve on a committee to develop such a plan.

In September 1992, the University Strategic Planning Committee was formed. The Committee developed the University Strategic Plan in stages: a "Vision and Basic Values" for the university, "Themes" of importance to the future of UWP, and "Initiatives" for dealing with those themes. The final version of the plan was distributed in April 1993.

During the 2001-2002 school year, the strategic plan was updated and revised, with a final version submitted and approved in April 2002. This plan was distributed at the University Convocation at the beginning of the Fall semester, 2002.

Linkages with assessment run throughout the UWP Strategic Plan as it establishes initiatives that illustrate a university-wide commitment to continuous improvement. Several specific initiatives are associated with individual statements from the Higher Learning Commission's "Ten Characteristics of an Assessment Program" in Appendix 4.

4. Assessment Maxims

Several characteristics appear critical to the development and implementation of any successful assessment program in higher education. The following Assessment Maxims form the foundation of assessment philosophy and activity at UW-Platteville.

- Assessment must be faculty- and staff-based. Assessment outcomes to be measured and measurement instruments to be used must be developed or selected by faculty and staff. Likewise, the results of assessment must be made available to faculty and staff in a form that permits their use in improving student learning.
- The reason for assessment must be improvement of teaching/learning. Regardless of the impetus for undertaking assessment, both the process and the product of assessment must be used for improvement of learning for the student, the overall program, or both.
- No existing assessment model is likely to be appropriately replicated elsewhere precisely. That is, an assessment program must recognize institutional uniqueness and autonomy, and be consonant with the particular mission, programs, and character of the campus. (A corollary is that program-specific measures are unlikely to be readily comparable across programs or across campuses.) Assessment should neither limit access to educational opportunities nor distort educational goals.
Within given resource limitations, more information is almost always better than less in assessing learning in higher education. On the one hand, this suggests comprehensive, multi-dimensional assessment of educational components; on the other, it suggests "triangulation", i.e., use of more than one measurement instrument to assess each facet of the learning environment. Appropriate assessment of a particular program may involve a survey of student perceptions and values, a survey of alumni and employers, a standardized test, a qualitative assessment by faculty, or some combination thereof.

Assessment should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Assessment is a process rather than a product per se. We assess in all our courses, for all our students, and in all our programs. What is new, however, is how we assess - more systematically, more explicitly and with greater feedback to the teaching/learning process. In sum, we should build slowly and surely on the existing assessment system.

A significant obstacle to assessment occurs at the critical first step: gaining faculty and staff consensus on educational objectives (or desired program outcomes) to be measured. However, the very process of attempting to specify outcomes is itself an important (possibly even the most important) beneficial effect of assessment. Once such consensus is achieved, the selection of an appropriate assessment methodology is greatly simplified.

Implementation of a true assessment program may create profound changes in curriculum, in faculty and staff perspectives, and within the overall learning environment. We believe that an emphasis on assessment is more of an attitude than a collection of tests, and that serious assessment must institutionalize self-awareness.

Section 3 - Strategies and Components of Assessment

1. Strategies

This plan provides for four types of assessment: assessment of basic skills, liberal studies, major programs, and student life. These assessment areas are by no means inclusive of all educational processes occurring at UW-Platteville. Nor do they include all pertinent educational outcomes. Rather, they are identified separately solely to facilitate the assessment process.

The various assessment types dovetail closely. For example, competence - if not proficiency - in the basic skills is usually a critical precondition to student success in liberal studies and in major programs as well as being an important educational outcome in its own right. A "substantial writing component" has long been required in all courses yielding liberal studies credit.
Critical thinking has been identified as central to learning of basic skills, liberal studies, and major programs alike. Not surprisingly, student mastery of critical thinking skills has been assessed at all three of these levels. More difficult to assess is how students apply critical thinking skills in their daily lives outside the classroom (i.e., through assessment of student life).

Interrelation among the several types of assessment has two implications for the assessment process. First, some of the same teaching/learning processes and outcomes (e.g., critical thinking) will be measured in more than one facet of assessment. Second, virtually all administrative and governance bodies will be involved in the various types of assessment; involvement will include assessment design, implementation, monitoring, and use of the assessment results.

For each type of assessment, we will describe how we will (1) identify operational goals and objectives; (2) develop and implement assessment techniques and instruments; and (3) use results to improve quality, quantity, or effectiveness.

At issue is the extent to which teaching/learning activities at UW-Platteville contribute to student well-being, however construed. To measure a student's level of competence or proficiency in basic skills, liberal studies, or major programs at some point during the student's experience at UW-Platteville may or may not measure the university's contribution to that competence or proficiency, i.e., the "value added" by the university and its activities.

Hence, value-added assessment will constitute an important dimension of UW-Platteville's assessment program. Several tentative efforts have already been taken in this regard. The nature of the National Survey of Student Engagement, for example, lends itself to longitudinal comparisons in various facets of student life. Also, value added has been assessed in learning of business statistics and principles of economics. (See, for example: John Simonson and Terry Liska, "Assessment of Value-Added Learning of Business Statistics Using Cooperative Learning Techniques", unpublished paper (1991); and Ann Al Yasiri, Terry Liska, and John Simonson, "Assessment of Economics: It's Mostly How You Play the Game", a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Economics Association, Cincinnati, Ohio (April 1, 1989).)

As described elsewhere in this plan, writing and mathematics competence is to be assessed biannually. Regression analysis of these data has compared students' performance on the ACT-CAAP test instrument at the "rising junior" level with performance by those same students when they entered UW-Platteville. Although this provides an admittedly rough measure of value added, it is an important step in the assessment process.

We intend to develop pre- and post-tests of liberal studies and of major programs as well as to refine the pre- and post-tests of basic skills. Despite the considerable
difficulties of ensuring valid and reliable measures of value added, we are confident that we will be able to do so.

2. Basic Skills Assessment

The current basic skills assessment program had its genesis in a UUCC-sponsored assessment conducted in 1982, (John Simonson, "UW-Platteville Basic Skills Assessment Final Report", submitted to the University Undergraduate Curriculum Commission, January 1984.) and in a subsequent UW-System comprehensive assessment development program. As noted in Section 2, more systematic assessment of verbal and mathematical skills was initiated during the early 1990s.

The Humanities Department (which houses the writing program) and the Mathematics Department initially identified specific competencies expected to be mastered by UW-Platteville students in verbal and mathematical skills, respectively. Those competencies provided the basis for selection of a basic skills assessment instrument - the ACT-CAAP.

Writing Skills Assessment

Students completing their second year at UW-Platteville are expected to achieve competency in specified verbal and writing skills, and to demonstrate that competency through an assessment instrument which entails a substantial piece of writing. That writing must demonstrate competence in the following ways:

1. Prewriting
   - Formulate and explore ideas using strategies such as brainstorming, listing, mapping, journal writing, questioning, clustering, and outlining.
   - Consider purpose and audience in selecting and limiting topics.
   - Gather and evaluate materials and information pertinent to the topic.
   - Use primary and secondary research to shape ideas, when appropriate.

2. Drafting
   - Develop and elaborate ideas, distinguishing between topics and theses.
   - Distinguish major features from minor points.
   - Develop support that is both sufficient and relevant, including sources where appropriate.
   - Use appropriate materials for research, e.g., interviews, biographies and data bases.
   - Report and acknowledge the ideas of others.
   - Write multiple drafts when necessary.
3. Revising
  - Read own drafts critically to refine the development of ideas.
  - Anticipate the needs and responses of the readers.
  - Incorporate feedback from readers and provide constructive feedback to other writers.
  - Assess and, as necessary, improve the focus and clarity of the controlling idea(s).
  - Review supporting materials for relevance and accuracy.
  - Demonstrate control of Edited American English.
  - Revise for ideas, coherence, and organization, reshaping the text as necessary by adding, deleting, substituting and rearranging.

4. Structuring
  - Display a clear purpose and address an appropriate audience.
  - Focus on subject, employ unifying ideas, and use appropriate organizational patterns (e.g., comparison/contrast, cause/effect, description/narration).
  - Have a logical organization, appropriate transitions, and internal coherence and cohesion.
  - Use a variety of sentence types and lengths appropriate for the reader and genre.
  - Support generalizations with appropriate detail.
  - Express ideas with individuality and insight.
  - Employ conventional formats of documentation (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago).

Mathematical Skills Assessment

By the end of their sophomore year, UW-Platteville students are expected to have mastered specified mathematical skills, and to be able to demonstrate those skills on an appropriate assessment instrument. All students are expected to achieve at least the following prescribed competencies, although desired proficiencies differ substantially among academic programs. (For example, greater statistical skills are typically required for students majoring in business or psychology than for other programs, and higher calculus skills are required for students in engineering and natural science programs (compared to the general student population).)

- Develop problem-solving skills using the methodology of mathematics.
- Use the recognition and extension of patterns to solve problems.
- Distinguish between valid and invalid reasoning.
- Work with fundamental notions of numbers and space.
- Remain alert to the plausibility of solutions.

Assessment Methodologies

10. Sampling
Every other year, a sample of "rising juniors" is selected randomly and given tests of writing and mathematical skills. The precise sample size is determined by the margin of error deemed acceptable in estimated average basic skill levels of all UW-Platteville students based on the computed sample statistics, the degree of confidence desired (usually 95 percent), and the dispersion of skill levels among UW-Platteville students. (Results of previous basic skills assessment efforts at UW-Platteville are used to estimate dispersion of skill levels.)

11. Assessment Instruments

Instruments have been selected periodically to measure the competency of UW-Platteville students in basic skills areas generally and in the areas of writing and mathematics in particular. The basic skills of matriculating students have been assessed for many years based upon minimum competency levels specified principally by the English and Mathematics programs. The UW System English Placement Test, the UW System Mathematics Placement Test, and the ACT Enhanced Version are used for assessing basic skills of incoming freshmen. The English and mathematics placement tests are currently used to place students in the appropriate college basic skills courses.

12. Use of Basic Skills Assessment Results

The primary objective of basic skills assessment is to make comparisons over time of student competencies for the purpose of making improvements in the teaching/learning process as needed. In addition, basic skills assessment results are used in cross-sectional analysis to identify factors seeming to be systematically related to measured variation in basic skills attainment. Basic skills assessment results are disseminated among major program areas and basic skills programs (particularly mathematics and English), as well as among appropriate university committees to achieve several goals.

- To provide individual departments with basic skills profiles for students majoring in those departments for use in evaluating departmental curricula with respect to their respective basic skills requirements and expectations.
- To solicit from individual departments and appropriate university committees recommendations for modifications in basic skills assessment procedures and profile development.
- To provide appropriate university committees with basic skills profiles for use in considering possible curricular and/or programmatic implications.
Although the ACT-CAAP mathematics and writing tests permit the average performance of UW-Platteville students to be compared with national norms, these tools have insufficient diagnostic value for our programs. Therefore, alternative strategies continue to be considered for assessing these areas.

As discussed in Section 2, efforts to improve the home-grown assessment instrument in mathematics continue. The plan is to administer this test biennially, possibly in conjunction with administration of the ACT-CAAP tests, as we have since 1998.

English faculty continue to explore alternative approaches to assessing students' writing competency. They first considered use of a locally developed variation of the ACT-CAAP (essay) writing test. Although some faculty continue to advocate this approach, greater support exists for a more in-depth assessment strategy, particularly the development of writing portfolios. This latter approach (described in Section 2) will attempt to compare student writing from the beginning of the Freshman Composition I course, from the conclusion of the Freshman Composition II course, and from a senior-year course that is writing intensive.

An intermediate strategy is also being investigated. Students in Freshman Composition II write extended papers with several revisions. A sample of those papers is to be reviewed each year as a means of assessing students' writing proficiency. In addition to permitting year-to-year comparisons, this approach will yield useful diagnostic information for the faculty who teach the writing courses.

We draw two conclusions from these experiences. First, no single instrument is likely to assess adequately UW-Platteville students' writing proficiency, much less the effectiveness of the institution's writing program. Second, the assessment process is necessarily iterative, with each attempted assessment strategy and/or instrument raising additional questions and implying other potential assessment strategies and instruments.

In summary, we deem the process of developing assessment strategies and instruments itself to be of immense value to students and to faculty alike. We are continuously rethinking the crucial first step in assessment (identifying the specific outcomes desired from our basic skills programs) and searching for more effective ways to achieve the second step (measuring the extent to which desired outcomes are being achieved).

3. Liberal Studies
The liberal studies component of UW-Platteville's general education program is designed to challenge students to explore a diverse range of disciplines including fine arts, historical perspective, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, international education, and ethnic and gender studies. Each discipline plays a significant role in promoting the development of clear, coherent, powerful, critical, creative and appreciative thinking in these areas.

The goals of each of the liberal studies areas were selected to enhance the development of students in the various categories of thinking identified above. Courses meeting the liberal studies requirements are designed to challenge students through stated goals in each of the seven areas.

**Goals of Liberal Studies**

0. Fine Arts courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - think imaginatively;
   - explore the history and heritage of the arts; and
   - examine the logic of artistic expression.

1. Historical Perspective courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - gain knowledge of the past, of the judgments, actions and visions of those who have gone before us;
   - explore circumstances that have helped to shape those judgments, actions, and visions; and
   - explore ways in which all of these have shaped the present.

2. Humanities courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - confront basic questions about reality, knowledge, goodness, justice, and beauty;
   - examine critically how great writers and thinkers have addressed these questions; and
   - ponder those questions as they apply to their own lives and times, and how they might contribute with both imagination and courage to the creation of the future.

3. International Education courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - explore cultures, peoples and nations other than those with which they are familiar;
   - analyze how people of diverse cultures address common issues and problems; and
   - explore the implications of this study for students' own lives.

4. Natural Science courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - discover what patterns, principles and dynamics seem to find expression in empirical data about natural phenomena;
   - reflect on the beauty of science;
   - assess the character, possibilities, and limitations of the scientific method; and
   - engage actively in the analysis of directly encountered natural phenomena.
5. Social Science courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - learn something of the reality of individual and social behavior;
   - discover the principles and forces that seem to find expression in that behavior; and
   - explore the ways in which such structures and processes influence self- and group- perception.

6. Ethnic and Gender Studies courses are designed to challenge students to:
   - explore the history, culture, customs, values, lifestyles and contributions of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and socio-economic minorities in the United States;
   - investigate the social and political structures that support racism and sexism;
   - recognize the influence that students' own culture and experiences have on their attitudes toward women and minorities;
   - understand the western ethical tradition of justice; and
   - examine the literature that depicts, analyzes and protests racism and sexism.

**Assessment Methodology**

The UUCC is responsible for the selection of assessment processes which measure the degree to which UW-Platteville is accomplishing goals set forth in the liberal studies component of the general education program. Implementation and analysis of the assessment process results are also the responsibility of the Commission.

The UUCC and the Academic Standards Committee will use the course requirements established in the 1987-90 revision of the general education program as criteria in assessing whether specific classes satisfy the intended goals and standards of general education. This procedure will involve (input) assessment of course syllabi, materials, examinations, activities, etc., in determining how effectively classes attempt to satisfy current general education goals or purposes.

Secondly, the UUCC will assess learning outcomes and student performances/outcomes with external (i.e., nationally normed) assessment instruments and/or internally developed assessment practices built around locally determined criteria. Such assessment will focus primarily on graduating seniors' abilities to demonstrate critical thinking techniques, computational skills, effective communication skills, etc., as defined within the general education program. As discussed in Section 2, the Assessment Oversight Committee has facilitated ongoing dialogues among faculty in the fine arts, social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, etc., to consider those common elements of liberal education that transcend individual courses and disciplines. The consensus achieved within these faculty discussion groups has led to subsequent consideration of appropriate methodologies for assessing these components of the general education program.
Finally, based on the findings of the previous steps, the UUCC will re-evaluate the goals and procedures of general education and, as appropriate, recommend changes in the general education program at UW-Platteville. Results of the UUCC assessment of the general education program will be compiled in an annual report to the Faculty Senate, the APC, the UABC, and appropriate campus administrators.

4. Review of Academic Programs

Academic programs are assessed by the APC every five years on a rotating basis. These evaluations consist of a review of quantitative measures of faculty productivity and workload (e.g., Student Credit Hours generated), an analysis of factors that measure program quality (e.g., placement of program graduates), and an examination of the assessment processes used by the program to measure the program's effectiveness in meeting its goals. Also examined is the effect of the assessment processes in bringing about changes and improvements.

Academic Planning Council

The APC is charged with "audit and review" responsibilities for academic programs, each year reviewing one fifth of all academic programs on a rotating basis. During the mid-1990s, the APC's audit and review protocol was substantially modified to incorporate basic assessment techniques. As a result, academic programs are asked to address the following questions.

- What are the program's goals and objectives?
- What output measures are currently being used?
- How are results of your output measures being used to improve the program?
- What noteworthy problems is the department having in meeting its goals and objectives?

Anecdotal evidence indicates that some program administrators were obliged to look at their programs from a different perspective during this assessment process. One department chair remarked: "It had not occurred to me previously what some of our goals are."

On the other hand, some APC members were uncomfortable relying primarily on the four questions, preferring instead to consider the relatively extensive measures of program inputs and program performance indicators as was done in the past. It was the consensus that the four assessment questions be used in the future, but with supplemental assessment data available both to APC members and to departments whose programs are under audit and review. Those data provide a "framework" within which to discuss answers to the four assessment questions.
Assessment Methodology

Individual programs are routinely assessed by the department or administrative units having primary responsibility for their administration. The APC's role is to monitor, review and facilitate program assessment activities. Appendix 2 provides a compendium of ongoing academic (i.e., basic skills, liberal studies, academic programs) and non-academic (i.e., student life) assessment activities at UW-Platteville.

As noted earlier, the AOC will survey (cf., appendix 2) and distill for the APC a set of "best" assessment practices, to be disseminated across the university. Also, a faculty development program on these best practices will be prepared by the Assessment Coordinator, in consultation with the Teaching Excellence Center. The list of best practices includes: accreditation visits, assessment exams (national, System-wide, or locally developed), surveys/interviews/evaluations, portfolio reviews, advisory boards, and focus groups. The idea is to spread the word around campus about how assessment can be shaped to fit the needs (and time-constraints) of individual programs. This program should occur sometime early in the Spring semester of 2003.

Section 4 - Implementation

1. Responsibility for Implementing the Assessment Plan

Existing administrative and governance bodies, with coordination by the Provost, are responsible for carrying out the various facets of UW-Platteville's Assessment Plan. The Assessment Oversight Committee was initially charged with the duties of coordinating university-level assessment efforts and providing counsel and support for individual programs and colleges. More specifically, campus assessment activities have been assigned at four levels.

- The AOC shall oversee administration of the basic skills component of the Assessment Plan.
- The UUCC shall oversee administration of the liberal studies component of the Assessment Plan, in cooperation with interdisciplinary efforts within the liberal studies areas and with the assistance of the AOC.
- The individual academic program units shall administer their respective assessment programs, with audit and review by the APC.
- The Division of Student Affairs shall oversee administration of appropriate assessment activities in the area of student life.

The AOC monitors the various activities and procedures comprising the assessment program to ensure their consistency with the Assessment Plan. The
AOC takes actions and makes recommendations deemed appropriate to improve and enhance existing procedures and to revise the Assessment Plan as needed. Above all, the AOC is responsible for ensuring maximum benefits are derived from the Assessment Program. This will entail disseminating assessment information and facilitating improvement of programs based upon that information.

After the AOC was created, the administration created a part-time position to coordinate the UWP general education program; effective 2002, this position is also responsible for coordinating many of the assessment activities in collaboration with the AOC. The AOC is comprised of eight voting members and two non-voting ex officio members.

- On a staggered schedule, the following three governance groups shall each appoint one member to a two-year term: the APC, the UUCC, and the UABC.
- The Office of Student Affairs shall appoint one member to a two-year term.
- The Faculty Senate shall appoint two members, each serving for two years on a staggered-term basis.
- The Student Senate shall appoint one student member to a one-year term on the AOC.
- The Provost shall appoint one member to serve a three-year term.
- The Provost and the University Assessment Coordinator shall serve as ex officio members of the AOC.

AOC members may serve consecutive terms at the discretion of the various governance bodies and administrative units. In the event the various governance groups are unable to select a member of their respective bodies to serve as representative to the AOC, these groups may appoint a non-member to serve in this capacity, with the stated understanding that this appointee is expected to provide appropriate liaison between the AOC and the represented group.

Whenever possible, appointments by the various governance groups and administrative units shall be made near the end of each spring semester, thereby allowing the AOC to select its chair for the next academic year by May. Committee members are expected to keep their respective governance groups or administrative units apprised of relevant assessment information as well as to alert the AOC to those groups' needs for assessment information.

The AOC works closely with the Provost and the APC to ensure the assessment program contributes to achievement of missions and goals of the university within institutional and budgetary constraints. The AOC establishes monitoring and oversight procedures.
The AOC Chair shall report annually to the Provost, the Faculty Senate, the UUCC, and the APC regarding the assessment program. This annual report shall evaluate ongoing assessment activities, identify notable anticipated changes in those activities, and recommend changes in the Assessment Plan.

2. Assessing Assessment

Ideally, evaluation of the university's assessment program is based on its contribution to attainment of clearly defined and generally agreed upon educational goals and objectives, especially the goal of enhanced student learning. While difficulties in evaluating such a program's effectiveness are potentially unlimited, two fundamental concerns focus on the nature, level, and efficiency of student learning.

- Desired educational outcomes may not be well defined, making effective measurement of such changes difficult to conduct and to evaluate.
- Key variables in the learning process may be difficult to identify and isolate for assessment purposes, thereby making it difficult to improve those elements within the control of the institution and its faculty.

Given these inherent concerns, the assessment program must be evaluated through the best techniques available. It is essential that the evaluative process be systematic, objective, and firmly anchored in the educational process (i.e., the evaluation must avoid heavy reliance on anecdotes, casual observation, or other ad hoc evidence of how the educational system is performing).

Unfortunately, since outcomes are often difficult to measure in education and other service areas, the evaluation frequently focuses on the educational process itself, e.g., through "performance evaluation". Regardless of the merit of what is being achieved through educational process, the efficiency of the process itself is assessed to determine whether outcomes are being achieved at minimal cost, in minimum time, or with fewest possible resources.

The assessment program's impact on the educational process is essentially what is assessed at UW-Platteville. All four areas of UW-Platteville's assessment program - basic skills, liberal studies, major programs, and student life - are to be routinely monitored and evaluated. Despite their second-best status as an assessment technique, performance evaluations can be useful nonetheless - if their limitations are kept in mind.

The first step in assessment - identifying goals and objectives - has received considerable attention at UW-Platteville since the mid-1980s. The goals and objectives of the basic skills component of general education program remain more focused than those of the other areas; as a result, achievement of these goals has traditionally been easier to assess.
Goals and objectives of the liberal studies component of general education have been identified by the UUCC, albeit in general rather than specific terms. In part, the support offered through the Assessment Activity Fund grants since 1999 has attempted to stimulate inter-disciplinary discussion of goals that transcend specific majors and disciplines.

Major program goals and objectives have received less systematic attention, although cataloging them has been initiated as part of the APC's program audit and review process. Academic programs are evaluated on a rotating schedule, with individual departments and majors reviewed once every five years. In part, the APC performance audit and review process is based on program data trends (e.g., student credit hours generated, full-time equivalency faculty positions, number of student majors). Such consideration is primary and may overshadow assessment of larger issues (e.g., appropriateness of program mission, learning outcomes).

The second step in assessment - measuring achievement of outcomes - has continued to evolve over the past decade. In the basic skills area, ACT-CAAP tests of writing and mathematics skills have been administered to a random sample of rising juniors biennially since the early 1990s (see Section 2). Subsequent development of home-grown assessment tools began in the late 1990s. Progress has been slow, however a local test of basic math skills has been developed (with AAF funding). This test has been piloted and shown to be a qualified success.

The liberal studies component of the general education program was evaluated through the UUCC's input assessment in 1994-95. Selected aspects of the liberal studies component (e.g., critical thinking) have been evaluated through output assessment in several ways over the past two decades, e.g., program-specific pedagogical research and ACT-CAAP's critical thinking component. The Academic Standards Committee's development of a course portfolio review process should begin to create some very useful feedback in the very near future. However, this is a historical responsibility of the UUCC, to which the AOC recommends a major reevaluation of the general education program.

Major program areas continue to be assessed through a wide variety of methods, many tied to discipline-specific needs or characteristics; current program assessment practices are indexed in Appendix 2 (the Assessment Inventory). These practices provide a baseline against which future assessment results can be evaluated. As the APC moves into these uncharted waters of assessment, it is the role of the AOC to provide direction.

Student Affairs will continue to assess the quality of student life at UW-Platteville through multiple measures, including externally developed tools and locally designed processes.
The critical third step in the assessment process is creating and delivering appropriate feedback on assessment findings. Successful assessment would provide routine feedback to the administration, governance bodies, and individual colleges and departments. Such feedback can be useful in effecting change in curricula and other aspects of institutional operation. Regular dialogue would also contribute to the evolution of an effective campus assessment culture. Therefore, high priority should be given to ongoing efforts in providing direct and explicit linkages between program assessment and decision making by the administration and governance bodies (e.g., Faculty Senate, UUCC, APC, UABC).

This Assessment Plan is a dynamic document designed to meet a variety of institutional needs, with input from individual faculty, governance groups, and campus administration. It is appropriate, therefore, that the Assessment Program continue to be subject to periodic review by these governance groups and campus administration. It is the intention of the AOC that a major evaluation of the Assessment Plan be conducted approximately every five years, or more often (as needed). Moreover, it is the duty of the AOC to review the Assessment Plan on an ongoing basis, to solicit input from governance groups and academic programs, and to make appropriate recommendations for change as part of its annual report.

Section 5 - Summary and Evaluative Criteria

1. Summary

The Assessment Plan represents a logical continuation of what has been occurring at UW-Platteville for many years. It provides for assessment in basic skills, liberal studies, baccalaureate and graduate programs, and student life. Although the AOC was created to oversee implementation of the plan, primary responsibility for administering the various components rests with existing faculty and administrative bodies.

The basic skills area of general education is assessed biennually with an external tool (i.e., ACT-CAAP) and efforts to refine locally developed assessment instruments continue.11 Among faculty in the diverse liberal studies areas, as well as in ethnic, gender and international education, discussions are ongoing. 12 The UUCC and the Academic Standards Committee are responsible for administering specified assessment activities as well as for monitoring, assessing, and modifying the assessment program itself.

Nearly all baccalaureate and graduate programs are assessed as a matter of course, using a variety of assessment techniques. Under institutional by-laws, the APC is charged with audit and review responsibilities for academic programs, a form of assessment. The APC has modified their historical audit and review protocol, and
is beginning to experiment with a more direct emphasis on programmatic assessment of student learning outcomes. The UABC and Faculty Senate likewise play important roles in the assessment program. The AOC includes representation from all these bodies.

Finally, student life on campus is assessed with several external instruments by Student Services, also permanently represented by a member of the AOC.

In addition to a discussion of the continuation and extension of on-going assessment activities, this plan provides for their refinement and systematization. It articulates and coordinates assessment activities by linking rationales, strategies, and procedures for assessment activities. For example, assessment activity is certainly grounded in and implied by specific university missions, with further implications about precise assessment objectives. Moreover, the plan identifies specific university individuals and entities responsible for administering specified assessment activities as well as for monitoring, assessing, and modifying the assessment program itself.

In summary, assessment at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville has a history that provides fertile ground for the institutional growth of an culture of awareness and curiosity, with the goal of always improving that which the university offers the communities it serves.

2. How the Assessment Plan Addresses the Commission's Five Evaluative Criteria

The accreditation criteria of the Higher Learning Commission (formerly the North Central Association) provide five evaluative questions tied to assessment. Answering these questions provides an effective means with which to summarize UW-Platteville's assessment program.

1. Linkage to Mission and Goals

   Evidence of a clear linkage between this plan and UW-Platteville's mission and goal statements is explicit throughout this document. Specifically, sections 2.B: "The Relation of the Mission to Planned Assessment", section 2.C: "Linking Assessment with the Strategic Plan", and appendices 3 and 4 describe and illustrate this linkage.

2. Faculty Participation, Institution-wide Scope

   Faculty have been instrumental in developing every phase of the Assessment Plan. Faculty comprised two-thirds of the original APC membership, and three-quarters of the voting membership of the AOC. The initial plan was reviewed by faculty governance bodies, as were
subsequent changes; this major revision of the Assessment Plan will require approval by the Faculty Senate. The Assessment Maxims upon which the plan is based (section 2.D) explain the philosophical foundation of our plan. Certainly the uses of assessment techniques to enhance program quality, quantity, or effectiveness are ultimately the responsibility of faculty and an important part of the mission of the entire institution.

3. Will Lead to Improvement

Faculty responsibility in using assessment to improve teaching and learning is outlined in Maxim 2 (section 2.D): "The reason for assessment must be improvement of teaching/learning." This responsibility is discussed further for three of the four assessment categories (see the "Assessment Methodology" components for basic skills, liberal studies, and academic programs within section 3). As stated in Maxim 7: "Implementation of a true assessment program may create profound changes in curriculum, in faculty and staff perspectives, and within the overall learning environment."

4. Time Line

Sections 2, 3, and 4 document various assessment activities since the Assessment Plan was initially developed in 1995; these sections also project the routine administration of various externally developed assessment tools as well as the process of refining internally developed instruments.

5. Administration of Assessment

Administration of the assessment program is institution-wide. In particular, large shares of the responsibility for assessment fall upon the APC and the UUCC, as well as upon individual academic and administrative departments. However, the process of assessment continues to be monitored and facilitated by the AOC. See "Responsibility For Implementing the Assessment Plan" (section 4.A) and "Assessing Assessment" (section 4.B) for details.