TO: Academic Affairs Committee
FROM: Assessment Subcommittee
DATE: February 8, 2010
RE: Findings from Department Meetings

During the 2008-09 academic year, the Assessment Subcommittee (ASC) suspended submission of program assessment reports to conduct a study of current assessment processes in place on campus. During the fall semester, the committee studied Maki's *Assessment for Learning* to align all committee members' understanding of effective assessment processes. During the spring semester, ASC members, in teams of two to three, visited fifteen departments that were scheduled to submit assessment plans, reports or Program Review Self-studies. During these meetings with department faculty, we discussed their responses to the following questions:

1. What is your current departmental assessment process? How is your assessment data currently used by or incorporated into the department? Who does the work on assessment in the department?
2. What resources or assistance do you need to accomplish assessment in your department?
3. What roadblocks or hindrances are there in your assessment process?

We present below a summary of the results of these discussions.

Current departmental assessment processes and use of data

Departments that are accredited by outside agencies have well-developed assessment processes, usually with student learning outcomes guided by agency requirements and/or standards. The requirements for accreditation often include many elements beyond the assessment of student learning. These elements are frequently very similar to our Program Review Self-study requirements, leading to some duplication of effort for the departments involved.

Some departments house multiple academic programs; the assessment processes may be at very different levels for the various programs. Interdisciplinary programs seem to have more challenges generating student learning outcomes than discipline-based academic programs.

Many departments practice informal assessment, a process in which faculty engage in informal discussions of student learning (sometimes in hallways), leading to department meeting discussions of possible curricular changes. These practices are not well documented, and are not reliable measures for continuous improvement of student learning.

Of the assessment processes in the fifteen departments visited during the spring semester,

- all reported difficulty with formulation of student learning outcomes;
- four departments had identified student learning outcomes, assessment instruments were in use, and assessment data was used for curricular improvement;
- eight departments had identified student learning outcomes and some collection of assessment data;
- four departments had identified no student learning outcomes and collected no assessment data.

Who does the work? In four departments, the chair gathers data and writes the report. Eight departments have assessment committees responsible for this work. In three departments, there appears to be no one formally assigned the responsibility for assessment.

Resources needed to accomplish assessment
- Training in all aspects of the assessment process: how to write measureable student learning outcomes, how to choose valid assessment tools, how to analyze and use the results
- Many departments were interested in models of effective assessment processes
- Funding to support assessment work, such as stipends, release time, workshop support, etc.

Roadblocks/hindrances in their assessment process
- Lack of experience with writing student learning outcomes.
- Inconsistent terminology for assessment
- Time, money, faculty workload
- Short time-frame for reporting
- Structural challenges for interdisciplinary majors

The ASC proposes the following goals for the 2009-10 academic year:

- Continue hiatus on program assessment reports.
- ASC representatives will meet with the remaining departments during the fall semester to continue the conversations about assessment of student learning. Remaining programs include.
- All departments will submit a draft of their student learning outcomes by the end of the academic year. The ASC will work with the Office of Academic Affairs to provide support and resources to assist departments with this task.
- Create and obtain approval for a new Assessment Cycle.
- Create and obtain approval for an Assessment Process Map for the campus.
- Formalize the Assessment Subcommittee processes.

Recommendations
Based on the discussions with academic departments from the 2008-09 academic year, the ASC puts forth the following recommendations for consideration by the Academic Affairs Committee:

- Professional development opportunities for faculty on assessment-related topics must continue to be made available. The summer workshops conducted by the CAESE are a very good start on this activity. This professional development must also continue to be incorporated into new faculty orientation activities, as was the case this year.

- The Office of the Chancellor and/or Academic Affairs should establish a fund to support discipline-specific assessment training and workshops for faculty.

- The ASC has set target dates for departments to submit a list of their student learning outcomes to the ASC for feedback (indicated in the table at the end of this report). The ASC will work with CAESE to provide support and resources to assist departments with this task.

- Create a clearinghouse - perhaps a MyPoint site – where faculty can go to look for information. This site should include a public place to share information such as: where departments across the campus are in their assessment process, models, rubrics, explanations, examples from similar colleges or departments, information about funding sources available to support activities such as training in specific assessment tools, procedures for applying for these resources, etc. The site will increase the transparency of assessment so that faculty can learn from each other, as well as provide a place to receive feedback from the ASC and peers.

- Appropriate faculty governance committees should consider integrating and aligning the Program Review and Assessment processes. This would provide a formal mechanism for incorporating the assessment of student learning into the review of academic programs and alleviate some of the redundancies in reporting for programs accredited by outside agencies.

- Encourage scholarly work in assessment by making clear that this type of work is valuable and will "count" for retention, promotion and tenure decisions. This might be accomplished through modification of the "Teaching, Scholarship, Service" document that is distributed by the Provost each year, or through other means.

Departments visited Spring 2009 Target date for submission of Program Learning Outcomes: January 31, 2010	Departments to be visited Fall 2009 Target date for submission of Program Learning Outcomes: April 30, 2010
Art and Design, Biology, Business and Economics, Chemistry, College of Natural Resources, Communications, Foreign Languages, Geography and Geology, History/International Studies/Social Science, Mathematics, Philosophy/Religious Studies/Anthropology, Physics, Political Science, Theater and Dance, Women's Studies	Communicative Disorders, Education, English, Health Promotion and Human Development, Health/Exercise Science/Athletics, Health Sciences, Interior Architecture, Library, Music, Paper Science and Engineering, Psychology, Sociology, American Studies, Individually Planned Major and Natural Science