Assessment Summary

Introduction

Drury University concluded its most recent accreditation cycle with a comprehensive evaluation visit on November 9-10, 2010. In the Final Report received following the visit, the evaluation team concluded that Drury University met the requirements for Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching. It concluded that Drury ‘has established, clearly articulated, and made public university-wide learning outcomes,’ with departments and programs responsible for assessment. It noted Drury’s improvement efforts in this area, and recommended submission of a 2012 Progress Report on assessment of student learning. The Team noted that:

- ‘not all units have fully articulated and implemented plans for assessing specific, measurable student learning outcomes’;
- ‘the need to align course-based, program-based and [general education] GP21 learning goals is clear and acknowledged by academic leadership’; and
- ‘the assessment plan for CGCS is in an early stage of development’.

The stipulation of a progress report, thus, asked the university to provide further evidence of Drury’s ability to fulfill its mission by demonstrating evidence of student learning, and the use of assessment data to inform curricular improvements. In particular, the team asked for evidence of cohesion between institutional outcomes for student learning across general education and major programs, both in the traditional ‘day school’ and in programs for non-traditional students in the College of Continuing Professional Studies.

This report documents our work and progress on assessment over the last two years. Since that time, Drury has completed the development and initial implementation of Drury CORE. Throughout this process, we paid particular attention to the Team’s comments, developing a curriculum that closely integrated department and general education, created overlapping responsibility for assessment that strengthens both processes, created a larger pool of faculty with awareness, responsibility, understanding and commitment to assessment and assured equality of learning outcomes assessment throughout all of the university’s academic programs, whether in the traditional day school or the College of Continuing Professional Studies.

As we reflect on the significant progress we have demonstrated since 2010, there are three noteworthy institutional changes during that period that have provided context for our work on assessment. The first is the introduction of a new general education curriculum, with the Drury CORE replacing the Global Perspectives 21 curriculum. The second involves the restructuring of the former College of Graduate and Continuing Studies into the College of Continuing Professional Studies, with its primary focus on undergraduate instruction for ‘non-traditional’ students on the Springfield campus, our additional locations through southwest Missouri and through our online programs. Finally, we have developed and formalized a university-wide framework for evaluating our progress on assessing student learning outcomes. All three changes enabled us to advance our work on the assessment of student learning, assuring that we are accomplishing our teaching/learning mission in all of the university’s programs.
The Drury CORE

Global Per (GP21) was Drury's general education curriculum at that time, and a substantial effort on studying and revising the curriculum was underway. As noted by the team, the University was keenly aware of the need to ensure that any new curriculum would include an effective plan for assessment that was closely integrated with other efforts to ensure outstanding student learning. This was a consistent concern of both faculty and academic leadership in the conversations about a new curriculum.

These processes resulted in the approval of Drury CORE: Engaging Our World, a new framework for general education at Drury University. Introduced in Fall 2012, Drury CORE builds upon the commitment to global learning embodied in GP21, emphasizes engaged learning, and connects general education more closely with departments across the campus, requiring students to complete two foundational learning experiences in each of the University's four divisions.

We focused significant effort on launching Drury CORE with integrated assessment plans. Our aims here were two-fold: first, to assure that student learning received the proper focus; and second, to use this effort to strengthen assessment processes within each department or program. During the planning and revision process for our general education curriculum, faculty frequently noted the difficulty in assessing the outcomes of GP21, which were often attributed to the perceived lack of institutional ‘clout’ by the director of those efforts, merging assessment efforts in after the development of the curriculum, and difficulty in recruiting sufficient people to undertake the work. This led to a significant burden on those carrying out assessment and failed to develop a broader range of understanding and expertise among the faculty. Thus, this essential aspect of the shared nature of general education was neither recognized nor widely shared across campus.

Our work over the past two years has emphasized a different approach. We built a process that gives the proper home for responsibility and authority for assessment, included attention to learning goals in the development of the curriculum, and quickly built a structure of assessment teams with responsibility for each significant area within Drury CORE. The new curriculum requires students to complete courses in each of the university’s four academic divisions, with many of the options already in place as foundational learning experiences within the division. Thus, assessing the learning goals for CORE overlaps with departmental efforts, so that these two projects can support and inform each other. In addition, we will increase awareness and understanding of efforts across campus, since each divisional team will include people from as many as four departments. This approach also increases the number of faculty involved in this work, and develops additional awareness of assessment, understanding of its process, and enthusiasm for using such work to improve student learning and faculty expertise at facilitating learning.

The College of Continuing Professional Studies

In May 2011, the university’s Board of Trustees officially approved the creation of the College of Continuing Professional Studies to replace the College of Graduate and Continuing Studies. Now headed by a Senior Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs (a title designed to reflect that person’s ‘first among equals’ role in institutional decision making), CCPS has been integrated much more effectively into institutional decision making, particularly
as regards priorities and the primacy of student learning. As the Board’s Continuing Studies Committee observed in May 2012, this new designation aligned, perhaps for the first time, the fundamental educational ethos of our programs for non-traditional students with Drury University's longstanding commitment to the integration of liberal and professional learning in all of its programs. In addition to the evidence of integrated assessment activities detailed below, it is worth noting that adjunct faculty and staff colleagues in CCPS have participated in search processes for full-time tenure track faculty positions in programs ranging from Education to Business and History to Behavioral Sciences, providing a new sense of institutional coherence for what had previously been seen tacitly as ‘day school hires.’

All course and program assessment efforts for our day school and College of Continuing Professional Studies are now administered through the departments. For the first time in Drury’s history, the same learning goals are in place for all courses, regardless of when, where and to whom they are offered. We continue to use the ‘liaison’ developed in recent years as a means to ensure communication and consistency, assess courses, and train and equip CCPS faculty. We now have full time tenure track liaisons in place for those programs that have the largest CCPS enrollments, particularly in Biology, Chemistry, Behavioral Sciences, and English. Lead faculty members serve in a similar role in the Breech School of Business and the School of Education and Child Development. In all departments, faculty credentials, syllabi and student evaluation data are reviewed by Chairs as part of their professional responsibilities. This sharper focus has led to significantly improved levels of oversight of student learning at sites outside of Springfield. For example, the Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science travels to the Cabool campus once a week to observe and meet with faculty, as well as teaching a course there himself in spring and fall 2012. Similarly, the Departments of History and English offer their capstone courses in both seated and online environments, with day and CCPS students ‘mixed’ in both media.

**Evaluative Framework**

Working with our elected division chairs and other interested faculty colleagues, the Associate Dean of the College led the development of a formal framework for evaluating progress on assessing student learning outcomes. Drawn from a review of best practices in assessment (including those emerging from the Commission’s Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning), this framework focuses attention on the specificity of outcomes to be assessed and relative effectiveness at marshaling evidence of student learning and, as warranted, of making pedagogical and/or curricular changes on the basis of that evidence.

The Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs-Undergraduate Studies (AVPUS) and the Associate Dean, both members of the Office of the Academic Affairs, share responsibility for assessment: the AVPUS for general education and the Associate Dean for departments and programs. The Assessment Working Groups put in place for Drury CORE report to the AVPUS, while departmental assessment is overseen by the Associate Dean. As our efforts proceed using this new framework, they will coordinate in ensuring that the two strands of assessment—CORE and department assessment—inform each other as our intentional approach requires.
IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction

For more than 10 years, the IDEA System for Student Ratings of Instruction has been Drury’s uniform method for collecting student feedback, due to its strong focus on student learning. We continue to request this information on all classes, to provide that feedback to instructors and departments, and to fold that information into departmental and individual evaluation.

These results continue to indicate that Drury students evaluate their learning, their instructors, and their courses very highly, with ratings above the national averages (see Table 1). As shown in the following, results for the two years since the visit are consistent with the five-year data included in the self-study.

The IDEA evaluation reports on four principal categories:

- Progress on Learning Objectives
- Excellence of Teacher
- Excellence of Course
- Summary Evaluation, an average of the three with Progress double-weighted

IDEA is based on a model of student learning that assumes that specific teaching methods, used in certain circumstances, directly influence student learning. Because objectives and circumstances vary widely, the IDEA system was devised to be useful in these diverse settings. The instrument attempts to ‘factor out extraneous circumstances’ in student self-evaluation of learning on 12 objectives that are central to college learning, and provide feedback on how instructors employed 20 different teaching methods. Faculty select the set of objectives that are relevant for their own course, and only student ratings on those objectives are incorporated into the reporting. Relevant objectives in introductory classes frequently include ‘Learning fundamental principles, generalizations or theories’, while more advanced objectives are ‘Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values’ and ‘Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Progress on Relevant Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Excellence of Teacher</th>
<th>Excellence of Course</th>
<th>Summary Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.2/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2011</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.3/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.3/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2012</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.3/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.3/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>4.2/3.8</td>
<td>4.4/4.2</td>
<td>4.1/3.9</td>
<td>4.3/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>4.3/3.8</td>
<td>4.5/4.2</td>
<td>4.2/3.9</td>
<td>4.4/3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>4.3/3.8</td>
<td>4.5/4.2</td>
<td>4.2/3.9</td>
<td>4.4/3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Drury ratings, all classes/national database ratings for each category.

For these analyses, we used the raw scores, omitting the adjustments IDEA performs to account for factors beyond an individual instructor’s control (conversations with IDEA Center staff suggested that the raw data was best suited to these purposes).

We continue to look closely at this data to measure the effectiveness of instruction at Drury, and within each program. We track the percentage of courses in a department that have ratings at or above the average of the
IDEA database. When this exceeds 60%, IDEA states that ‘the inference is that the group’s overall instructional effectiveness was unusually high’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Progress on Relevant Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Excellence of Teacher</th>
<th>Excellence of Course</th>
<th>Summary Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: IDEA scores (raw): % of Drury classes above national average.

Results for all Drury courses continue to be strong (Table 2), with all four categories at 70% or higher, as they were in the self-study data set. Most importantly, the results on ‘Progress on Learning Objectives’, which is the most direct measure of learning are quite high.

Results for departments also continue to be quite strong (Table 3). Our goal is to have all programs exceed the 60% standard in each of the four areas. As with the institution-wide data, the Fall 2012 results are the strongest within this eight-year window, and now exceed 90% in all four areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Progress on Relevant Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Excellence of Teacher</th>
<th>Excellence of Course</th>
<th>Summary Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Percentage of High Performing Departments (raw IDEA scores).

Conclusions

Our systematic review of departmental assessments provides strong evidence that departments are attentive to student learning, reflective about the outcomes of classes and programs, and working to implement changes to improve both learning and the process by which assessment impacts these outcomes. We have successfully aligned assessment frameworks and processes between Drury’s traditional day program and our College of Continuing Professional Studies. We designed and implemented Drury CORE to build upon our awareness of the importance of assessment processes, to put in place effective structures for ensuring that outcomes are established and met in the
new curriculum, and to connect with, reinforce, and further develop faculty expertise in assessment. We see this approach succeeding, as we have significantly broadened the number of faculty involved in these efforts as we put in place the CORE assessment plan this fall.

Our process for reviewing and providing feedback on departmental efforts will be enhanced by this project, in part through the strong connection that Drury CORE establishes between general education and foundational learning in our academic divisions and departments.

We see the following areas where additional attention may be needed:

Interdisciplinary Programs
We have number of minors (Asian Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and others) that draw together course offerings from multiple departments to give students significant experience in a focused area. Although learning in each of these courses is examined within each home department, we are concerned that assessment at a higher level may teach us something about the ultimate outcome of student work in these programs. The work of the Medieval Studies Program may serve as a model for these interdisciplinary minors, who have outlined an approach for explicitly addressing this aspect of the program. The program plans to address the largest issue: systematically collecting and evaluating evidence to support assessment. This will begin with papers from contributing courses. They plan work on approach for assessing the multidisciplinary aspect of the program, by asking for work from contributing English and History classes where students examine the differences among a similar collection of different texts/sources, such as document of practice (like a will), and a work of poetry, like a French chivalric song. Responsibility for leading these efforts has been assigned to the Associate Dean, who will continue to work with these programs in Spring 2013.

Communication, Feedback, and Sharing Results With All Campus Constituencies
As part of the self-study process, we created a new level of review for assessment, with a council of division chairs reviewing annual reports and providing feedback. To raise awareness of efforts across campus, we created a website where reports, supporting materials, and feedback were posted and publicly available. With the new assessment framework and an emerging university focus on articulating the ‘value added’ of a Drury education to our prospective students, this website is being retooled to reflect our much stronger level of accountability to all of our stakeholders. We plan to supplement this with information from the Drury CORE process, with each assessment working group’s materials, minutes, and documentation posted here, in order to support the current level of effort and attention that assessment is receiving on campus. The AVPUS and the Associate Dean will share responsibility for this effort. The improved website portal, including this year’s round of materials, should go live in January 2013.

We will continue to highlight the role of assessment in our work, and to feature departments who are doing an exemplary job, or approaching assessment in creative ways that may help others improve their processes. We will continue to use fall and spring faculty workshops, department chair meetings, and other opportunities to maintain the profile of assessment across campus. Our follow up to the Commission’s site visit in 2010 has led to demonstrable improvement in our assessment processes and procedures. More importantly, it has tangibly improved student learning, hence our ability to meet our mission.