

Annotated Bibliography

Submitted by: Texas A&M University—Kingsville

Blattner, N. & Frazier, C. (2004, July-August). Assessing General Education Core Objectives. *Assessment Update*. 16, 4-6.

Nancy Blattner and Cristina Frazier asserted that using outside evaluators to assess general education core objectives based on student work both from freshman-level seminars and senior capstone courses proved a valuable exercise. They described the process by which they implemented this plan, including the creation and subsequent modification of rubrics that outside readers used to evaluate the degree to which students had mastered various learning objectives. These rubrics were created in consultation with faculty teaching the courses from which work was sampled. Blattner and Frazier depicted a process wherein different groups of readers evaluated papers for each learning objective. They also noted that faculty received stipends for volunteering their time as readers. They concluded that this assessment process yielded valuable results and led to changes in the way faculty taught in order to insure improved student learning. Blattner and Frazier wrote this article to universities seeking a useful general education assessment plan with the purpose of claiming that random sampling can work well.

Dwyer, P. (2005). Leading Change: Creating a Culture of Assessment. *To Improve the Academy*, 23, 38-46.

Patricia Dwyer argued that it is necessary to create a “common sense of purpose and responsibility” to foster support for assessment in the university environment. She applied John Kotter’s eight-step process to implement organizational change in order to demonstrate how it applied to the efforts to change campus attitudes toward assessment at Shepherd College in West Virginia. For example, Kotter calls on organizations to develop a vision to help direct change and to then create strategies designed to implement that vision. Dwyer related that the vision at Shepherd included connecting the process of assessment to student learning, with the goal of improving attitudes toward the process. To achieve the vision, Shepherd implemented yearly assessment reports from each department. Dwyer wrote this article in order to provide an organized framework through which other universities could improve attitudes toward assessment.

Gerretson, H. & Golson, E. (2004, November-December). Introducing and Evaluating Course Embedded Assessment in General Education. *Assessment Update*. 16, 4-6.

Helen Gerretson and Emily Golson argue that course-embedded assessment provided the ideal format for assessing the General Education curriculum at the University of Northern Colorado because it utilized existing faculty assignments in a fairly nonintrusive and systematic way. Gerretson and Golson proved their thesis admirably by demonstrating the flexibility of course-embedded assessment in a number of areas. For example, they wrote that although faculty members teaching the same course would have to agree on some course objectives and work with common rubrics, they could utilize different assignments to assess the objectives. In this way, assessment did not require extreme uniformity. Because of the diversity of approaches allowed with course-embedded assessment, it appealed to a variety of disciplines—a necessity for General Education. Gerretson and Golson wrote this article to demonstrate that course-embedded assessment can provide a useful model for General Education curriculum, because it gets faculty involved in the assessment process while still allowing for a wide degree of freedom for differences among sections.

Palomba, C. & Banta, T. (1999). *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass.

Catherine Palomba and Trudy Banta, both nationally recognized assessment experts, put together this book to help guide universities in creating assessment mechanisms. Throughout the book, they argue that people must augment assessment plans to fit the particular needs of their campus. For example, student learning goals may vary from institution to institution, depending on a university's mission statement; as such, the assessment plan should reflect the unique characteristics of each campus. They also highlight the need for faculty leadership in the assessment process. They include a chapter dedicated specifically to the challenges of creating a successful assessment plan for the General Education curriculum. In it, they address difficulties such as assessing courses taught by numerous faculty across multiple sections and assessing goals related to critical thinking. Palomba and Banta wrote this book for campuses new to assessment in order to provide practical advice regarding how to create successful assessment procedures.

Sorenson, L. & Bothell, T. (2004). Triangulating Faculty Needs for the Assessment of Student Learning. *To Improve the Academy*, 22, 23-40.

D. Lynn Sorenson and Timothy Bothell argue that conducting a qualitative study with faculty and administrators can help campuses determine what faculty members need in order to improve assessment procedures within a university community. The authors present their efforts at Brigham Young University (BYU) as a model for other campuses to emulate. As part of its endeavor, the BYU Faculty Center interviewed faculty members, asking questions such as "What do faculty need in the area of assessing student learning?" The survey revealed that faculty believed that they could benefit from more training in regards to assessment procedures. The Faculty Center also studied NSSE results and a Faculty Assessment Activity Study to draw conclusions about how BYU could improve its assessment procedures. Sorenson and Bothell wrote this article to provide a model for other campuses to utilize.

Stassen, M., Doherty, K. & Poe, M. (Fall, 2001). *Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement*.

The authors presented a comprehensive handbook for the University of Massachusetts—Amherst community to help programs deal with the challenges of creating successful assessment plans. They demonstrate that creating comprehensive assessment plans is feasible by outlining the steps that need to be undertaken to do so. They also argue that good assessment plans do more than stave off accreditation worries, they help to improve student learning and the quality of academic programs. By providing a variety of examples regarding how assessment can be approached, they show that assessment procedures can occur with minimal impact on how a faculty member wishes to deliver her course. Although this document was produced for the relatively narrow audience of the UMASS community, it provides information useful to any campus community seeking to improve assessment processes.