

**ASSESSMENT AT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY:
PLANS AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS**

**PART 1: PROMOTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS THROUGH
PROGRAM ASSESSMENT EFFORTS**

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William Paterson University Assessment Plan

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<http://ww2.wpunj.edu/studentdevelopment/Assessmthome.htm>

Preface

This report, presented in several parts, serves as the primary source for documenting William Paterson University's efforts in describing and implementing its assessment and effectiveness outcomes. This particular report, Part 1, gives an overview of the University's assessment process as well as puts forth the assessment efforts for academic undergraduate and a number of graduate programs at the University. Additional efforts are underway to have all graduate programs enter the assessment cycle within the next two years. Part 2 presents the assessment and effectiveness efforts of the other University divisions. All three parts set the framework for assessment activities of all academic and non-academic activities at William Paterson University.

Assessment at the University has very much been a bottom-up approach embracing and respecting faculty and divisional efforts and approaches. This has led to a diversity of ways for reporting assessment activities and uses of assessment findings. This assortment is reflected in the format of the report which reflects these varied presentation styles.

The William Paterson University Assessment Plans and Activities

Introduction

At William Paterson University assessment of student learning outcomes serves as a means of improving and strengthening educational programs and practices; of gaining and maintaining the accreditation of voluntary associations of peers; and of assuring ourselves, our constituents, and those who fund our work, that what we do makes a difference and affects the minds and lives of students. When conducted in the spirit of self-study and self-improvement, assessment is the surest way of protecting and increasing the freedom and creativity of the faculty, professional staff, students, and all those who may benefit from the work of the University.

Thus, the core of assessment, within the framework of University governance, is guided self study and inquiry, originating in the determination of desired outcomes and culminating in an understanding of what we do best and where and how we can and should seek to improve programs and practices. Assessment provides us with the means to respond to our own questions about our effectiveness and to those of others and to guide program development and improvement.

The responsibility for the assessment of the outcomes of academic programs – for the student learning outcomes in particular courses, to those outcomes pertinent to major, minor, certification, and licensure programs, to the total undergraduate and graduate programs – resides with the faculty within the total plan of assessment. The development of forms of assessment and the determination of desired outcomes issues from the faculty, subject to the review of administration and the requirements of accrediting bodies.

The responsibility for assessment is everyone's and does not pertain to academic programs alone. Each administrative, educational support and advancement unit is responsible as well for the outcomes of its activities in support of the University's mission under the guidelines of the Student Success Plan and the primary goals of Student Success and Academic Excellence.

As reflected in University policy assessment is formative and constructive. It takes as a given the worthiness of the program assessed and is distinct from evaluation, which is a summative process in which a judgment is rendered about whether an employee or a program is worthy to be sustained by and included in the University community. Evaluation involves necessary and obligatory, but distinct, processes and functions from assessment, governed by policies, contracts, and laws that are also distinct from the processes and functions of assessment.

The University's assessment plan structures the efforts and presents the evidence and results of assessment.

I. Goals and Objectives of the Assessment Plan

The primary goal of the University Assessment Plan is to provide a framework for assessment activities at the University and ensure that these activities are directed toward one central goal: demonstrating student learning and the efficient and effective delivery of student and administrative services for the attainment of the University's mission and the goals of the Student Success Plan.

A second subordinate but important goal of the University Assessment Plan is to assure the public and our accrediting agencies of our institutional commitment to the continuous improvement of programs, processes and service at the University. This second goal is particularly evident in Part 2 of the assessment plan which also incorporates institutional effectiveness indicators (many of them derived from the Student Success Plan).

The assessment plan:

- delineates the scope of assessment and establishes timelines for ongoing and recurrent University assessment activities;
- provides a framework for implementation of assessment activities that supports lateral and vertical integration of these activities;
- provides guidelines for the assignment of responsibilities for the coordination of assessment activities;
- ensures the privacy of individuals is respected (per University policy) and the integrity and reliability of reporting is upheld.

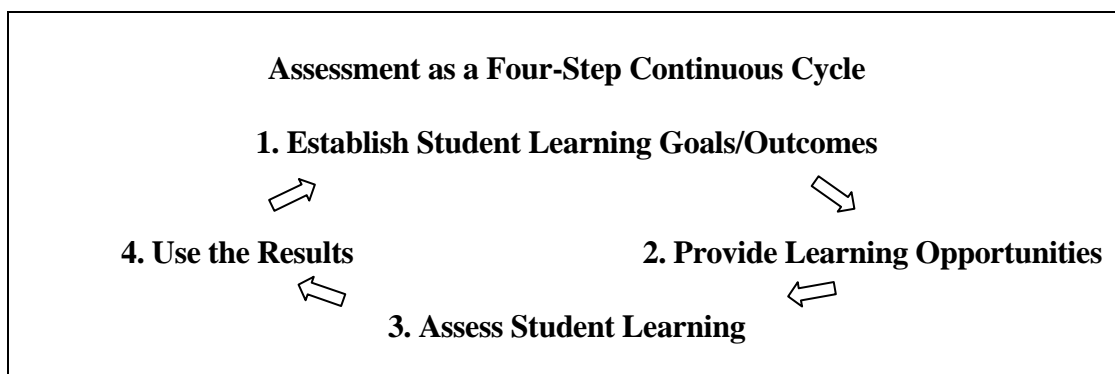
The assessment plan is **NOT** an end in itself but rather a means for the University to provide reliable evidence that will lead to improvements in the way students learn, how we teach and how we deliver services. It will enable us to effectively answer for ourselves and external constituencies,

What are we trying to do?

How well are we doing it? and

How are we using these answers to help us improve what we do?

In summary, William Paterson University's Assessment Plan provides the evidence that the University's mission and its Student Success goals are being met. The following diagram from Linda Suskie's book *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (page 4) succinctly summarizes the assessment process.



II. The Scope of Assessment

Assessment activities are found at various levels throughout the University.

A) Courses: Student Learning Outcomes

Initial efforts (around 2000) were extensive and focused on the course level. All course outlines are required to have statements of student learning outcome objectives (SLOOs). Course learning outcomes reflect program and university learning outcomes.

B) Programmatic Outcomes: Program Review/Accreditation

Within a few years the focus of assessment at the University shifted towards an emphasis on program level outcomes. Undergraduate and graduate academic programs are expected to have statements of student learning outcomes, which express the desired outcomes students can expect to gain by studying in the major, minor, or certification program. As well, undergraduate program outcomes build on the stated general education learning outcomes. Program outcomes also reflect the mission and goals of the College in which they reside. When accreditation bodies are involved their standards should also be reflected in the program's goals, objectives and learning outcomes. The Middle States Commission's accreditation efforts are particularly interested in academic program assessment efforts.

While assessment is an ongoing activity and occurs through a continuous process and not just at particular periods it is important to note that assessment of program learning outcomes is an integral part of cyclical Program Review and/or Accreditation Review. (The Five-Year Program review, for instance, provides an opportunity to reflect deliberately on the ongoing assessments and outcomes. This is an opportunity to demonstrate how results from the assessment activities are being used to improve the program, teaching and learning).

C) College Plans: Mission and Outcomes

Each College has the opportunity to have a Mission based on its identity and the composite of its academic programs. Outcomes in each college reflect coordination between University outcomes and the disciplinary bases of the College. As well, College outcomes build on general education and University learning outcomes. When accreditation bodies are involved their standards should also be reflected in the College's goals, objectives and learning outcomes.

D) University

University level assessment activities are guided by the University's mission especially as it is articulated in the Student Success Plan (SSP), a major University planning document (found at <http://ww2.wpunj.edu/ira/ASSESSMENT/StudentSuccessPlan.pdf>). Briefly, the major goals of the SSP are:

Goal 1 Student Achievement

William Paterson University will make the academic and professional success of students its defining characteristic with programs and strategies that reflect best practices.

- Objective S1* *Develop and implement enrollment management practices that are effective in improving recruitment and retention, and time-to-degree for undergraduate and graduate students.*
- Objective S2* *Use admissions criteria that are effective in identifying students with the potential to succeed at both the undergraduate and graduate level.*
- Objective S3* *Help students make a successful transition into the academic community.*

- Objective S4 Offer programs and curricula that reflect best practices and that prepare students for productive lives in contemporary society and for life-long intellectual growth.*
- Objective S5 Through teaching/mentoring strategies that reflect best practices (e.g., Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education), help students achieve high levels of intellectual and personal growth.*
- Objective S6 Provide effective academic support services to help students with diverse needs achieve academic success.*
- Objective S8 Offer co-curricular experiences that complement academic programs in helping students achieve high levels of personal and intellectual growth.*
- Objective S9 Help students make a successful transition from the University community to graduate or professional study and/or career.*
- Objective S10 Integrate systematic assessment into all programs and services that contribute to student success.*

Goal 2 Faculty and Staff Development

William Paterson University will increase efforts to develop the knowledge and skills of its faculty and staff.

- Objective D1 Improve and expand strategies for faculty and staff recruitment.*
- Objective D2 Expand efforts to help new faculty become distinguished teachers and scholars.*
- Objective D3 Expand efforts to help adjunct faculty become effective contributors to student success.*
- Objective D4 Expand and enhance programs to help tenured faculty maintain vitality over their careers at the University.*
- Objective D5 Provide a wide range of faculty development opportunities to help faculty hone their teaching/mentoring strategies, particularly in the areas noted in Objective S5, above.*
- Objective D6 Provide an effective array of services and opportunities to enhance faculty productivity in research, scholarship, and creative activities.*
- Objective D7 Enhance programs to help employees in all job categories increase their skills and knowledge.*
- Objective D8 Develop programs to assist employees in developing career paths for advancement and/or lateral moves into new areas at the University.*

Goal 3 Campus Climate

William Paterson University will foster a sense of common purpose, pride, and community among all employees and students.

- Objective C1 Expand efforts to create a sense of community among students, faculty and staff.*
- Objective C2 Expand efforts to develop a sense of pride in the University among students, faculty and staff.*
- Objective C3 Foster a campus community where interaction and collaboration among its diverse members contributes to enhanced appreciation and respect for diversity.*
- Objective C4 Create a safe and secure campus environment where the health and wellness of employees and students are valued and supported.*

Goal 4 Resource Development and Management

William Paterson University will develop physical and fiscal resources appropriate for achieving its goals, and will manage those resources effectively.

- Objective R1 Increase the effectiveness and efficiency with which the University manages all of its resources*
- Objective R3 Develop and maintain state-of-the-art technology facilities, equipment, and infrastructure appropriate to support academic programs and administrative functions.*
- Objective R4 Create and maintain facilities and grounds that make a strong, positive contribution to achieving the University's mission.*
- Objective R5 Offer effective auxiliary services that make a strong positive contribution to achieving the University's mission.*

Goal 5 Community Outreach and External Relations

Through educational, cultural, and service programs, William Paterson University will contribute significantly to the quality of life in the community, region and state, and achieve public recognition as an excellent university.

- Objective O1 Develop a continuing education program that offers an array of educational courses, programs and services in a variety of formats and venues that meet the educational needs of the community, region, and state and are consistent with the University's mission.*
- Objective O2 Offer an array of Distance Learning courses that expand educational opportunities to students who are unable to enroll in classes on campus.*
- Objective O3 Develop a comprehensive and coordinated array of programs, services and collaborative relationships, consistent with the University's mission, that meet the needs of the community, state, region and private sector while providing reciprocal benefit for the institution*
- Objective O4 Contribute to the quality of life in the region through excellent and innovative cultural activities that complement the University's academic mission.*
- Objective O5 Enhance public recognition of William Paterson University: the strengths of its academic programs, faculty, and students, and the contributions it makes to the region.*

The Student Success Plan acknowledges and incorporates the earlier efforts of the Faculty Senate which stated:

Upon completing a degree at William Paterson University students will be able to:

- *Effectively express themselves in written and oral form*
- *Demonstrate ability to think critically*
- *Locate and use information*
- *Demonstrate ability to integrate knowledge and ideas in a coherent and meaningful manner*
- *Work effectively with others.*

Each Vice President will develop a divisional assessment/effectiveness plan that reflects and brings to fruition the goals and objectives as put forth in the Student Success Plan. Units or offices within a division will reflect the objectives or effectiveness indicators of the division in which they reside. Student support units (including those in charge of experiential activities) will continue to work closely with academic units to insure student learning

outcomes are being achieved. It is expected that plans will reflect the interdependency of the divisions to successfully meet objectives.

III. Responsibility for Directing and Coordinating Assessment

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IR&A) directs and coordinates the development and evolution of the University Assessment Plan, and encourages and provides guidance to individual units in the development of departmental, college, and administrative and educational support plans for assessment. IR&A does not determine the outcomes to be assessed, but it does play the principal role of oversight for the integrity, thoroughness, and coherence of plans within the overall scope of the University Plan.

It is the responsibility of the Institutional Research and Assessment Office to:

- Ensure that all departments, programs, and units have the resources to participate actively in coordinated assessment activities

- Educate and inform the University community about ways and means of assessment, conducting workshops and forums as needed and desired

- Develop and disseminate statistical and other reports and interpretations that may be useful in assessment, program improvement, and accreditation activities

- Ensure that all instruments and means of assessment meet professional standards such as those of reliability, respect for the confidentiality and well being of subjects, integrity of data, etc.

- Report to the University community and to the administration on progress in matters of assessment and accreditation.

The majority of the reporting will be done through the office's web page which acts as a repository of assessment activities and fosters the sharing of assessment resources and activities across the campus.

IV. Timeline

DATE:	ACTIVITIES
2000-2004	Academic Departments initiate course level student learning outcomes and objectives (SLOOs).
2000-2005	Colleges establish Assessment Committees and appoint assessment coordinators.
Fall 2004	Administrative Offices and Units initiate the development of assessment plans.
Fall 2004	<p>Office of Institutional Research and Assessment</p> <p>Begins work with Deans to insure programs have learning outcomes by the end of the spring semester</p> <p>Work with administrative offices through the Director's Council</p> <p>Review surveys in use by the University and programs for application to assessment planning</p> <p>Develops University Assessment page and posts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource list FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) Assessment Definitions Examples of Evidence
Fall 2004	General Education Survey refined by GE Senate Committee and administered to a larger number of GE courses
Spring 2005	<p>Academic Departments</p> <p>Chairs and faculty review or develop program goals and undergraduate and graduate program level student learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are linked to general education courses. Courses are mapped to the program student outcomes.</p>
Spring 2005	IR & A coordinates NSSE to begin documenting baseline information about student engagement at WPUNJ and comparable universities.
Spring 2005	Within each Academic College at least a third of the Academic Departments submit assessment plans to the Dean
Spring 2005	Senate Assessment Forum held
Spring 2005	Directors Council Assessment workshops held
Spring 2005	Deans' year End Reports to Provost include assessment updates
Fall 2005	Next Third of Academic Departments submit full assessment plans with program learning outcomes and begin assessment activities
Fall 2005	<p>Senate General Education and Assessment Committees</p> <p>Review findings from already collected data and expand the activities to more fully assess GE</p>
Spring 2006	Submit Periodic Review Report
Fall 2006	Final third of undergraduate programs submit assessment plans
Spring 2007	All programs have activated assessment programs.
2007-2008	University-wide assessment process solidified and actively engaged with numerous and varied assessment instruments. Results from assessment activities, in numerous cases, used for program improvements