The LAMP is (Being) Lit

The Learning Assessment in Missouri Postsecondary Education (LAMP) Advisory Council is having its initial meeting on Thursday, October 23, 2008 from 10:00am-2:00pm.

This voluntary group will begin work on a statewide assessment policy that is built upon the foundations of previous statewide efforts and driven by the improvement of student learning while responding to the call for accountability. Such a cohesive statewide assessment approach must develop a greater understanding of the scope and magnitude of assessment in Missouri; gather information on best practices, both local and national; agree upon meaningful methods and outcomes; and make appropriate policy recommendations.

To carry out this charge, LAMP participants will do the following:

1. Perform a review of Missouri postsecondary assessments currently in use;
2. Perform a review of literature and professional knowledge regarding effective use of assessment of student learning for continuous improvement and for accountability;
3. Deliver a report to the Commissioner of Higher Education by June 1, 2009;
4. Develop and implement a communication plan to publicize, allow feedback, and build support at the secondary and postsecondary levels concerning the development of a statewide assessment agenda.

COL 020 Coordinators Remember the Alamo

Recently, COL 020 (College Orientation and Study Skills) Coordinators Rhonda Adams, Julie Copp, Kathy Petroff, and Lillian Seese attended the National Conference on First-Year Assessment, October 12-14, 2008 in San Antonio, TX. The conference is “designed to maximize opportunities for participant learning and networking, and structured to create a cumulative learning experience. The Conference’s purpose is to provide a comprehensive introduction to the theory and practice of first-year assessment.”

According to Lillian Seese, Professor of Mathematics and Meramec Coordinator of COL 020, all the sessions she attended were “solid, very worthwhile.” Seese offered that the featured speaker, John N. Gardner, was most impressive. Gardner is founder and senior fellow of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and distinguished professor emeritus of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina.

According to Seese, of particular interest was Gardner’s observation that “a team effort and consultation with outside experts” are necessary elements in a sound assessment of developmental programs.
More on the Higher Learning Commission Review

As Chancellor Zelema Harris reported in her opening remarks at Professional Development Day, on September 22, she, Acting Vice-Chancellor Donna Dare, and Director of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment John Cosgrove met with representatives of the Higher Learning Commission to review its recent accreditation visit findings.

The purpose of this meeting was to appeal the HLC visiting team’s finding that STLCC needed on a focus visit on assessment. STLCC’s appeal was successful, as the Review Committee’s follow-up report proclaims (below), thereby supporting STLCC’s position that the Mission-Based approach to assessment, devised and implemented by the College, is in accordance with HLC’s official policy on assessment.

“A new mission based assessment program has been initiated by the institution. The review committee recognizes the merit in this approach; however, it has not been fully implemented within the faculty structure and in every program. The assessment program has been endorsed by the Board and administration, including academic leadership.

“The Review Committee does not feel a focused visit is necessary because that recommendation seems to have relied excessively on the expectation of ‘course-based’ assessment across the district as opposed to ‘program-level’ assessment as specified within [the] Commission statement on assessment.

“The Review Committee agrees [that] additional institutional follow-up is necessary but does not agree [that] a focused visit is needed in this situation. The Review Committee recommends a progress report on implementation of assessment due on January 31, 2011. The particular issues in the progress report are to the same as recommended in the Team Assurance report.”

October Assessment Council

The Assessment Council heard reports on a number of issues at its October meeting at Forest Park Campus. Following are notes from that meeting.

1. John Cosgrove provided a brief update on 2009 Mission-Based Assessment Projects:
   ● Transfer: Academic success of STLCC students who completed 24 or more STLCC credit hours and then transferred to a Missouri, public four-year college/university. Results are being examined for college-ready and non-ready students.
   ● CTE: Analysis of employer feedback related to the employment preparation of STLCC career graduates. Programs scheduled for program review in 2009-2010 will participate in a pilot project to solicit both general and program specific feedback from employers who hire their graduates.
   ● Developmental Education: Collection and analysis of data required for the NADE self-study process.
   ● General Education: Analysis of writing skills/competencies of STLCC students who complete the General Education capstone course.
   ● Student Affairs: Collection and analysis of CCSSE student engagement data.
   ● WCD: Project is currently under development.

2. STLCC Analysis of CAAP Graduate Testing Data

Greg Works (IRPA Senior Research Associate) provided an excellent review of 5 years of CAAP testing data (link to the full report provided below). The presentation generated an excellent discussion regarding the importance of adequate academic preparation. The group also discussed the idea of analyzing the graduates’ scores in more detail in an attempt to develop determine specific areas/skills in which our graduates are lacking. The IRPA office agreed to contact ACT and request a more in-depth content analysis of the scores. The group agreed to revisit this project at its November 17th meeting.

3. Update on Campus Academic Division 2009 Assessment Efforts

Cosgrove reported that all academic divisions at each location have submitted their 2008-2009 division assessment plans to their appropriate Vice-President.

4. Update on Strategic Planning and Assessment

Cosgrove reported that the link between strategic planning and assessment has been formalized at the Leadership Team and Board of Trustees levels. Each strategic planning choice is supported by a list of strategic planning performance indicators. Information related to these indicators will be reported to the LT and BOT on a regular basis. The first such report is schedule for January 2009.

In Print: Mission-Based Assessment

John Cosgrove and Larry McDoniel recently received word that their article entitled “Mission-Based Assessment to Improve Student Learning and Institutional Effectiveness” will be published by Jossey-Bass in the forthcoming book, Principles and Profiles of Good Practice in Assessment. Trudy Banta, one of the editors, reports that “the profile you submitted for our new assessment book has been selected as one of 50 (chosen from a total of 150) to be included in its entirety in the volume. Congratulations.”

The article submitted by Cosgrove and McDoniel describes the rationale for and progress of STLCC’s mission-based approach.

2009 Transfer Conference

The [Missouri] Transfer and Articulation conference will be held on January 30, 2009 at the Holiday Inn Select, Columbia, Missouri. Three tracks in keeping with the theme will be offered:

1) Statewide Initiatives as they relate to transfer;
2) Best Practices in Transfer Credit; and
3) Transfer Student Data and Research.

In Track 3, John Cosgrove and Larry McDoniel, STLCC and Melissa Hattman, UMSL will be presenting on the Transfer Education Assessment Committee’s recent assessment projects. In 2007 – 2008, the Committee sought to follow up on the previous year’s findings as well as recent CCSSE data that suggested STLCC students were not using advising services as expected to assist them in transferring. With funding provided by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, and with the cooperation and assistance of Melissa Hattman, Director of Transfer Services and Articulation at UMSL, the committee devised a study involving former STLCC students currently enrolled at UMSL who participated in focus groups divided into three cohorts. In this session, participants will learn what assessment of student engagement and the focus groups have revealed about STLCC transfer success.

Professional Development Day “Observations”

John Cosgrove offered a number of observations regarding Professional Development Day activities. As he says: “Here are a couple of observations regarding the influence of assessment on professional development day; use or disregard as you see fit.”
1. Throughout the opening remarks, as well as during the breakout sessions, it seemed clear that the mission-based assessment process has helped develop a culture of thoughtful interpretation of data/information which leads to action.

2. The relationship and connection between assessment and strategic planning is strong and continues to grow, as both processes support each other.

3. The excellent session related to Developmental Education initiatives played to a packed lecture hall. Using assessment results, faculty and staff from all locations have developed a number of new, campus-based instructional strategies aimed at the common goal of increasing the academic preparation of our developmental students.

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Since 1992, an assessment conference has been developed and hosted by principals in the Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement at Indiana University-Purdue University (IUPUI). The purpose of this series of educational programs is to further the scholarship and practice of assessment in higher education. Presenters and participants come from institutions across the country. Participation by internationally recognized and respected assessment leaders has made the Assessment Institute in Indianapolis one that many attend routinely and has resulted in a steady increase in attendance, from nearly 300 in 1992, to over 1000 in 2007.

GENERAL EDUCATION
ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

We at St. Louis Community College recognize that general education supports learners in becoming capable lifelong learners, informed and responsible citizens of our global community, and valuable contributors to the work force and the economy. Therefore, on this 21st day of October, 2008, St. Louis Community College formally declares its commitment to general education for all students. In response to St. Louis Community College’s Strategic Direction II: Improving the Academic Achievements and Student Learning Outcomes of our Students, we as faculty, staff, and students of St. Louis Community College hereby commit to work together to advance academic achievement and student learning through general education for all students.

Important STLCC Assessment Links
- Assessment Resources  http://www.stlcc.edu/Faculty_and_Staff_Resources/Assessment/Assessment_Resources.html
- Assessment Public Site  http://www.stlcc.edu/Faculty_and_Staff_Resources/Assessment/