Redux: Assessment and the Higher Learning Commission

On September 22, Chancellor Zelema Harris, 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 a focus visit on assessment. Also in attendance at the Appeal and Review Committee meeting was Dr. Kim Linduska (STLCC’s HLC visiting team chair).

After several hours of questioning and discussion, the HLC Appeal and Review Committee reversed the decision of the visiting team and found no merit for the College to receive a focus visit on assessment. Instead, the HLC Appeal and Review Committee instructed the College to prepare a progress report regarding the continued development of its mission-based assessment approach. The Committee directed the College to submit this progress report to the Higher Learning Commission by January 31, 2011.

Thank you for all of your efforts to support the successful development and implementation of the College’s mission-based assessment model. This model continues to receive national recognition, and given the decision by the HLC Appeal and Review Committee, it is clear that HLC recognized your efforts.

During the next Assessment Council meeting, additional information related to this topic will be provided. In addition, the Council will begin a discussion related to a specific topic for the progress report, specifically direct measurement of student learning outcomes in general education.

District-wide Developmental Education Meeting

On September 4, 2008, a group of key stakeholders in developmental education from across the district participated in a discussion regarding the future of developmental education at STLCC. The primary context for the discussion was the college’s strategic planning direction “Improving the Academic Achievements and Student Learning Outcomes of Our Students” and its two strategic choices, namely:

- **Strategic Choice 1**: Increase degree and certificate completion rates, while enhancing the learning outcomes of graduates.
- **Strategic Choice 2**: Create an effective developmental education program aimed at the development of skills necessary to complete college-level coursework.

An additional noted context for the discussion was the Coordinated Plan for higher education entities in Missouri, which includes indicators related to developmental education.
One of the primary points of discussion throughout the meeting was the notion of a developmental education program and if/how developmental education might be re-envisioned by the college if it were to be considered a program in the same way that general education, for example, is considered a program. The question of the balance of college-wide approaches and local (i.e., campus) efforts was raised and included a brief discussion of certification process steps particularly in regard to developmental math and COL 020.

Generally, the group encouraged a continued focus on collective planning and assessment efforts related to developmental education for the purpose of informing the college and community constituencies regarding the increasing demands for innovative and aggressive approaches to meeting the developmental needs of students. Members of the group also voiced their support for locally developed solutions for addressing developmental needs of students on each campus. The group acknowledged the need to look at funding and resources collectively (as a district) in order to obtain and leverage maximum resources for addressing developmental education needs across the district.

As next steps, the group concurred that STLCC should look at the NADE certification process and should use the process elements as a framework for developing a strategic approach to continuous improvement of developmental education. The acting VCE and vice presidents of academic affairs will meet with several others to determine how the district can most effectively organize efforts in developmental education around the NADE certification process steps to bring maximum benefit to the college. A primary goal of using the NADE certification process steps will be to leverage certification efforts in ways that could best advance the entire district’s approach to developmental education while still encouraging innovative and unique approaches to meeting the needs of students at the local campus level.

The group will reconvene in late October to formalize next steps in planning continuous improvement in developmental education and to coordinate related efforts and resources.

**Mission-Based Assessment Charges**

At the first Assessment Council meeting of the 08-09 year on September 12, Council Chair John Cosgrove discussed several changes in 08-09 assessment approaches. These changes are in response to feedback and information received from faculty and staff during the 07-08 “Assessment of Assessment” process. Such changes include: adding a campus Vice-President for Academic Affairs to the Assessment Council; submitting campus division assessment plans to the campus Vice-President for Academic Affairs; merging of Student Support Services committee with Student Affairs Mission-Based committee; further developing the “public” website for Assessment; assigning specific, district-wide assessment projects to each mission-based assessment committee; distributing *Assessment Notes* more widely and more purposefully; revising the internal Assessment Portal.
All of these changes have been implemented and are under way. For example, the Mission-Based Assessment Projects assigned for 2008-2009 are as follows:

- Career and Technical Education: Examine employer satisfaction with the overall quality of STLCC graduates.
- Developmental Education: Examine Strategic Planning Performance Indicators related to developmental education and also pursue NADE certification for STLCC.
- General Education: Clarify program and course-level outcomes as well as develop rubrics for cornerstone, capstone, and writing intensive courses that assess depth of knowledge.
- Student Affairs: Coordinate the collection of CCSSE and CCFSSE data.
- Transfer Education: Examine the number of students who complete 24 or more credit hours with STLCC, transfer to a Missouri four-year college/university and remain in good academic standing at their four-year institution after 24 credit hours.
- Workforce and Community Development: Under the director of the new Vice Chancellor for Economic Development, examine cost/benefit factors and strategies related to WCD course and programs.

Several questions and points were raised related to the Student Affairs mission-based effort. The Council recommended that it will be very important to ensure that CCSSE and CCFSSE data collection at each campus occurs in a systematic and standardized manner.

### FYI

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<tr>
<th>2008-09 Meeting Schedule</th>
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<td>STLCC Assessment Council</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Meeting Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>Student Center 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>FV</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>TC 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>BA 105</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>Highlander Lounge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 13</td>
<td>FV</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>TC 110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12:00 – 4:00</td>
<td>SC 200-201 [Assessment of Assessment]</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2:30 – 4:00</td>
<td>Multipurpose Room 102, Side B</td>
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National Conference on First-Year Assessment  
October 12 - 14, 2008  
San Antonio, TX  
http://www.sc.edu/fye/events/fall08/index.html

The National Conference on First-Year Assessment, formerly the Summer Institute on First-Year Assessment, 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.

Exploring both quantitative and qualitative assessment practices, conference concurrent sessions allow participants to gain a breadth of knowledge while workshops allow an in-depth examination of major issues. Faculty, first-year program directors, student affairs professionals, institutional researchers, and assessment practitioners at the conference engage one another, formally and informally, during the conference while seeking a common goal of better understanding of the first year of college.

2008 Assessment Institute
October 26 - 28, 2008
Indianapolis, IN
http://www.planning.iupui.edu/574.html

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.

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/