MEMO

To: Members of the Faculty Association
From: John C. Garrett, Ph.D.
Date: Monday, April 28, 1997
Subject: Academic Assessment Committee’s End-of-Year Report.

This has been a busy year for the Academic Assessment Committee (AAC). We were charged by the Academic Dean to take a look at how the College assesses the achievement of our students in their general education classes and to develop an assessment plan that would meet the criteria outlined in the NCA Handbook of Accreditation for assessing student academic achievement. In addition to looking at what we are already doing here at Columbia College, we also surveyed approximately 30 other II-B colleges’ assessment plans. Based on those results, we have developed an assessment plan for our general education program which we believe will not only meet NCA’s requirements but will also maximize our academic freedom and will be “sellable” to our students.

Our proposed assessment plan is described in this document and in the documents that are attached. We realized that it is too late in the academic year to adequately discuss and finalize the plan this year. We are giving it to you now so that you will have time to think about it over the summer and then be prepared to act on it at the start of next semester. The NCA criteria for an academic achievement plan will serve as headings for the rest of this report.

Successful assessment flows from the institution’s mission and educational purposes.

The first page in the attached material addresses this criterion. This table starts off with the part of Columbia College’s Mission Statement that deals most directly with general education: “a broad understanding of liberal arts and sciences.” Then the criteria for general education courses, which have recently been approved by the faculty, are used for column headings, while the categories of courses which make up our general education program are listed as row headings. The X indicates which GE criteria are met by which categories of courses, while the (X) indicates the criteria that may be met to a lesser degree. We expect that there may be some discussion as to where the X or (X) should be, but the table reflects what appeared most appropriate to the AAC.
members. The table provides a convenient form for seeing which G.E. criteria we are meeting through the multiple perspectives.

**Successful assessment emerges from a conceptual framework.**

The table that was described above and the figure on the next attached page, "The Assessment Cycle," form our conceptual framework. I have already described the table, and a narrative description of the Assessment Cycle is provided on the third attached page. While the table emphasizes the academic content of our conceptual framework, the Assessment Cycle demonstrates the process. It shows the flow of information and how the data collected will feed back into the system.

**Successful assessment is marked by faculty ownership and responsibility.**

First, a faculty committee has developed the proposed model, and the entire faculty will finalize the College's academic assessment plan. Also, in the Assessment Cycle, there are three stages where the faculty play a central role in processing and making decisions based on assessment data (the AAC analysis, CAP action, and general faculty action). It is clear that the faculty will own and be responsible for this plan.

**Successful assessment has institution-wide support.**

The AAC has kept Dean Smith informed of its work throughout the year, and he has told us that he has mentioned our progress to the President. We have been assured that administrators are aware of the importance of developing an academic assessment plan and that we have their support. One benefit of the model that we are proposing is that it should be fairly easy to gradually institute at our ESD sites and in the evening program.

**Successful assessment relies on multiple measures.**

This has been the most frequently discussed aspect of our proposed plan in the AAC. First, after reading the NCA guidelines and collecting data from other schools, it became clear that this was where we were most lacking. While our student course evaluations may provide useful information, they are not instruments of academic assessment. Rather, they measure attitudes, and though such are important in "total assessment," we were charged with developing a plan for assessing academic outcomes.

Our discussions centered on several underlying principles. First, we wanted to be respectful of academic freedom, so we did not want a plan that placed too many restrictions on what faculty taught or the methods they used. Second, we wanted a plan that would be demonstrably relevant so faculty would help in its implementation without taking too much class time. Finally, we wanted a plan that we could motivate students to take seriously.

We hope that the proposed three measures accomplish those aims. The easiest measure to collect and work pertains to the students' actual grades in their general
education courses. Those are easy to obtain and have an intuitive validity. However, in some other materials NCA makes it clear that grades \textit{per se} are NOT sufficient measures of academic achievement (there are concerns about reliability and grade inflation).

Our second measure will be developed by the full-time faculty on the Columbia campus who are responsible for teaching the general education courses. Instead of being a single measure, this is actually a procedure which we are calling the Classroom-Based General Education Course Assessment Procedure (see attached description). In brief, each department, or designated faculty, will develop an independent pre-test/post-test assessment procedure for each general education course that they teach. Whatever procedure used would have to have a numerical score (a mean and standard deviation are needed to do the analysis).

Finally, we propose use of a standardized test of general education. There are several on the market (i.e., COMP, CAAP, Academic Profile). While we have not made any final decision on which one, we are leaning towards the Academic Profile-Short Form (AP-S). The AP-S measures four skills (Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking, Use of Math) across three content areas (Humanities, Social Sciences, Math/Natural Sciences), which closely correspond with the skills/competencies and content areas we cover in our general education program. The AP-S has good reliability and validity, provides both criterion-based and normed-based data, and (best of all) only takes about 50-60 minutes to administer. It is our plan that all incoming students would take the AP-S during student orientation and then again sometime in their junior year. We believe it will be much easier to motivate students to take seriously a 50 minute test than a 2-3 hour test (like the others).

Obviously, the details of both the classroom-based assessments and the standardized testing need to be worked out next year.

\textbf{Successful assessment provides feedback to students and the institution.}

The Assessment Cycle clearly demonstrates the feedback loops for both groups.

\textbf{Successful assessment is cost-effective.}

We have not had time to work out a budget for all this, but the AP-S is less than $10 per student, and the other measures are very low-cost since we will develop them ourselves.

\textbf{Successful assessment does not restrict or inhibit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution.}

The plan that we are proposing flows directly out of the College's stated objectives, and it provides maximum flexibility for the faculty and students.
Successful assessment leads to improvement. Successful assessment includes a process for evaluating the assessment program.

The circular nature of the Assessment plan allows for this feedback. In the near future, the College will have less evidence of how this has already led to improvements. Basically, we need to put an assessment plan in place so that we will have a couple of years worth of data, along with our responses to the information, to show NCA.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Academic Assessment Committee (Christine Cotton, J.S. Huang, and Stephanie Taylor) for all the hard work they did this year in developing this proposal. I am certain that our proposal will provoke some valuable feedback next year as we, the faculty, work out the details and start to implement it.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that the best examples for the Academic Assessment Committee’s work come from a carefully and completely developed assessment plan already in use at Heidelberg College.
### General Education Perspectives

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<tr>
<th>General Education Perspectives</th>
<th>Columbia College General Education Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Main Computer, Language Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Civilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Science Courses</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math/Science Courses</td>
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The Assessment Cycles

The Assessment Plan at Columbia College can be illustrated by means of two cycles - one that illustrates the assessment of the college's general education requirement, and the other illustrating the assessment of the academic programs. The cycles indicate the relationship between the entities and procedures involved in the assessment process.

The General Education Cycle indicates that the general education curriculum flows from the objectives in the College's mission statement that relate to academic achievement.

Student achievement in general education is measured by means of the assessment instruments that address the College's academic objectives. In order to have multiple measurement of general education achievement, three sets of data are collected; a standardized test of the skills and knowledge typically covered in college general education (i.e., Academic Profile, CAAP, COMP), a classroom-based course assessment procedure, and the grades given in each general education course. A pre-test/post-test format is used for both the standardized test, and the classroom-based course assessment procedures. These procedures are described in more detail in another section, as well as the schedule for conducting these procedures. The data from these assessment procedures will be collected by the Institutional Research Analyst, who will then analyze the data and make a report to the Faculty Academic Assessment Committee (AAC).

The Faculty Academic Assessment Committee, based on the analysis of the data, will then forward any proposals for improvement in the general education curriculum to the Vice President and Dean of Academic Affairs Office (VP/DAA). The VP/DAA will then forward the AAC report to the Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee (CAP), and other appropriate constituencies (e.g., the College's Trustees, Administrative Council, Alumni Board, and Student Government). Both CAP and these other constituencies may make suggestions for revisions to the AAC.

It is the responsibility of CAP to evaluate the final report from the Faculty Academic Assessment Committee, and make recommendations to the Faculty Association for action. Faculty action then results in improvement in the general education curriculum, and the cycle is complete. Some results may be forwarded to other appropriate committees or groups for consideration and possible action to improve institutional effectiveness outside the curriculum (any such actions will be reported in the Faculty Academic Assessment Committee annual report). It should be noted that despite the appearance on the diagram, the College's objectives related to academic achievement are not outside the cycle. The plan includes periodic review of the objectives.
Annual Report on Student Academic Achievement and Academic Program Reviews

This report describes the status of assessment and program review activities for 1997-98. The outcomes of the three program reviews are summarized in Appendix I, which describes the reviews conducted since 1996. The three elements of outcomes assessment are reported on below.

General Education

The Academic Assessment Committee and the Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee recommended, and the Faculty Association adopted, a General Education Assessment plan with two components. The first is pre/post-tests in all General Education classes, beginning with Basic Skills classes (CISS 170, ENGL 111, ENGL 112) and HIST 101 and HIST 102. By the end of the 1997-98 academic year, pre/post-tests had been administered in CISS 170, HIST 101, and HIST 102. Data have not been analyzed.

The second component is the administration of the standardized test of general education, the Academic Profile, Short Form. This test was taken by 128 Day and Evening students in their Fall 1997 and Spring 1998 culminating experience classes.

Results show that upper level students at the College are at the national average for peer institutions in overall results in the skills areas of reading, writing, critical thinking, and using data, and in the content areas of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The results have not yet been subjected to detailed analysis. The General Education Task Force has been given the results.

Culminating Experiences

Each bachelors degree program has a culminating experience that informs faculty about strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum to a greater or lesser degree. Culminating experiences are to meet six criteria:

1. Identify learning goals of the major.
2. Measure learning goals of the major.
3. Identify activities that demonstrated learning.
4. Stipulate desired level of learning.
5 Demonstrate that faculty use information from culminating experiences to improve the major.

6 Include criteria 1-4 in course master syllabi.

Of the twelve culminating experiences, one (EDUC 400) meets all six criteria, and three (ARTS 495, MGMT 479, and SOWK 490/495/498) meet five.

Surveys

The College has administered the ACT Enrolled Student Survey in 1988, 1993, 1996, and 1997. This past fall 360 students (Day and Evening) completed the survey.

Survey findings include satisfaction with small class sizes, faculty attitudes toward students, instruction in the major, and quality of grounds and facilities. Deficiencies were reported in student commons area, residence hall rules and regulations, parking, food service, and transcript evaluations.

The Retention Council analyzed the results and made recommendations for institutional improvement. Key recommendations include:

1. Improve course placement procedures
2. Increase academic environment in residence halls.
3. Improve advising.
4. Address differences between Day and Evening.
5. Improve food service.
6. Develop a senior-level class to prepare students for the world of work.

Goals for 1998-99

1. Interpret results of Basic Skills and HIST 101 and HIST 102 course pre/post-tests and get recommendations by faculty for curricula improvement.
2. Administer pre/post-tests in ENGL 111 and ENGL 112
3. Develop pre/post-tests for 30 more general education courses.

5. Prepare for administration of AP at selected Missouri ESD sites

6. Use AP results in developing recommendations for revising general education.

7. Complete refinement of all culminating experiences to meet the six criteria.

8. Interpret initial findings of culminating experiences and get recommendations from faculty for curricula improvement.


Academic Affairs Office
June 30, 1998
TO: Academic Assessment Committee
FROM: Terry B. Smith
       Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs
DATE: December 8, 1998
RE: Pre-Post-Tests

I have attached the pertinent pages from the Handbook of Accreditation from North Central. Note especially the section that begins at the bottom of page 43 with the eight items. The statement that comes closest to mandating multiple measures is number eight, which is about measuring different kinds of learning, or at least different levels of learning. Also, you have previously read the paper prepared by Cecilia Lopez: "Patterns of evidence that demonstrate useful implementation of assessment plans include:

1. clearly stated goals for all academic programs;
2. explicit objectives for student learning derived from these goals;
3. that are publicly stated and linked to specific measures;
4. the use of multiple instruments that include direct measures of student learning;
5. minutes of assessment committee meetings that document how assessment information has been collected and interpreted;
6. a feedback loop, that is, documentation of how the information derived from the interpretation of the data has been disseminated to constituents, how often, and to what end;
7. documentation of changes proposed and made in teaching curricula and/or academic support services as a direct result of information derived from the analysis of the data;
8. evidence of any improvement in student achievement following changes; and
9. any evidence that the assessment program itself is being periodically evaluated."

We are clearly in compliance with North Central assessment guidelines. We do use multiple measures. They include, but are not limited to,
Academic Profile (short form) to assess general education

Culminating experiences in each of the bachelors degree programs

Enrolled student survey

Alumni survey (forthcoming)

Other departmental assessments, including use of the Major Field Test in several majors

I support the recommendation of the academic assessment committee to the faculty that the Pre-Post-Test requirement be eliminated, because it is not necessary to bring the College into compliance with North Central guidelines. However, departments may choose to use pre-post-tests as they see fit for instructional and curricular improvement.
TO: Academic Assessment Committee
FROM: Dr. Terry Smith
DATE: January 23, 1998
Re: Results of Fall Semester Academic Profile Pilot Project

Forty-two upperclass students (mostly seniors) took the Academic Profile (Short Form) in December in their culminating experience class to pilot the Academic Profile as a general education assessment instrument.

This week I received the results, which are available for your review in my office.

Executive Summary: Our students performed at the national average of liberal arts college upperclass students.

c: Jill Kingsbury
TO: Dr. Brad Lookingbill
FROM: Terry B. Smith  
Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs
DATE: October 20, 1999
RE: Responses to Questions

1. What are the specific plans of the office for academic affairs this year in regard to expanding the AP test pilot program to include several thousand students completing GE courses in ESD and EGD?

For many reasons we will not administer the AP everywhere in ESD. The purpose of administering the AP to assess general education at the sites is to see what differences, if any, there are between traditional day students and adult learners. In theory we could meet that objective by giving the AP only to Evening students. However, there are three different types of sites, so we should do the AP at one site of each type for a period of time to see if there are a different learning outcomes.

2. What are the specific plans of the office for academic affairs this year in regard to collecting data from culminating experiences required of the several thousand students completing academic majors in ESD and EGD?

Same general answer as above.

3. What are the expectations of NCA for the assessment of graduate programs? Does the accreditation handbook provide different guidelines or standards for the assessment of Undergraduate and Graduate programs?

See attached from the NCA Handbook. Graduate assessment needs to demonstrate especially the first expectation on page 47.

TBS/ss
Inter-Office Memo

TO: T. Smith, Dean for Academic Affairs
FROM: B. Lookingbill, Chair for Assessment Committee
DATE: November 4, 1999
RE: Assessment Committee responses to responses members

Thank you for responding to the assessment committee's questions about implementation. The committee is in the process of collecting information on implementation activities at ESD and EGD, but your response to our questions seemed to indicate that the plan will not be implemented as designed. However, the committee believes that the faculty approved assessment plan calls for multiple measures wherever learning is a value.

The committee's duties in the 1998 faculty handbook (section 4.2.1) include the charge to coordinate activities related to "educational assessment throughout the College." Indeed, we are concerned about your statement about implementing the plan only "at one site of each type" because there has been no previous discussion of this strategy with the committee. As you suggested, the possibility of "differences" between traditional day students and adult learners in achieving GE and academic program outcomes needs to be scrutinized through the analysis of institutional data. We surmise that feedback loops will enable the assessment committee to exercise its responsibilities to help improve teaching and learning wherever the "gaps" between competencies and outcomes may be contributing to inequities. In order for the committee to assist with student achievement, the AP, culminating experiences, and surveys need to be generating results about the performance of several thousand students across the system each year. Simply put, the status quo does not collect data representative of student learning at ESD and EGD.

The assessment committee appreciates more information about on-going implementation throughout the College and requests that you meet with the committee to clarify and to elaborate upon your statements. Since you are an ex-officio member of the committee, I am inviting you to participate in our next meeting on December 2 or to request an alternative meeting date at your convenience.
SKILLS DIMENSION SCORES: FALL 1999 UPPERCLASSMEN

SKILLS DIMENSION SCORES: SPRING 2000 UPPERCLASSMEN

Prepared by Institutional Research
Sheila Brynulfson, Analyst
TO: Chairs

FROM: Terry B. Smith
Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs

DATE: February 23, 1999

RE: Annual Department Assessment Report

By May 1 I need a report on department assessment of learning outcomes using the format outlined below. It will be summarized in the annual institutional assessment report.

I. Department name

II. Assessment of General Education [i.e., use of Academic Profile results in curriculum development, if applicable; pre/post tests].

III. Assessment of major through Culminating Experience – use of findings in curriculum development. Graduate programs must also assess learning.

IV. Program review and outcomes [if conducted].

V. Other assessment activities [i.e., student exit interviews, alumni surveys, employer surveys, review of ACT student survey results, adoption of Retention Council recommendations, etc.].