

Seton Hall University Assessment Plan

The University's assessment operation (website: <http://www.shu.edu/offices/provost/assessment/>) consists of three major arms: an infrastructure to ensure distributed and continuous work on assessment and widespread contribution to and authority for assessment plans, a network of programs and initiatives to profit from assessment innovations at peer institutions and to generate our own assessment innovations, and a system of calendars to increase the breadth, predictability and use of substantial assessment activity at the University.

PERSONNEL

The University's management of Assessment is assigned to one of the Associate Provosts; at least two of the colleges with external accreditations also have assessment specialists on staff and one college also has an assessment co-coordinator. An additional faculty member joined the Provost's Office on special assignment in Summer 2011 as Assessment Coordinator.

The Associate Provost chairs an Assessment Steering Committee, which was formed in 2009 from the same group that had served as the Middle States Periodic Review Report Steering Committee and had managed the preparation of Seton Hall's 2009 Periodic Review Report. The Steering Committee is composed of individuals from varied units across the University. The Steering Committee consists of, in addition to the Associate Provost,

A representative from Student Affairs

A representative from the Division of Finance and Technology

A chairperson in Arts and Sciences who also serves a leadership role in the Faculty Senate

A faculty member from a Professional School with considerable external accreditation experience.

The role of the Steering Committee is to guide and coordinate the overall assessment operation across the University. The Committee is charged with ensuring that all members of the University understand the value of assessment, engage in ongoing assessment on a regular basis, and use the data to make modifications and improvements to improve processes across campus. The effective use of assessment data will enable all University employees to work towards our singular goal, which is to support the mission of the University by providing programs of the highest quality, while effectively preparing our students to succeed in their chosen profession and contribute meaningfully to the common good.

Seton Hall has had a number of larger groups specializing in assessment over the years; in Spring 2011 the Steering Committee reconstituted a larger group with representation from all colleges and divisions to serve as a forum for assessment issues and best practices. The first meeting was held in April 2011.

This larger group will also serve as a forum for the regular special outcomes assessment projects that departments will be expected to report on in future Program Review self-studies.

The University also has an Institutional Research Office with a staff of four that takes primary responsibility for national assessments such as Your First College Year (YCFY), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE), handles the Fall and Spring course evaluations, and takes the lead role on preparation of statistics used for University Planning including enrollment and finance statistics, IPEDs, Middle States profile and U S News reporting, and the regular university “dashboard”, as well as some ad hoc assessment projects.

The annual NSSE administration is the subject of a full report every Fall and is also incorporated into the University’s annual Fact Book (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/institutional-research-fact-book.cfm>; see p. 82 of 2010-11 edition, for example), which presents trend information as well over the ten years Seton Hall has participated. The University has participated in BCSSE and YCFY in alternate years.

TECHNOLOGY

Seton Hall’s Teaching, Learning and Technology Center (TLTC) operates within the Division of Finance and Technology but works closely with Academic Affairs to ensure that the center’s mission receives academic direction in the use of educational technology to enhance the teaching and learning experience. The director of TLTC serves on the University’s Assessment Steering Committee.

One of the Center’s major programs is the Curriculum Development Initiative (CDI), now in its fourteenth year. The CDI program provides significant multi-year support to academic departments to undertake technology-enabled curriculum development projects. In 2007 through the present, CDI projects have focused on the development of the Core Curriculum, support for the development of online courses in the undergraduate and continuing education curricula, and assessment of student learning outcomes. Since 2007, six academic departments have been awarded internal grants to design, develop and implement new assessment projects in their departments to measure student learning outcomes, including the departments of Psychology, Biology, Physics, English, and Educational Studies.

In 2007, the TLTC and the College of Arts and Sciences formally adopted the Quality Matters Program to assess the quality of all online courses in the CAS. The Quality Matters Program is a FIPSE funded, nationally recognized, faculty-centered, peer review program to ensure quality in online and blended learning courses. Consisting of over 30 checkpoints, the QM rubric assess consistency across all online and blended learning courses and ensures that students have the necessary information to succeed.

Other assessment-related initiatives supported by TLTC include development of a local e-portfolio style system for the College of Education and Human Services, and support for the artifact collection employed by the Department of English for their regular evaluation of writing skills components in student essays.

Since 2008, TLTC and Academic Affairs have collaborated on another innovative approach to outcomes assessment in which large numbers of students are asked to answer very small sets of knowledge or

skills questions and the collective performance on these questions analyzed. This collective assessment approach provides a complementary approach relative to comprehensive tests taken by a small number of students (such as the CLA) and artifact-analysis approaches which are more time- and resource-consuming. Since the beginning of this program, collective assessments of Math skill have been conducted four times, with two administrations each of a Critical Thinking test and an Internet research test, and one administration of a writing test and a Psychology knowledge test.

CYCLES

To facilitate more comprehensive assessment of academic and nonacademic operations at the University, a set of matrices is used that categorize SHU's operations in different ways. The **assessment calendar** (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/provost/assessment/calendar.cfm>) is organized by year, with columns for recurring academic assessments (such as NSSE), and recurring nonacademic assessments (e.g., career services initial employments surveys), and then for the current year and three years going forward. Adapting models used by other universities, rows categorize the assessment as external reporting and national studies, accreditation-based assessments, satisfaction assessments and internal research, and outcomes assessments. The **assessment landscape** (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/provost/assessment/upload/AssessmentLandscape2011.pdf>) is organized by university responsibility, based on the organizational chart of the university, and is used to track the assessments of the different academic and nonacademic units. Two representative examples of use of assessment results in support units outside of academe include initiatives to survey graduate student needs, and a new Internal Audit process.

- The Division of Student Affairs surveyed Associate Deans across the campus to learn about the pressing issues affecting graduate students in their college. A number of issues were raised and will be further assessed and studied in conjunction with the academic units. As a direct outcome of these interviews, housing was offered to graduate students for the first time and 82 students have taken advantage of this opportunity for the Fall 2011 semester.
- The Office of Internal Audit conducts risk assessment and identification of academic and nonacademic units across the University. The office was expanded in 2008 and the new administrator engaged a comprehensive risk survey of all University operations. Recent audits and outcomes include: Laboratory Administration - audit resulted in improved processes for handling of hazardous materials; Registrar – audit resulted in streamlined processing for managing holds on student records; NCAA Compliance – audit resulted in affirmation of compliance with applicable regulations.

Assessment activity of academic departments is monitored in different ways. The annual reports of most of the colleges require departments to report on their assessment activities and related outcomes, and the Program Review process managed in concert by the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate has long required departments to report on assessment activities. An escalation of these Program Review expectations is planned for the upcoming 2011-12 cycle, including the requirement that representatives of departments due for a self-study will attend and present at University Assessment Group meetings.

In January of 2011 departments were required to report specifically on their use of assessment results and to develop new assessment activities if warranted. Workshops were held at two Chairs' meetings and departments were also invited to the April University Assessment Group meeting in April. Highlights (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/provost/assessment/upload/DepartmentalHighlights.pdf>) and a comprehensive table of departmental use of assessment (<http://www.shu.edu/offices/provost/assessment/upload/DepartmentalOutcomes2011.pdf>) are on the assessment website; this reporting will become an annual expectation. These substantive reports describe completed and ongoing assessment activities and related modifications that enhance student learning and improve academic programming. The new University Core Curriculum has been assessed and strengthened regularly since its launch and is included in these documents as a quasi-department but it affects all students as its two primary courses are required of all undergraduates.

The University has been working on its new Strategic Plan for an extended time and plans are to submit the plan to the Board of Regents for official adoption in September 2011. However, earlier drafts are widely available to the community and have already played roles in some strategic decisions. The Assessment Steering Committee maintains a modified version of the **assessment calendar** which includes links to the 12 components of the draft plan to show the linkage between planning and assessment, and will be updated should the final version include changes in the components. Once the plan is adopted, a specific assessment plan for the Strategic Plan components will be built in and monitored by the Assessment Steering Committee and other appropriate university bodies.