

Assessment at UH Mānoa Report on Activities, 2000–2003

Assessment activities at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa are guided internally by Board of Regents and University of Hawai'i policies and externally by accreditation standards of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior Colleges Commission. Section 5-1 in Chapter 5, Academic Affairs, of the Board of Regents Policies direct campuses to conduct regular reviews of academic programs. University of Hawai'i Executive Policy E5.202, Review of Established Programs, mandates the periodic examination of academic programs by faculty and administration. Further, University of Hawai'i Executive Policy E5.210, Institutional Accountability and Performance, calls for the "regular and systematic assessment of programs" which focuses on "overall program and institutional effectiveness" and for the "integration of assessment activities into the institution's ongoing planning, program review, accreditation, student services, administration, budgeting, tuition-setting, and other processes."

One of WASC's core commitments is a commitment to educational effectiveness. This commitment requires institutions to explore approaches to educational effectiveness and assess whether institutional systems (course and program design), faculty support, and program review are effectively linked to evidence of student learning and are consistent with the educational goals and academic standards of the institution. Further, institutional policies and practices should lead to the development of a "culture of evidence and improvement."

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has embraced the charge from WASC to conduct "a more systematic review of learning" including "a demonstration of the effectiveness of University programs and activities to support student learning." Program assessment initiatives at Mānoa have proceeded with strong, consistent faculty leadership and participation. Assessment at Mānoa is about improving the quality of the educational experience. Following are the major assessment activities undertaken during 2001–2003.

- An Assessment Fund of \$100,000 was established in Fall 2000 to support faculty efforts to assess programs. Criteria for funding included demonstration that: (1) the proposed assessment was tied to program objectives; (2) would become a regular activity of the program; and (3) would be used to provide feedback to make adjustments that help meeting the objectives that the program has set for itself. In 2001, twelve programs received assessment fund awards. In Spring 2002, assessment funds were once again available. In this round, priority was placed on the assessment of general education. Six awards were made in Spring 2002.

- Leadership workshops were conducted to apprise incoming and existing department chairs of the assessment resources and data sources available to them.
- On Saturday, May 9, 2002, an all-day Assessment Workshop was attended by over 60 department chairs. Featured were Peter Ewell, Senior Associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, and several recipients of the 2001 Assessment Fund. On November 20, 2002, an Assessment Workshop was attended by over 60 departmental assessment officers. Featured speakers included key assessment resource people on campus as well as more recipients of the 2001 Assessment Fund.
- Program review guidelines were revised to include assessment of student learning and use of evidence to improve educational effectiveness. Academic programs undergoing program reviews are given informational resources regarding assessment of student learning outcomes.
- In Spring 2001 and Fall 2002, deans and department chairs reported on the status of assessment efforts in their programs, including student learning outcomes, dates/time lines of assessment activities, population(s) covered, aspects of the program that were assessed, types of instrument or data-gathering approach, response rates, and how the assessment was used to improve/evaluate program quality. These data were assembled into summary tables which are available at www.hawaii.edu/assessment/uhm/assessment_efforts_summary_tables.htm.

Individual department assessment reports have been collected and posted to the OVCAA assessment webpage, www.hawaii.edu/assessment/uhm/assessment_efforts_dept_reports.htm. The reports revealed that programs are utilizing multiple methods to assessment program quality. A wide variety of instruments/methods are employed including:

- student end-of-course evaluations
- student interviews, focus groups, meetings
- student surveys (entry, midpoint, and/or exit)
- capstone courses, internships, thesis, design project, field work, clinical
- portfolio, non-capstone
- national or state exam
- locally-developed exam (entry, midpoint, and/or exit)
- embedded-assessments (common across classes, including common exams)
- alumni surveys and/or interviews

- employer surveys and/or interviews
- faculty course review (using Hallmarks/Outcomes)
- external review of curriculum/program

The summary tables were distributed to all departments as part of an effort to acquaint faculty with the range of potential data-gathering approaches and to provide access to experienced resource persons.

- An assessment website has been developed, www.hawaii.edu/assessment/uhm, to provide information on department and college assessment activities, to provide institutional studies and data, to showcase best practices on campus, to provide resource materials and contacts to help in the implementation of assessment plans, and to keep the campus apprised to assessment efforts and events.
- The General Education Committee held a retreat on December 13, 2002 to discuss the assessment of student learning outcomes for the new General Education Diversification requirements. Throughout the 2002–2003 academic year, other General Education Committees (Foundations; Oral Communication; Writing; Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues; and Contemporary Ethical Issues) discussed processes for identifying both student learning outcomes and assessment instruments by which to evaluate student learning in the context of the new General Education curriculum.

Mānoa's approach to assessment of student learning outcomes is consistent with its mission as a research university. It is based on the belief that assessment is most appropriately conducted by academic leaders in individual programs, that it is a scholarly endeavor informed by data, that it includes peer review, and that it recognizes the evolutionary nature of learning and discovery.