Welcome to Assessment Matters

It is my pleasure to bring you the first issue of Assessment Matters. This quarterly newsletter is designed to be a resource for members of the Tulane community and other individuals interested in assessment in higher education.

Assessment Matters will contain regular features as well as special topics of interest to readers. Regular features will include Across Campus, From the Bookshelf (or e-reader), Resource Corner, and Closing the Loop. “Across Campus” will highlight the assessment and institutional effectiveness efforts of both academic and administrative departments. “From the Bookshelf (or e-reader)” is a review of an assessment-related text. The “Resource Corner” will highlight useful resources that are readily available to faculty and staff engaging in assessment efforts. “Closing the Loop” will feature how academic and administrative units use assessment results to improve their programs, initiatives, and processes. Assessment Matters will also include information on best assessment practices, key dates, and notices important to Tulane institutional effectiveness efforts.

I hope that you will find this newsletter both informative and helpful.

Katie Busby
Director of Institutional Assessment

Across Campus - SACS Reaffirmation

Tulane University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) or simply “SACS”. To reaffirm its accreditation, Tulane is reviewed every ten years by off-site and on-site review teams. The off-site team reviewed Tulane’s compliance certification report in November 2011, and a 10-member on-site team of faculty, staff, and administrators visited the New Orleans and Houston campuses March 30-April 1, 2011. The review team found Tulane in compliance with all standards. In accreditation terms, Tulane received no recommendations. This accomplishment is quite rare, and speaks to the quality of work from many Tulane community members. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees formally reaffirmed Tulane’s accreditation at their meeting on December 3, 2011. The next accreditation visit will take place in 2021, but Tulane is required to submit an interim report in 2017. Thank you to all of the faculty, staff, and students who contributed to the reaffirmation efforts.
From the Bookshelf (or e-reader)

*Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education*

By Mary J. Allen

Professor, author, presenter, and assessment professional, Mary J. Allen, guides readers through the assessment process in her book *Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education*. Beginning with the basics, Allen provides definitions of commonly used assessment terms. Throughout the book she offers suggestions on ways to engage faculty in the assessment process and to build a culture of assessment. Allen recommends a six-step assessment process and lists the steps as:

1. Develop learning outcomes.
2. Check for alignment between the curriculum and the objectives.
3. Develop an assessment plan.
4. Collect assessment data.
5. Use results to improve the program.
6. Routinely examine the assessment process and correct, as needed.

The text provides an overview of each step, and offers the reader multiple suggestions for implementing the assessment process. This approach to assessment follows commonly accepted and best practices. For example, Allen examines the strengths and weaknesses of different direct assessment techniques including published tests, course embedded assignments and activities, competence interviews, and portfolios.

The book is appropriate for any faculty member, program coordinator, or department chair interested in advancing student learning regardless of experience with assessment.

Faculty and professional staff interested in co-curricular assessment can also benefit from this text, as many of the points translate to learning experiences outside of the classroom and assessment of student development.

Urging the reader to “keep it simple” and “don’t skip steps” (p. 163), Allen offers a guide through the assessment process that is appropriate for those who have little experience with assessment, as well as those who are seasoned assessment practitioners.

This book can be found in the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library stacks call number LB2822.75.A44 2004.

Resource Corner - A Resource Among Resources

There are numerous texts, articles, websites, conference presentations, and listservs dedicated to advancing strong assessment practices. The “Resource Corner” feature is designed to cut through the clutter and highlight resources that will be most helpful to you.

To launch this feature, is a resource among resources: the North Carolina State University Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment website, one of the most comprehensive assessment resources available.

http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

The site was developed and is maintained by Ephraim Schechter. Dr. Schechter works tirelessly to ensure that the links provided on this site are working and contain relevant information for readers.
Course Evaluations

Fall 2011 course evaluation reports were made available to faculty beginning January 9, 2012. Faculty received an e-mail message alerting them that the reports had been uploaded to Blackboard. Instructions for accessing the complete reports are available for download anytime on the Institutional Assessment website.

The Fall 2011 quantitative course evaluation results will be made available to members of the Tulane community before April 10, 2012, via the Course Eval Results link within the Gibson portal.

Committee on Assessment

In May 2010 the University Senate amended the bylaws of the Constitution of the University Senate to include a Committee on Assessment. This committee is charged with reviewing and making recommendations to the Director of Institutional Assessment on assessment-related practices, and making recommendations to the Senate on assessment-related policies.

The committee is comprised of faculty, staff, and student representatives. The current members are as follows:

Deen Kemsley (A.B. Freeman School of Business); Jim Simmons (Continuing Studies); Amy Gajda, Chair (Law); John Howard (Liberal Arts); Tom Voss (Medicine); Hugh Long (Public Health and Tropical Medicine); Cedric Walker (Science and Engineering); Bob Hill (Newcomb-Tulane College Curriculum Committee Chair); Dave Davis (Institutional Research); John Nonnamaker (Student Affairs); Andy Corrigan (Library); Arthur Nead (University Communications); Dylan LeCorgne (undergraduate student); Jamin Butler (graduate student); and Katie Busby (Institutional Assessment).

Representatives from the School of Architecture, School of Social Work, and Technology Services are to be determined.

During the upcoming year the committee will work to routinize many of the assessment activities that have taken place in preparation for the SACS reaffirmation of accreditation.

The dedication and efforts of the committee members is greatly appreciated.
Current Assessment Activities - COACHE Tenure-track survey

COACHE Tenure-track Survey

Tulane is a member of the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) and participated in the 2011 Tenure-track Faculty Survey.

COACHE is a consortium of over 160 colleges, universities and systems across North America committed to making the academic workplace more attractive and equitable for faculty. Founded in 2002, with support from the Ford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies, COACHE is based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and is now supported completely by its members.

Thank you to the faculty who participated in the survey. Tulane had a 66% response rate, which was higher than the national average of 57%. This survey was anonymous, and results will be reported in the aggregate. Peer comparisons will be available and where appropriate school-level analyses will be conducted and shared with the respective deans.

Once the results are available, we will share them with you in a “Closing the Loop” feature in a future edition of Assessment Matters.

Tulane also participated in the 2008 COACHE project, the results of which indicated a desire among junior faculty for better professional development opportunities including mentoring. The Office of Academic Affairs utilized this feedback during the development and implementation of a multi-phase faculty development initiative that included sponsorship of a grant-writing workshop and development of a mentoring resource website.

Coming in the Spring 2012 issue

The Spring 2012 issue of Assessment Matters will focus on the practice and the scholarship of assessment. A special feature will outline best practices for developing and submitting unit assessment plans. To promote the scholarship of assessment From the Bookshelf (or e-reader) will examine Building a Scholarship of Assessment edited by Trudy W. Banta and the Resource Corner will highlight scholarly assessment journals and conferences.