

**I . N Q U I R Y  
Q . U A R T E R L Y**

MARCH 2009

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I.Q. is an online newsletter published by the Office of Institutional Research in conjunction with the Assessment Committee.

The goal of the newsletter is to (1) highlight efforts to measure student learning outcomes across campus both in academic departments and administrative and educational (AES) support units, (2) provide practical tips and tools in the areas of assessment and evaluation to guide practitioners in everyday work,

(3) discuss various survey efforts underway, or upcoming, that support departmental/unit work or university objectives, and (4) examine data available to assist faculty with 5-and 10-year program reviews as well as research efforts by AES units on campus.

We are confident that this newsletter will serve as a resource for members of the Southwestern community in their efforts to improve student learning.

**MEET THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

The mission of the Assessment Committee is to provide oversight to the university's plan for assessment of (1) the strategic plan, and (2) institutional learning goals. The committee is responsible for reviewing the institutional plan for assessment, reviewing outcomes of assessment efforts, coordinating assessment efforts to ensure that the information is referred to the appropriate Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Unit or academic department for improvements, and evaluating the institutional research activities.

Currently, the Assessment Committee is composed of members who represent the academic divisions and major administrative units at the university.

Committee members for 2008-09 include:

Glenda Carl (fall 2007), Chair  
Division of Humanities  
carlg, x1590

Elma Benavides  
Human Resources  
benavide, x1441

Justin Gould  
Institutional Advancement  
gouldj, X1997

Jason Hoogerhyde  
The Sarofim School of Fine Arts  
hoogerhj, x1682

Nadia Mahannah  
Financial Aid  
mahannah, x1189

## MEET THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (CONT.)

Bryan Neighbors  
Division of Social Sciences  
neighbob, x1495

Kendall Richards  
Division of Natural Sciences  
richards, X1556

Derek Timourian  
Student Life  
timourid , x1939

### Ex Officiis

Alicia Betsinger  
Institutional Research  
betsinga, x1939

Paul J. Gaffney  
The Sarofim School of Fine Arts  
gaffneyp, x1612

Ronald L. Swain  
Strategic Planning and Assessment  
swainr, x1940

Members normally serve two-year terms on the committee and it is chaired by a faculty member.

The committee meets monthly, during the academic year and meeting notes are posted online at <http://www.southwestern.edu/councils/>.

## COLLEGIATE LEARNING ASSESSMENT (CLA)

### What is the CLA?

- ◆ The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), developed by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE), is an assessment program that measures the **institutional** contributions to the learning gains made by students.
- ◆ It has a “value-added” approach to assessment through the use of performance tasks, web-based administration, matrix sampling strategy, and adjustments made for initial ability.

### What skills are measured?

- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Analytic reasoning
- ◆ Writing

The CLA uses direct measures of ability in which students actually perform cognitively demanding tasks from which quality of performance is scored. The CLA measure assesses a student’s ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English. There are **NO** multiple choice items rather all responses require students to answer open-ended questions. The web-based administration has a 90 minute time limit.

### Benefits of participation

- ◆ Our campus receives detailed information about the intellectual growth of our students.

### What’s your I.Q. ?

#### **Q: What is assessment?**

**A:** Assessment is the ongoing process of establishing clear, measurable expected *outcomes* of student learning, ensuring that students have sufficient *opportunities* to achieve these outcomes, systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting *evidence* to determine how well student learning matches our expectations, and using the resulting information to understand and *improve* student learning (Suskie, L., *Assessing Student Learning*, 2004).

#### **Q: What are student learning outcomes?**

**A:** The knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences.

## COLLEGIATE LEARNING ASSESSMENT (CONT.)

- ◆ Our campus is a part of the larger national study to understand the institutional, curricular and pedagogical components that promote powerful learning.
  - ◆ The CLA uses SAT/ACT scores to adjust for entering student characteristics. Such adjustments must be done through additional institutional analyses with raw data from NSSE.
  - ◆ The CLA is considered a “direct” measure of student learning whereas NSSE is an “indirect” measure or proxy.
- CLA and NSSE: Similarities and differences**
- ◆ The CLA and NSSE are both limited to the sample of students who agree to participate.

### What's your I.Q. ?

- Q: What does “informing the public” mean?**
- A:** Providing readily available and easily understood data or analysis that informs students and others about the success of a major, program, or institution.

## TK20: WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW

### What and Why

Tk20 is a comprehensive assessment and reporting system for collecting and managing your program, departmental, and institutional data, both academic and non-academic, for the measurement of accountability, institutional effectiveness, and for accreditation.

Tk20 lets you collect all your data systematically, plan your assessments, compare them against specified outcomes/objectives, and generate detailed reports for compliance, analysis, and program improvement.

### When

The Office of Institutional Research is currently spearheading this new effort along with Sharon Fass from ITS and Dr. Paul Gaffney. Our Tk20 team will work with the developers over the next few months to get the system operational.

The goal is to have administrative units submit their completed 2008-09 grids on the system during the summer and then to completely transition to the online system in Fall 2009.

### Where

Tk20 is a web-based application such that it can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection; hence, you will not need to be on-campus to access the system and your information.

### How

Tk20 will provide on-site training once the system is completed. The Office of Institutional Research will be available for departmental and individual training needs as the adoption process unfolds on campus.